

MRS. M'ELHANEY TELLS ABOUT HER LIFE IN PRISON

(Continued from Page 1)

nothing to her. They passed groups of carefree co-eds on the street corners—girls no older nor younger than she. They were looking forward to Saturday night dates—while she—

Every large building caught her eye. Was it "it"? But the taxi did not stop. They passed them all up. And presently there were no more "big" buildings. Just houses. Then not seven those.

As the car crested the top of the Fourteenth street hill, she got her first glimpse of "the place." It seemed like it was so lonesome—way out in the country like that. There wouldn't be much to watch from the windows.

But would they let her look out of the windows?

The taxi drew up in front of the massive door. She caught her breath and her girl-woman heart contracted. She, who had experienced so much, was full of child curiosity to see it, the new home and its people. She who was so young in years had the woman embarrassment in facing those very people.

"Everyone will look at me and say: 'There goes that awful woman,'" she whispered.

Styles Meant Nothing.

Her French heel clung to the turf between the pavement and sidewalk, reluctant to let go, perhaps. It might be the last time her foot would rest upon the heaven-spread earth carpet for over a quarter of a century. Those heels might never carry their mistress beyond the walls again. One could scarcely expect those stubby toes, and beaded straps to stay in style for thirty years.

Style—

Would Evelyn be able to keep in touch with the styles of the world while youth tingled her longings for good-looking clothes? If she had to stay in thirty years she would be fifty and tottering when she came forth. Fifty—why women were old and white-haired at fifty.

The big door closed behind her.

Closed! The word never meant so much before in all probability. Closed! That meant shut. She had become a shut-in.

She climbed a short flight of steps. Perhaps she did not notice that the first door on the left bore the simple inscription, "Warden." Across the hall was a reception room.

But right straight in front—

A big gaping doorway with great gray bars.

Everyone seemed to be looking. A man appeared magically on the spot. They told her it was Deputy Warden Harmon. And without more to do, they were mounting, mounting two long flights of green carpeted steps. They were broad stairs, not the crooked twisty ones of fiction. But maybe the twisty ones would come later.

The matron met them at the head of the stairs—Mrs. Frank Lockard. Evelyn had been told that she would

treat her square. But many things already had not turned out as she had been told. She sized her up as she had sized up Harmon and as she later did the warden.

Mrs. Lockard took the girl at once to the ward. As the great gray door swung open and showed the inner bars, Evelyn took a look about her new apartments.

They were not a bit as she had expected. A long wide hall spread before her, but there were no visible cells—little windowless holes in the wall where one must stay eternally curled up. It wasn't half bad on first glimpse.

Searched Her First.

The matron took her at once to a room at the rear. There she was searched.

Evelyn smiles when she looks back upon that. They must have thought her to be desperate when they did that. Searched her like she was an ordinary—

Mrs. Lockard told her to go in and bathe. The water felt good after the dirty trip across the state. One does get so grimy traveling.

They let her wear her own aprons with the warden's permission. She had a number of them. The state would find that it had a long time to clothe her at that. And it made the beginning seem easier.

Then came the filling out of the record—the act that makes an inmate's private qualities, his identification marks, property of the state.

And while the room that was to house the girl from Alliance was being warmed, Mrs. Lockard talked to Evelyn. None but the two know just what was said. Mrs. Lockard explained the rules of the ward, the discipline, the things that would be expected of the newcomer, her relationship to the other girls there. She found that she could write a letter once in two weeks, and that she could receive visitors on the second Thursday of each month.

That is, she could if she obeyed the rules.

Room to Herself.

Evelyn has a room by herself. So have the three other women housed in the same quarters, one colored girl and two white girls. Evelyn learned that two were in from one to seven years, with one of them re-serving after a violation of a parole. The other is there for from one to twenty years on forgery.

The parole matter does not concern Evelyn. The little brown book on rules that govern inmates of the Nebraska penitentiary says that those confined for treason, murder, rape, or kidnapping are not eligible to paroles.

When the room got warm, Evelyn had until the evening supper hour to think these things over. Her room was large, with three beds in it. At present, it is not necessary that she share it with another. The cells are white. There is but one window and it is barred. But it has white curtains and that helps a lot.

Not so bad as a cell.

Supper was brought up from the big

kitchens in a pail and carried by a "trusty." No frills. Just plain meat, potatoes and cabbage. But there was plenty.

The four of them sat down to one table. The white and colored girls do not have to eat together. There are two dining rooms. But why not? No one cares.

No One Cares.

That is the funny part about it. No one seems to care about anything.

If there is a job to do, and one gets through with her share first, she lets the others work out their own salvations.

"We don't get paid for extras. So, what's the use."

Sometimes the girls even stoop to tricks to get one another "in bad." One day Mrs. Fenton sent in a particularly nice tablecloth to be laundered. She did not care to have this fine a piece go into the general prison laundry.

Someone had it "in" for the girl who was assigned the task. She sprinkled some red stuff on the linen and it never came out.

Another time, a big square was torn out of a piece of muslin given to a certain girl to "shrink."

But even at that, Evelyn is worried for fear the time will come when she will be left "up there all alone." Thirty years is such a long time.

At home now, someone was always running in for a chat. There were thirteen children in the family and eleven, six girls and five boys, still living.

