

## An Unexpected Confession;

Or, The Story of Miss Percival's Early Life.

### CHAPTER IX.—(Cont'd)

The following day the Cushman family departed for Lake George, where they were to remain until the last of September.

They had been there less than a week when Esther received a letter—forwarded from New York—from Dr. Crawford, who inclosed a draft for a hundred and fifty dollars, the amount of which remained, after paying all bills, from the sale of her furniture.

He advised her to deposit it in some reliable savings bank, and allow the interest to accumulate for a time of need—counsel which she resolved to follow immediately upon her return to the city. His letter was very kind and friendly, telling her that he should always feel a deep interest in her, and asking her to write him occasionally, and keep him posted regarding her welfare.

The same mail brought her also a small package, bearing a foreign postmark.

Upon opening it she found a short note from Donald Lancaster, when her heart leaped and her face crimsoned with sudden joy.

It was written from Paris, and, after telling her a little about the city and his trip, he closed by asking her acceptance of the "inclosed trifle, for old acquaintance sake."

The "inclosed trifle" was a lovely ring set with a cluster of three forget-me-nots, with a tiny diamond glistening in the heart of each. "Oh, how perfectly lovely of him!" Esther exclaimed, with gleaming eyes, as she slipped the pretty circlet upon her finger and regarded it admiringly; "but I did not need it to keep me from forgetting him—I can never forget him; it might be better if I could," she concluded, with quivering lips.

Then, breaking down utterly, she covered her face with her hands and sobbed as if her heart would burst.

She knew that she loved Donald Lancaster with the one great passion of her life; but, feeling this love to be hopeless, the future seemed to hold no promise for her—it seemed like looking out upon a dreary desert, with no verdure or bloom to break or brighten the monotonous waste.

At length, controlling her grief, she arose and went to the glass, where she studied her face long and critically.

"I am an awful homely girl," she said, at last. "I am so tall and thin, and this stoop in my shoulders makes me very awkward. My cheeks are hollow, my chin is sharp, my eyes are too big for my face, and this great mass of hair, which Mrs. Cushman insists that I must do up, makes me look too heavy. I am not quite so tall, though—my complexion is really getting quite clear since I have had to stay in the house so much; and, truly, the expression of my mouth isn't bad, now that my teeth are getting into shape. I wonder," she continued, reflectively, "if I should grow plump and round, like Madge, if I could manage to stand erect, and dress in style, whether I should ever be anything but a fright! Oh, dear, why do some people have everything—wealth, beauty and every wish gratified—while others have nothing?"

Poor Esther! It really seemed as if fate had been especially unkind to her, thus far on life's journey; but this same knotty problem has, for ages, perplexed older and wiser heads than hers.

But she was not given to dwelling morbidly upon her trials, and, ere long, she had cheerfully resumed her duties with all her accustomed faithfulness.

A day or two later, however, she procured a book upon physical culture, and rising an hour earlier every morning, she put into vigorous practice the instructions which she found recorded therein, and which resulted, before long, in producing a marked change in her personal appearance.

Her form became more erect, her chest began to expand, while the country life, the clear, bracing mountain air, the nourishing diet, soon manifested their beneficial results in a decided gain of flesh and in perfect health.

And thus the summer slipped by, almost uneventfully, until the last of the season drew on apace, and Mrs. Cushman began to talk of a return to her city home.

One day the whole family were invited to join a picnic with some friends, who had planned to spend it upon a certain lovely island in the lake.

Esther was not supposed to be a member of the family, and therefore was not included in the invitation.

She did not regret the omission, however, for she was very glad to have a day to herself, and yet there were times when she felt exceedingly

forlorn over being so alone in the world, and ostracized from every pleasure and privilege enjoyed by the family.

Mrs. Cushman always left plenty of work for her to do, whenever she was relieved of the care of Daisy, so, after she had her lunch—taking her basket and an interesting book—she went down to the margin of the lake, upon which the grounds bordered, and settled herself in a cozy nook under the shelter of a great rock which was shaded by a magnificent maple.

