

An Unexpected Confession;

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

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Cont'd.)

Meanwhile Mr. Humbert King was very busy attending to the many things that must be done before his return to England. He had given orders for the embalming of his friend's body, and arranged for its transportation across the Atlantic, for Lord Irvington had expressed the wish to be laid to rest in the tomb of the Irvingtons in his own country.

He had passed away during Wednesday night, and the next day Mr. King took passage for himself and Esther on the Etruria, which was to sail at noon on the following Saturday.

No one, save those who had been present at her marriage, knew exactly under what circumstances our young heroine was going abroad, and they were bound to secrecy, as it was thought best to avoid all notoriety.

It was generally believed, by the people in the house, that Mr. King, out of a feeling of gratitude to her for her kindness to his friend, had offered to send her to school for the next few years, and that, during this time, she was to make her home with his family, and this was regarded as rare good fortune for the friendless girl, who, hitherto, had been obliged to support herself by her own efforts.

On Friday Mr. King took his young ward to one of the large stores on Broadway to have her fitted out for everything needful for her comfort during her voyage. She was told to select only articles of the best material and latest make, regardless of cost, and this, her first experience in purchasing, just what she wanted and what her refined taste dictated, was a perfect delight to Esther.

But she gave a little gasp of dismay when, after her selections were made and the bill presented to her companion, she saw the startling amount which she had been betrayed into spending. "It is all right," said Mr. King, with a little smile of amusement, "and we are not quite through yet, for there are one or two other things that I want you to add to your purchases. It will be very cold during the voyage, and I think it would be well for you to have a seal jacket, cap and muff. Come, we will go to the fur department to look at some garments."

A seal jacket! Esther could scarcely credit her own ears as she heard this. She had often looked with longing eyes upon the bright and happy girls whom she had seen enveloped in such costly and comfortable attire, but she had never even dreamed that she would ever become the possessor of anything of the kind.

"Will—will they not cost a great deal?" she timidly inquired of her companion.

"Yes, sealskin is rather expensive," he responded, "but that does not signify; Russ told me he wanted you to have it, and anything else in the way of finery that you might desire. So, you perceive, I am only obeying his orders. Perhaps, however, there is some other kind of fur which you would prefer," he concluded, with sudden thought.

"Oh, no; sealskin is the most beautiful of furs," Esther responded, with a sigh of infinite content.

So to the fur department they went, where she was fitted with an elegant garment for Mr. King was critical and would have none but the best, and as she glanced into the full-length mirror and saw the stylish figure, in its costly wrap reflected there, she began to realize for the first time since her marriage, that she was really going to be a "fine lady," according to Jennie's ideas regarding the term.

Early on Saturday morning she bade her landlady and the servants good-bye, leaving with each a choice little gift as a souvenir of her sojourn in the house, and then started for the steamer, accompanied by Jennie, who was going to see her off, and who was almost heartbroken over the approaching separation, for she had learned to love her friend very dearly and to depend upon her as well during the year or more that they had been together.

Mr. and Mrs. Leighton—the rector and his wife—also met them at the pier, to wish the young lady of Irvington Manor bon voyage, and a happy future amid new scenes beyond the Atlantic. Esther, in spite of the great change awaiting her, experienced very few regrets, in view of leaving her native land.

The outlook for her seemed very bright and attractive. She had stepped, as by magic, into an assured position, where, with almost unlimited means at her command, she could henceforth live her life pretty much as she wished.

She was eager to begin her studies, for school life had a great attraction for her, and thus, beyond the next three or four years, she had not, as yet, laid any plans for her future. It had been agreed between herself and Mr. King that she was not even to be introduced to people more than was absolutely necessary to establish her identity and rights as Lady Irvington, until she should come forth from school finished and ready to take her proper position in the world.

Her chief regret in leaving America was on account of Jennie, who would be left alone and entirely dependent upon her own resources. Still, she was leaving her well-established in a good business, which, if rightly managed, would be likely to increase, and thus give her a good living.

Esther was quite ill for the first day or two after sailing, and was obliged to lie quietly in her berth; but the third morning she made her appearance on deck, where, although she looked very white and seemed weak, she began to recuperate rapidly.

After that she found the voyage very pleasant, and, as Mr. King was a delightful companion and continually thoughtful for her comfort, she thoroughly enjoyed every moment.

She soon began to attract the attention of other voyagers, as they observed the tall, graceful girl, clad in her costly furs, taking her daily constitutional, leaning upon the arm of her middle-aged escort. She appeared to bloom into greater beauty with every succeeding day, as the pure salt air painted her creamy cheeks with a healthy and beautiful color.