No Right to a Mother.

Of course there is visitor's day. That comes but once a month. Evelyn's mother and a sister came down the January day. She enjoyed them so much. And when the mother left at 3 o'clock, Evelyn stood at the window to watch until they had melted from sight.

"Aw kid—you ain't got no right to a mother, now," some one spit out. "I lost mine."

But that first night, she was not thinking so much of visitor's day, as the countless number of solitary days that stretched out ahead of her.

Evelyn asked Mrs. Fenton once how long she had lived there.

"Eight years."

"Eight years? My that seems like a long time to stay in one place. I don't believe I could stand to—"

Eight years. That is only a little less than a fourth of thirty years.

"I am going to be as good as I can," Evelyn confided to the matron, after a bit of figuring. "According to the good time law, I can reduce my actual time to a little over twenty-one years. I can do that if I never disobey a rule."

"Besides I don't see how being mean is going to get me anywhere. The warden looks like he could be good natured as long as I am good. But I figure out that he can be mean if I do something I hadn't ought to. You look like that too," naively.

The Same Routine.

Mrs. Lockard smiled and assured her she would be happier if she was a good girl.

The women prisoners give the day time hours to the state. They do the fine laundry work for the institution three times a week. The rest of the time they sew and do fancy work.

Evelyn had never sewed before, nor crocheted. She does now. She has made enough lace and insertion for some sheets for one of the official's beds. And when the factory is running, the women make the cretonne linings for the lamps.

Every day is alike. Get up at seven. Clean the room, eat breakfast, sew or wash until noon. Dinner. Continue the morning work until five. Supper, and then the evenings are spent in making things for one's self. Bed at 9 o'clock sharp.

Evelyn's bed hour, for the past few years at least—has not hovered about the 9 p. m. hour. Nor have her evenings been spent with a fitting needle.

And when one is twenty-one—

The only excitement is the mice. They got to be pretty bad for a while. And then someone sent a cat up.

The matron feared for a time, that a cat could not be kept on the third floor of a penitentiary. But tabby seems to like it. When she wants an airing, she crawls through the bars and out on an adjacent building to chase sparrows across the roof. When she gets hungry, she returns indoors and chases mice.

Evelyn envies the cat sometimes.

Take in a Movie.

On Sundays, the women are permitted to accompany their matron to the movie in the prison auditorium. And while they have their own Sunday school in their own quarters, they attend the church services with the men.

"It seems so funny to me, that whenever anyone talks out here its always 'you men.'" Evelyn remarked at one time, "They never say

anything to the women. I don't like it."

Evelyn is used to being noticed. But there is one thing she is thankful for. Visitors are never allowed to go through the women's ward.

"People cannot come and stare at us like they do the men," she said. "Our quarters are not arranged so that they could come through without being right with us. I am glad for that."

Thus goes the life of a woman whom the Nebraska courts have pronounced as guilty of violation of one of the state's statutes. There is plenty of substantial food, good beds, a chance to read if one does not lose the privileges. The working hours are reasonable. The officials are considerate.

But what a prospect—

Thirty years of the same thing, when one is twenty-one.

REAL ESTATE TRANSFERS

Filed for record for week ending February 11, 1921:

Anton Uhrig, widower to Eugene C. Kendrick, lots 1 and 2, block 21, Uhrig's addition, \$300.00.

William M. Corey and wife to Simon A. Dowell and wife, lot 16, block 34, Hemingford, \$2,600.00.

Vadie Chandler, single, to Norman G. Leishman, southwest quarter of section 21-25-48, \$1.00.

Sadie C. Bennett and husband to Robert F. Mece, west half of northeast quarter, northwest quarter of the southeast quarter and northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of section

7-28-52, \$1.00.

Lillie May Anderson and husband to Edgar Hilton and H. B. Karsting, northwest quarter of section 13-25-49, \$3,200.00.

H. Sheridan Keane and wife to K. L. Pierce and G. M. Jenkins, east half of section 7, south half of section 8, northwest quarter of section 8-27-52, \$5,580.00.

H. Sheridan Keane and wife to The Durland Trust Co., east half of section 7, south half of section 8-27-52, \$400.

Otto Matz and wife to R. E. Knight,

northeast quarter of section 28-26-47, \$600.00.

Ernest Radenbaugh and Mrs. Ada to T. K. Gilshannon, northeast quarter of section 6-23-47, \$1,000.00.

William H. Kiester and wife to Keith L. Pierce, southwest quarter of section 11-27-48, \$2,400.00.

Eugene C. Kendrick and wife to G. M. Jenkins, lots 1 and 2, block 21, Uhrig's addition, \$1,100.00.

Fred C. Peck and wife to Keith L. Pierce, northeast quarter of section 25-26-51, \$2,240.00.

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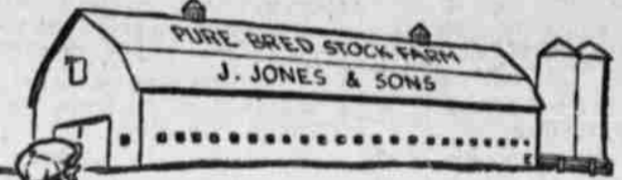
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