Under this same tree, but on the other side of the rock, there was a low rustic seat; but Esther chose the more secluded spot, where she would be less liable to interruption and where she could look off upon the water.

Taking out her work, she sewed with nimble fingers for over an hour, when she deliberately folded the little garment, laid it aside, and took up her book, in which she was soon deeply absorbed.

But Esther's rest had been broken during the previous night, and before she realized that she was even drowsy, she had fallen fast asleep, her book slipping from her hands upon the ground beside her.

The next she knew she was aroused by the sound of voices in earnest conversation upon the other side of the rock.

She sat up, rubbing her eyes and yawning, while she wondered if she could manage to slip away without being observed, as she had no desire to become an eavesdropper to conversation not intended for her ears.

But suddenly she drew in a quick, sharp breath, a startled look leaped into her great eyes, her face grew rigid and white as she caught the following sentences:

"Yes, sir, you may smile and sneer, but it's a fact, and I'd give a thousand dollars this very day if I could get hold of that twin ruby; it is worth a fortune."

"Pooh! I don't believe it is anything more than a legend."

"Well, scout the story if you like—call it a legend or romance, if you please; but it all happened just as I have told it—my grandfather was commissioned to carry that precious stone to his master's ladylove."

Esther had now lost all desire to leave her retreat.

The words to which she had just listened held her spellbound, for she believed that she was about to learn the secret of that wonderful jewel in her possession.

She felt that she was justified in listening, if by so doing she would be enabled to restore to its rightful owner the property in her keeping, and thus relieve herself of a burdensome responsibility.

"Humph! I should say the master was an idiot to trust such valuable stones in the hands of his valet," she heard one of the voices remark, with a contemptuous inflection.

"Oh, of course, he didn't tell him, at the time, what he was sending to the lady. He merely gave him the package—a common-looking thing, wrapped in brown paper—simply telling him to deliver it into the hands of the girl, and no one else, and bring him back an answer. My ancient relative was an honest man, and when, on passing through the forest of which I have spoken, he was attacked by two robbers, his first thought was to save, if possible, his master's property. So, as he ran, he tossed it under a huge oak tree, thinking he could easily come back and find it, if he escaped his pursuers; while, if he were overtaken with it in his possession he would be sure to be robbed of it. He then made straight for the river, into which he leaped, and so outwitted the rogues, who, after discussing his daring plunge for a few moments, went their way, and left him to his fate. Twenty minutes after he emerged from his enforced bath, crawled up the bank and retraced his steps to the spot where he had dropped his package. Just as he reached the oak he heard a horseman galloping away toward the city. He sought for his parcel for over an hour. It could not be found. The next morning he returned to the spot, and spent the entire day in an equally fruitless search, and finally came to the conclusion that the rider of the night previous must have been a witness to what had occurred, and having secured the package, had made off with it. In great distress of mind, he returned to his master and confessed his loss, when, to his consternation, he learned the value of the gift with which he had been entrusted. He was, of course, discharged on the spot, while he knew that his master would always suspect him of having at least been an accomplice in the theft of the wonderful ruby. It was worth an almost fabulous sum, and was set in

a circle of diamonds, also of great value. It had been inclosed in a leaden case; this was put into a box and wrapped in heavy brown paper. It was said to be the duplicate of another in the possession of his lordship, and both were precious heirlooms that had been in the family for several generations."

"Well! well! this is almost like an Arabian Nights' story!" Esther heard the other voice exclaim.

