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Mrs. Eva Hamilton's Story

She Talks Fully To "Nellie Bly" In Trenton State Prison

Remarkable Statements, If True, of Her Life Before And After Marriage

She Says She Didn't Want To Marry Hamilton, And Tells Why

The First Time She Has Been Able to Speak Freely With a Reporter and to Give Her Side of This Extraordinary Scandal and Romance—How She Met Robert Ray Hamilton, Married Him and Was Blackmailed by "Josh" Maun and His Mother—They Knew Her Past Life and Threatened to Tell Her Husband—He Did Not Believe Her Altogether Bad—She Was an Actress for a Year, and for a Time Was with the Florences—Untruths About Her Birth and Childhood—Her Married Life and Her Explanations About Her Baby and the Other Babies—Why She Didn't Tell This Story on Her Trial—Her Diamonds.

Trenton, N. J., Oct. 8.—I interviewed Mrs. Eva Hamilton late this afternoon in her prison cell in the Trenton jail. Everybody has heard Robert Ray Hamilton's side of the story. It seemed only fair that the woman be given a show. I have seen her. I have talked with her, and I write her story as she gave it. She has been judged in more ways than one. I smooth over nothing in the telling of what she told me.

The sun came faintly in the high windows, lighting the cells of Trenton State Prison where the women are confined. I heard the low hum of a sewing machine, and looking down the corridor I saw seated along the spotless walls blue-clad women sewing. Forgetting the peculiarity of dress they resembled nothing so much as a society sewing for charity purposes. I excepted the dress; I should also except the quiet. No one ever saw a quiet sewing society. But these women-prisoners were so quiet that I could hear low, despairing sobs, that came not from among them, but from the topmost tier.

I went up the three flights of stairs to this top tier, and, walking along the narrow balcony. I came to a door that was closed and locked. I looked in and saw a woman lying on the narrow cot. Her face was hidden in her hands, and she was crying bitterly.

The door was opened and I stepped inside.

"Mrs. Hamilton," I said, as the woman jumped to her feet. "I come to you from *The World* to state justly and exactly whatever you choose to say to the world in your own defense."

Without a word, without one question, the desolate woman flung her arms around me and sobbed so terribly that I almost feared she could not be quieted.

"Have you seen my husband?" she replied as she became more calm and drew back to look at me.

“No.” I replied. “I am Nellie Bly of *The World*. I have come to you to give you the same chance that has been given to Mr. Hamilton and the Swintons. If you have any story to tell I will faithfully report it.”

“I know of you,” she said, “and I will tell you the truthful story. It has never been told. They have told so many untruths about me.”

We sat down side by side on the cot. I looked about her tiny cell. On a little table were the remnants of a meal. The cot was extremely simple, but was furnished with two mattresses. There was a wooden stool in the cell and nothing more excepting a framed motto, which was printed in colored letters.

I believe in God my Father, And in Jesus Christ, my Saviour, And in the Holy Spirit Who Comforts Me, and Leads Me into All Truth

I looked at Eva Hamilton also. All her finery had disappeared: still she has a pretty face, but a weak one. She looked so much younger than I had expected. In the simple blue gown, plain waist and straight skirt, with a black-and-white breakfast shawl plumed about her throat, her bangs combed smoothly back, and her soft, reddish-brown hair hanging in one braid down her back, she looked not more than twenty years old. A pretty, slender girl.

Her Childhood.

“To begin at the first,” she said, holding my hand with her white, cool, slender one; “I am not the child of the Steeles, as has been said. I was only their adopted child. My mother died whom I was born, and when I was three years old my father died of consumption. I was born in Tunkhannock, Pa. The Steeles adopted me and I never knew any other people but them.

“When I was fifteen years old I moved to Towanda, Pa. I went there to learn to earn my own living. I was with Mrs. Marsh, who kept a millinery store on Bridge Street. I learned the trade and there I met Walter Parsons, who was then superintendent of a railroad.

“We were married,” she continued, releasing my hand and absently pulling single hairs one of her long braid. “My folks and his folks fought about it. It made a great deal of trouble. I had one child, a daughter to Walter Parsons, and then things went so badly by others interfering that we separated.”

“What became of your daughter?” I asked.

“I don’t like to bring her in this,” she said plaintively. “She is thirteen years old now. I have her at school and she does not know anything about this. I don’t want her to, and it is not right to drag Walter Parsons up, for he is married again.”

“Then tell me what you did next,” I said.

“I went to work for Durling & Pratt, in Elmira, N.Y. I was their ribbon counter. When I was eighteen I received some money which was left to me by my father. I then went back to the Steeles, and lived there quietly for some months.”

Married and Divorced

“In 1879, I think it was, Father Steele and the Parsons arranged to get a divorce to free Walter and myself. This was all done by them in Elmira, N.Y. After the divorce was granted I

went to Elmira, where I lived for three months. Then I went to New York. I immediately got an engagement with a dramatic company and went on the road.”

“Tell me what company?” I said.

