Ernest Worman and the Victorian Genizah: A Librarian’s Tale of Romance, Tax Evasion and Sudden Death

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Description: In 1898, Solomon Schechter donated the 190,000 manuscript fragments of the “Taylor-Schechter” Cairo Genizah Collection to the Cambridge University Library, on the condition that CUL fund a project to catalogue the material. This was estimated to take ten years under Schechter’s leadership. Four years later, Schechter was living in New York and no one was working on the Cambridge collection. Into this void stepped an unlikely hero: Ernest Worman, a 31-year-old Sunday-school teacher, serial tax evader and boating enthusiast. Seven years after that, Worman was dead, and Genizah work at CUL ceased for five decades. He left behind an unfinished catalogue, a personal archive and a legacy that is still entangled with the Cambridge University Library.

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