"Yes, it certainly is romantic," was the reply; "but it was a terrible blow to my ancestor to be regarded as a rogue, and he swore that he would search the city over to find the horseman who had passed through the forest on that fatal night. He spent months in his weary search, and at length, at a certain hotel, learned that a traveler on horseback, by the name of Wellington, had put up there on the very evening of his unfortunate adventure. He had passed two days and nights there, and had registered as from Albany. So to Albany my relative went, to search for his man; but meantime he had removed from that place, and no one could tell him whither he had gone. Still, he persevered, vowing that he would yet find and restore the twin ruby to its former master, until the purpose became a mania with him, and he lived for nothing else. When he grew too old and feeble to keep up his quest, he tried to make his son swear that he would devote his life also to the same cause, and in case he did not succeed, to pass the commission on to future generations. My grandfather and my father, however, being thrifty farmers, said they had no time to devote to any such nonsense, and so did not bother their heads with the affair. But I have made up my mind that I will renew the search—it will be something like hunting for a needle in a haystack, I suppose; but I'm not over and above fond of work, and if I should be so lucky as to come across that leaden case and its contents, during some of my roving, my fortune would be made."

"Then if you should find it you have no idea of searching out and returning it to its rightful owner?"

"Not if I know myself—I'd not be such a nippy as that," was the scornful retort. "I will pry every stone from its setting, and sell each one separately to the highest bidder. Why! I should have an independent fortune!"

A skeptical laugh followed this assertion.

"You'd be better off in the end to go to work for day wages, according to my way of thinking."

"I'll be — if I will," was the angry response; "the world owes me a living, and I'm going to take it without soiling my hands. If I could only get track of the descendants of that family whom my great-grandfather traced to Albany—"

"What was the name?" inquired the narrator's companion.

"Wellington—I've been hunting Wellingtons in every city and town I've been in for the last ten years."

"Who was the lord who owned the jewels, and how happened he to be making love to a lady in this country?"

"He met the girl in his own country, where she had been travelling, and followed her here, according to my relative's story, and his name was—Hark! what was that?"

"That" was the sharp snapping of a lifeless stick upon which Esther had trodden, as startled beyond measure by hearing the man give utterance to her own name, she crept forth from her place of concealment in the hope of stealing away unseen by keeping the rock between herself and the men who were conversing upon the other side of it.

(To be continued.)

### CRY OF LANDLORDS.

Large Estate to be Sold Because of Higher Taxation.

Sir Robert Peel has decided to sell all but the mansion and 3,000 acres of the historic Drayton Manor estate, Tamworth, England, some 11,000 acres in all, because of the burden of land taxation and the fear of heavier burdens with the budget. Sir Robert gives the following statement of his income, and the burdens upon it:

Gross income	£26,500
Property, land and income tax	1,250
Local rates	430
Tithes	315
Upkeep of buildings, etc.	6,000
Jointure to mother	3,000

He calculated that his real return was only 1½ per cent., instead of 3½ or 3½. By the proposed sale there would be a saving of 2½ to 3 per cent. in the upkeep of the estate. This was proved by the recent sale of Lancashire property, by which the estate was relieved of £700 a year in taxes. The land he now proposed to sell would save the estate £7,000 a year. By his action his income would be increased by some £15,000, which was bound to make itself felt in the future of the district. "I am sure," he said, "many land-owners will follow suit, because I have spoken to a great many; they will disencumber themselves from the land and invest their money in consols, which give 3 per cent. certain."

## The Farm

### STRAW IS VALUABLE.

Our fathers dumped the straw almost anywhere. If they even thought of the conservation of forces, certainly straw did not figure as a factor therein. It was just as valuable then as now for feeding purposes and yet seldom was it judiciously combined with the winter's hay for forage. Today we are as careful of its preservation as we are of hay, even though we may have no opportunity to ship it to paper mills. It is safe to say that oat or rye straw when properly cut and cured, is equal to one-third or one-half the same quantity of hay. This should no longer be regarded as a by-product, but as a source of income. And now that we are coming more and more to cut oats in the green, it will be seen how important is this bulky crop to the farmer. It may be fed as hay, or turned into silage, cut or uncut. The use of green oats is hardly yet out of the experimental stage, but enough is well known to warrant the caution. Do not wait for the kernel to harden before cutting. With the kernel in the milk and only the faint hint of yellowing stalk is the time for harvesting. Chemical tests have demonstrated this.