“Don’t ask me” she said again, “I do not wish to drag the names of people before the public who have so far escaped. While I was travelling with this company I met Joshua Mann. The company was stopping at the West End Hotel, Philadelphia, and Josh Mann was there. One of the girls in the company knew him and she introduced him to me. I was two years with this company and then I was out for nine months with Billy Florence. Then I went to New York to stay.

“I first got board at Mrs. Dean’s No. 252 West Twenty-first Street. She was the wife of a captain whose trip was to Brazil and back. Of course you know the rest of it and how I met Mr. Hamilton?” she said, with a long-drawn breath.

“I do not,” I answered. “Tell me the story.”

Her Meeting With Hamilton.

“A friend of mine took me to a home one night. Mr. Hamilton and two friends of his [she gave the names] were calling there at the time. We were all introduced and Mr. Hamilton and I became the most intimate friends from that time. That is five years ago this coming spring.

“We cared for each other,” she said, as she hung her head sorrowfully. “I mean by that that he paid all my expenses and was with me all the time he was in New York, which was usually from Friday night until Monday morning, coming down from Albany. He was a mentor of the legislature then.

“Twice during that time I was going to be a mother. I told Mr. Hamilton and he was very angry. Both times he compelled me to consult a doctor and he gave me \$300 each time to pay expenses. Once he gave me the money and the other time he sent the money in a registered letter to me to the Passaic Bridge Post Office in New Jersey.

“All this time,” she said, getting off the bed and pacing nervously up and down her tiny cell.

“I was friendly with the Swintons. ‘Dot’ as we called Joshua Mann, had introduced me to his mother Mrs. Swinton. Josh lost his position and they were hard pushed, so I began to lend them money. I like them; they treated me kindly, and I didn’t miss what I gave them. After I met Mr. Hamilton I tried to keep it from Grandmother (Swinton), but she found it out, little by little, and then my trouble began.”

Says She Was Blackmailed

“Every time they wanted money they came to me. If I refused they would threaten and then I would give up.”

“What would they threaten?” I asked.

“They threatened to tell my people and they threatened to separate me from Mr. Hamilton, so I gave them money to buy their silence and my own happiness. Mr. Hamilton knew I supported them, but he never made any objections.”

“Why did you not get rid of them?”

“You ask me that,” she said scornfully, with a hard, short laugh. “I couldn’t. I was afraid of them. They followed me everywhere and they threatened until I was glad to get peace at any

price. They somehow found out everything I had ever done in my life and they held my own deeds over me.

“Mr. Hamilton claims he gave me \$10,000. That is not true. I will tell you how it happened. He and a friend of his went out the road with—(she again gave the names). They stopped at a road-house and they all drank too much wine, and when Mr. Hamilton came back, he told me all about it and what had happened, which was something dreadful. I got angry and we had a quarrel, and I threatened to go to—the husband of the lady (giving his name) and tell him the whole thing. Mr. Hamilton begged me not, and said if I promised never to tell he would give me \$10,000. I promised. He gave me \$9,000, which I intended to pay for a house I had bought at Passaic Bridge, N. J. In a few days he asked me for \$6,000 back. I gave it. Afterwards he borrowed \$4,800 of my own money and still again \$3,250. He had never paid the other he borrowed back, so this time I said to him: ‘Ray Hamilton, you will promise today to pay this, but tomorrow you will deny every word of it, so I won’t give you a cent unless you give me a receipt to that effect.’

“He wrote out: ‘I owe Eva Hamilton borrowed money, &c,’ This receipt is with my papers in the Atlantic City Bank. At three different times after this he borrowed \$150, \$100 and \$150 from me. He never paid one cent back, and they have all been saying I was taking him money from him.”

Her Diamonds And Property

“My diamonds they talk about are only worth \$1,500. The majority of them I owned. Mr. Hamilton gave me very few. Besides, I have \$2,700, all of which is in bonds and mortgages except \$900, which is a deposit in a bank.

“Mr. Hamilton, as I have told you, never raised any objections to my giving money to the Swintons. I kept Mrs. Swinton, Josh Mann, Mrs. Swinton’s granddaughter (Carrie Swinton, or Collens, as her right name is). I kept them all, because they threatened me. At last Kate Collens, Mrs. Swinton’s daughter, found out about Mr. Hamilton and she also made me pay her money. When I went to Jersey they all went along and lived with me, and Mr. Hamilton knew it and did not object. Josh Mann got knocked down with my horse, which was very vicious, while in Jersey. He struck on the back of his head and lay insensible for almost twenty-four hours. When we returned to New York I took him to Dr. Ball, Dr. Paine and half a dozen other doctors. He has never been right since that, and should not be held responsible for what he says.

“One year ago last spring I told Mr. Hamilton I wanted to go to Europe. He gave me \$1,000 to go on. I told him I wanted to take Josh Mann for company, and he said it was all right. I went in May. When I left Mr. Hamilton I knew I was going to be a mother. I did not tell him then because I knew he would make me go to a doctor’s again and do as he had me do before. I returned from Europe sooner than I had expected and went up to the mountains, still taking Josh with me. Sept. 1 I returned to the city and took a flat in West Fifty-Seventh Street. Then I told Mr. Hamilton I was about to become a mother. He was very angry and wanted me to go to a doctor’s. I told him it was too late then and so matters rested. He was very angry, though, and we fought over it.”