But Esther's nights were not always as quiet and restful as she could wish, for, in the stateroom adjoining her, there was a passenger who was evidently a great sufferer from seasickness, while it was also patent that her disposition was not the most angelic of her sex.

She kept one of the weary stewardesses waiting upon her almost constantly—running up and down to bring her this, and that and the other thing, according to the whim of the moment, until Esther heartily pitied the much-tried woman.

"Doesn't she get any better?" she inquired of the stewardess one morning as she met her looking worn and heavy-eyed, coming out of her neighbor's room.

"No; at least she thinks she isn't any better, though I'm sure she might get up and be dressed if she would, and she gets crosser and crosser, until I am at my wits' end to know what to do with her. She's an old miser, too," the stewardess added, with some show of temper, "grumbling at every sixpence she puts out, and yet wanting every dainty the ship affords."

"Is she travelling alone?" Has she no companion?" Esther inquired.

"No, miss, she doesn't seem to know anybody aboard, more's the pity, for then I might get a little rest. She's just been giving me a tremendous raking over because I couldn't stay longer to bathe her head and coddle her; but I have other duties that have to be attended to. There! just hear her now!" the woman concluded, as a shrill voice screamed out:

"Stewardess! stewardess! come back here! I want you."

Then there followed a violent pounding upon the panels of the stateroom that was both ludicrous and irritating.

"She appears to have some strength left," said Esther, with a roguish gleam in her eyes.

"You are right, miss, and you should see her eat," she has an appetite like a shark."

"Perhaps I could do something for her and relieve you," the kind-hearted girl observed, as the dim continued. "You go on and get a little rest, if you can, for you look very tired," she added, pleasantly, "and I will drop in upon her for a few moments."

"Thank you, miss, it's very good of you, I'm sure," said the weary stewardess, gratefully, as she gladly availed herself of the offer and disappeared down the passage.

Esther then gently opened the stateroom door, and, putting her bright face inside, said, with a genial smile:

"Madam, the stewardess is busy just now and cannot come; perhaps, though, I can do something for you."

The woman ceased her pounding the moment the door opened, turning her sallow, wrinkled face toward the speaker, regarding her wonderingly.

"Who are you?" she curtly demanded.

"Why, how wonderful!" Esther exclaimed, in a startled tone, a

look of astonishment sweeping over her face. "Miss Percival! Can it be possible? How strange that we should meet again like this!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

The woman was indeed Miss Percival, but she continued to regard her visitor with an expression of curiosity and perplexity in which there was not a vestige of recognition.

"Why don't you tell me who you are?" she demanded, in response to Esther's exclamations of surprise, and with a note of irritability in her sharp voice.

"Don't you remember me, dear Miss Percival?" the fair girl continued, as she entered the room and closed the door. "I know that I have changed, but I am sure you cannot have forgotten Esther Wellington, with whom you spent so many weeks after your accident nearly two years ago."

"You are not Esther Wellington?" returned the woman, frowning, but still earnestly studying the lovely face looking so smilingly down upon her. "Your voice sounds something as if you used to, and your eyes resemble hers; but otherwise, you are no more like her than black is like white. She, poor child, was about the ugliest specimen of humanity I ever set eyes upon," Miss Percival concluded, with unparaphrased frankness.

Esther burst into a cheery, musical laugh.

The fact that the woman had utterly failed to recognize her was a greater proof of the wonderful transformation in her than any mere assertion of the fact could have been; and, knowing that she was no longer ugly, it did not pain her now to hear her former appearance so criticized.

"You are right," she said, presently, and checking her mirth; "nevertheless, I am that very same 'poor child,' though somewhat improved, perhaps, and I am also very glad to meet you once more."

"I can't believe it!" the spinster returned; "but your voice and ways are like Esther's, and the more I see you, the more familiar you grow. But what has become of those dreadful crooked teeth—have you had them all out and replaced by a set of false ones?"

"No, indeed," said Esther, with another burst of merriment that showed the lines of perfect pearls to the best advantage; "but I have had four taken out and the others straightened. It was a long, hard piece of work, but I have always felt paid for it."

"Humph! I should think you might. You were awfully round-shouldered, too, and thin as a rail."

"Yes, I know; but I practised calisthenics faithfully, to get rid of the stoop in my shoulders, while time and good health have done the rest. Now do you believe that I am Esther?"