### HORSE RATIONS.

Some valuable information has come to hand regarding the feeding of horses. A Yorkshire (Eng.) stud of 240 horses, used for draft purposes, have been kept for a long period at moderate cost. The stud has not been troubled by colic, and ailments of any kind have been very few. On an average, not more than two horses per week were unable to work, and this is an unusually small number in so large a stud. The horses in question were fed a weekly ration of 56 pounds of oats, 14 pounds of maize, and 49 pounds of bran.

An ordinary day's ration was about as follows: 18 pounds of hay, 8 pounds of oats, 2 pounds of maize and 7 pounds of bran. Eight pounds of peat moss was used for litter.

These rations were mixed at home, as it was found that, if blended by the manufacturers, they could not be relied upon; maize, especially, being cheaper, was used to excess. Maize in quantity is fattening, and not desirable for draft horses. One highly lauded purchased food was found to be 85 per cent. maize.

### GREEN FEED.

It will pay any dairyman or stockman in good hard cash to provide now, if he has not already done so, against a possible shortage of pasture in midsummer. The ideal supplement for scant pasture is about ten feet of silage, along with a field of alfalfa. Both together is better than either alone, although, unless one has a large herd, he may require to feed only silage while silage is being used to avoid spoiling or deterioration of the exposed layer from day to day. If he cannot have both, he may choose silage in preference to alfalfa, on account of the greater convenience in feeding, although the latter is better to keep up the milk flow, and better for the well-being of the cattle. It is perhaps just as well not to feed silage the year round, on account of the acid it contains. Where one has neither alfalfa nor silage, he should sow now from one to five acres of peas and oats, in several successive sowings, near the buildings, to be cut green for feeding before the new corn crop comes on.

Three bushels to the acre of a mixture of half and half, or two bushels of oats to one of peas, will turn off a lot of feed, and, if not all required for feeding green, the surplus may be cured as hay, or allowed to ripen its grain. — Farmers' Advocate.

### FARM NOTES.

Do not allow yourself to be drawn into any grain, cereal, copper or mining stock of any kind. Very few indeed realize any thing from this source outside the promoters. How to keep more stock, to make more manure in order to fertilize more fields, and raise more grain and hay on fewer acres—in a word, how to make more money without the expenditure of more labor or the impoverishment of the farm, is the question which is constantly before the thinking farmer.

A dwelling-place should be made a home in every sense of the word. The grounds immediately surrounding the house and beyond should be made attractive and lovely to those who live right on the spot. But we must think of others, too. We want to please our visitors, friends and neighbors, and in fact everyone who passes by. It is rightly a matter for personal pride that our surroundings be made to speak our appreciation of the beauties of Nature.

Though the phosphates in raw bone meal are insoluble in pure water, yet water charged with car-

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bonic acid will dissolve them in quantity sufficient to supply the demands of the crop. In buying bone meal, select that which is finest, and that which when rubbed under a knife blade, will not manifest the presence of sand. Bones now are seldom ground in their fresh state. They are generally steamed, to remove the oil, which is really injurious to the meal, and is valuable to the soap boiler. Frequently the steaming is extended to the point of removing the greater part of the gelatine, for the manufacture of glue. That renders the bones brittle and capable of furnishing a very fine meal with a high per cent. of phosphate; but it costs more slowly than meal from unsteamed bones.

### LESS WORK, MORE CRIME.

The Year 1908 Was a Black Year for Scotland.

The year 1908 was rather a black one in Scotland, for crimes of many kinds increased. In the annual report of the Prison Commissioners for Scotland, issued recently as a blue-book, it is stated that in 1908 the number of commitments of ordinary prisoners during the year was 62,182, an increase of about 1,000 on the previous year. There was also a rise in the daily average number of ordinary prisoners. This number reached 2,762, a figure which is beyond any of the recorded averages for the last 55 years.

The commissioners cannot offer any explanation of this increase. Judging from past experience, the average should have been lower than usual, in view of the fact that trade and industry were reported to be depressed during the year. It is the commissioners' experience that when trade is good and the demand for labor is great, crime tends to increase.