Mr. Hamilton’s Knowledge of Josh

“Just at that time Mrs. Swinton became high in her demands on me. I told her I could not give her money then, as I had been to a great expense all summer travelling about and keeping Josh. She threatened me, but for once I would not yield. I went to my flat and Josh went to hers for the trunks. He was to come back to take dinner with me. The trunks came, his with them, but he did not come. The next morning I sent down to find out what had become to him, and Mrs. Swinton said she thought he was at my house. For several days we did not hear of him, and Mrs. Swinton was at me all the time to advertise in the papers and offer a reward for him. She seemed to be in such distress about his disappearance that at last I consented and advertised, offering \$100 for any information as to his whereabouts. Mr. Hamilton knew this, and one day, as we were together, the negro janitor from the house where Mrs. Swinton lived came in and said he would tell me where Josh Mann was for \$50. Mr. Hamilton said, ‘Give the nigger \$50 and see if he can tell you.’ I gave him the money and he told me that Mrs. Swinton had Josh hidden in Edward Prideau’s flat. I went there. It made a big fuss and I did not find Josh. So I made the nigger give back the \$50. Then Mother Swinton said she had Josh, and she wanted the \$50. I gave it to her, and in a few days she came back for \$75. I was ashamed to tell Mr. Hamilton how they had ‘worked’ me about Josh, so I just told him he had returned and we dropped the subject.

“After this Kate Collen’s threatened me until I gave her \$25 a week. Then her husband got in a fight with her and Judge Patterson gave him three months on the Island. Kate went off with the Rockwell Dramatic Company and I haven’t seen her since. I had a chance to go with the same company, but Mr. Hamilton coaxed me to stay with him.”

The Child

“I kept very quiet about the fact that I was going to become a mother. Mr. Hamilton knew it, and he knew I didn’t want Mrs. Swinton to know it because it would be something more for her to threaten me about. She accused me several times but I always denied it. I slipped off to Elmira, to my brother’s a Mr. Steele, who lived in Third Street. Mr. Hamilton gave me \$200 in buy baby clothes, and \$150 for myself before I left. He also sent me a check for \$500. My brother knew what was wrong with me. I had not been at his house three days until Josh came. He followed me up. On Nov. 15 I slipped away and went to some good, honest people in the country. On the 19th my baby was born. On Dec. 1 I returned to Elmira, and on the 24th of December I returned to New York, leaving my baby at the house where it was born.

“Mrs. Swinton was the first one to see me on my return. She told me Mrs. Jennings wanted her to buy her a baby: that Mrs. Jennings offered her \$500 for the right kind. In the mean time Mrs. Swinton had taken a family named Preistman in to board, and she was trying to get rid of them.

“On the morning of Jan. 2 I had my baby brought home. Mrs. Swinton got a baby somewhere, and as her boarders had not gone out she asked me to keep it for a few days at my house. The colored servant I had (Celia Dickson) knew all about Mrs. Swinton’s child. Mrs. Swinton of course saw my baby and she accused me of being its mother. Mr. Hamilton helped me make up a story to tell her that the baby belonged to a friend of him who had it by some girl, and we were to care for it for a few days. Her baby got sick and died. She was sick herself, so she persuaded me to go to some house and get another baby she had engaged. This I did, and brought the baby to her. At this time Mr. Hamilton and I quarrelled.”

The Marriage

“I found out about him and--, --, and -- being off on a spree and with women. We had a terrible quarrel and I said I was going to leave him. He begged me not to, but I was determined, so he said for me not to leave him and he would marry me. We had never thought or spoken of marriage before, and at this moment our child was not thought of. Mr. Hamilton had been wishing she would die from the time he knew it was to be born. So we did not have much to say on the subject. This fight was on the night of the 8th of January. The next day Mrs. Swinton brought her two babies down to my flat and looked after the three while Mr. Hamilton and I went to Jersey and were married. That night and the next day Mr. Hamilton and our baby and myself were at the flat. I got a message from Mrs. Swinton that hers had died and I went up, but did not even see it.

“When Mr. Hamilton asked me to marry him I said I would not. I would not marry him to take his people’s abuse afterwards for having lived with him before we were married. He said if I would only marry him we would keep it secret until after the legislature and then we would take a trip to Southern California and he would say he met and married me there. I loved him and with these promises I consented.

“While Mrs. Swinton was at our house she sent out for a doctor to see her baby. She told him it was mine, and I let it go because she was afraid of getting into trouble if he knew she was nursing babies, as she was in one case. The nurse, Marie Canfield, warned me not to have anything to do with Mrs. Swinton and her babies or I would get into trouble. She nursed both babies while Mrs. Swinton was at our house.

The “Boughten” Babies.

“Still there were more babies. After the second died, she got another, but it was so ugly the woman wouldn’t have it. I went with Mrs. Swinton to...

(Continued in a later edition)