Commitments to prison in Scotland are much more numerous than in England. The comparison for the year 1907 was:—Scotland, 12,94 per 1,000; England, 6.03 per 1,000. The commissioners state their belief that if some method more reasonable and effective than simple fine or imprisonment were adopted in dealing with the numerous cases of drunkenness, and of other offences where inebriety was the cause, the difference between the number of imprisonments in the two countries would be much decreased. They are glad to know that steps are being taken by the Government in the direction indicated, and that inquiries are being made into the working of the inebriates acts, with the view to their amendment at an early date.

The average length of sentence imposed on ordinary prisoners during the year under report was 17.8 days. There were 138 sentences of penal servitude during the year. Out of the 65,000 who have been in the prisons during some part of the year, 4,000 have been punished for offences against discipline. The cost for maintenance of an ordinary prisoner has been at the rate of £20 13s per annum; of a convict, £36 10s 4d; of a criminal lunatic or inebriate, £44 4s 9d.

During the year 383 males and 23 females were added to the list in the "habitual criminal" register.

### THIRTY YEARS OF CRIME.

Man Who Has Spent Half a Lifetime in Prison.

Tall, with whitish hair and a slightly bent figure, a man who appeared at London (England) Sessions was proved to have had a remarkable criminal record. Giving the name of Thos. Lander, 60, and describing himself as a clerk, he pleaded guilty to stealing a coat and a pair of gloves in the East End. Superintendent Walker, of the Manchester police, produced the prisoner's criminal history, and proved the following convictions at the places mentioned: 1877—Ten days' and one month's imprisonment at Jedburgh. 1878—Five months, at Dundee. 1879—Nine months at Kirkcubright. 1880—Eighteen months at Morpeth. 1882—Twelve months at Aberdeen. 1883—Five years' penal servitude at the Old Bailey. 1888—Nine months, at Edinburgh. 1889—Five years, at Edinburgh. 1893—Three years, at the Old Bailey. 1897—Three years, at Edinburgh. 1900—Four years, at Liverpool. 1904—Five years, at Manchester. Prisoner's offences included theft, fraud and forgery and on one occasion there were as many as ten charges against him. He was released on April 2nd, and now had a ticket-of-leave of nineteen months. Prisoner was ordered three years' penal servitude.

### WOMEN OF COREAN COURT.

Reduction in Their Number—Influence They Once Exerted.

The visit of three Korean court ladies to Japan is an indication of the striking changes that have resulted from the Japanese occupation of the Hermit Kingdom. Two years ago there were no fewer than 1,800 ladies in waiting, now there are only 100, says the London Telegraph.

This wholesale reduction naturally created consternation, and there was much lamentation among those whose services were dispensed with. Their lot, however, does not seem to have been altogether enviable. It appears that it has been the custom to take girls into the court from the age of 10, and thenceforth throughout the whole period of their natural lives they were never allowed to leave the precincts of the palace, so that they lived in absolute ignorance of the outside world.

The few who accompanied the Emperor on his recent tour gave evidence of the timidity which had resulted from their long confinement, for they could hardly be persuaded to enter the train, and they finally did so with manifest trepidation.

Hitherto the influence of these ladies at court has been very great. Having constant access to the ear of the Sovereign, on the one hand, and being, on the other, accessible to all the intriguing influences that prevailed in the unwholesome atmosphere of the court, their power exceeded even that of Ministers of State.

### ELUDING THE LIGHTNING.

Though it is impossible to avoid the danger of being struck by lightning altogether, these few recommendations may, with advantage, be borne in mind: Avoid fireplaces. Lightning often enters by the chimney, on account of the internal coating of soot—one of the bodies for which lightning evinces a preference. For the same reason, avoid metals, gildings, and mirrors, on account of their quicksilver. The best place is the middle of the room, unless there should be a lamp or chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The less contact with walls or floor the better; and the safest place—were it possible to arrange it—would be in a hammock, suspended by silken cords, in the middle of a large room. In the absence of means of suspension, the next best place is on substances which are bad conductors—such as glass, pitch, or several mattresses.

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