"Yes, I suppose I must; but it seems wonderful," said Miss Percival, her eyes lingering upon the fair, smiling face looking down upon her, "and you seem so much happier than you used to be."

"Yes, I am happier," said Esther. "And now tell me what I can do for you; you know I am a good nurse, for you have tested my qualifications in that line in the past, and know whereof I speak," she concluded, brightly.

And the spinster, thus reminded of her aches and pains once more, began to sigh and groan, and bitterly bemoan her hard lot.

"I've been shamefully neglected ever since we sailed; I've been constantly sick, and had to lie here, day on and day out, with no one to speak a kind word to me or attend to my needs."

Esther opened her great black eyes in surprise at these complaints; for, while she did not like to think that Miss Percival would willfully falsify, she knew from her own observations how busy the poor stewardess had been kept waiting upon her, catering to her whims.

But she made no comment. She saw that the woman was weak and miserable, and, as she was well and strong, she resolved to do what she could to make her more comfortable and happy during the remaining three days of the voyage.

"Well, I will take you under my friendly wing, now that I have found you," she said, with a cheery smile. "If I had suspected who was my neighbor, I would have come to you before this. Now tell me what you have had for your breakfast."

"Oh, a dish of that endless porridge, an under-done egg, as cold as a stone, the wing of something the stewardess caught chicken, a couple of muffins heavy as lead, and a cup of muddy coffee."

Esther laughed outright as her companion concluded her rehearsal of this uninviting bill of fare, but she happened to know that every article mentioned had been the best of its kind, and if Miss Percival had partaken of such a breakfast she was sure she could not be in a very critical condition.

"And were you sick after eating this repast?" she inquired.

"Well, not so bad as I have been; but my stomach is far from being settled yet," complained the spinster, with an injured air.

"I'll fix you," said Esther, with a wise little nod. "I have a bottle of champagne in my stateroom;

that is considered excellent for seasickness, and I will bring you a glass."

"Champagne!" exclaimed Miss Percival, with surprise, but brightening visibly. "Humph! you must have been coming up in the world since I saw you to afford such luxuries."

"Oh, a friend provided me with a couple of bottles before I started," the generous girl explained; then slipped away to get the coveted beverage, smiling to herself as she wondered what Miss Percival would say if she knew what an upward stride she had taken along fortune's ladder, since they parted in the Grand Central Station, in New York, nearly two years previously.

(To be continued.)

RECENT CLERICAL BULLS.

Mr. Spurgeon Was a Keen Collector of Mixed Metaphors.

The proceedings at a recent Church Congress were enlivened by the intrusion of several very fine bulls, of which the following are samples. At one meeting Canon A. W. Robinson, in his opening remarks, warned his auditors that his speech would be "pointed to the verge of bluntness," while later in the evening Sir A. Coote, explaining his presence at such a gathering, said that he was like "one of these satellites of Jupiter which, when they were visible, were always obscured."

The late Mr. Spurgeon was a keen collector of mixed metaphors, finding a rich field in the correspondence that daily overwhelmed him. A lady, enclosing a small contribution for his schools, wrote: "I hope this widow's mite may take root and spread its branches until it becomes a Hercules in your hands." The pulpit prayers of ambitious probationers added something to the great preacher's store.

One prayed that "God's rod and staff may be ours while tossed on the sea of life, so that we may fight the good fight of faith and in the end soar to rest." "We thank Thee for this spark of grace; water it, Lord," was the sententious, almost imperious entreaty of another promising young man. S221 another prayed, "Gird up the loins of our mind that we may receive the latter rain." "As if we were barrels whose hoops were loose," was Mr. Spurgeon's laughing comment.

It was an Irish clergyman who remarked, sadly, "This is a sad and bitter world; we never strew flowers on a man's grave until after he is dead"; while another, a Hibernian cleric, preaching a funeral sermon while the corpse lay before him, exclaimed, "Here, brethren, we have before us a living witness and a standing monument of the frailty of human hopes."

Equally unconscious of his humor was the parson who, at the close of his sermon, said, "And now let us pray for the people on the uninhabited portions of the earth"; as also the minister who, pleading for funds for a parish cemetery, asked his parishioners to consider the "deplorable condition of thirty thousand Christian Englishmen living without Christian burial."

Even more unfortunate was the clergyman who was addressing a woman's missionary meeting. "My sisters," he said, solemnly, "it is terrible to think that thousands of gallons of rum go into Africa for every brother who is sent there." "Rather a large allowance for one missionary," was the whispered comment of one of the sisters to her neighbor.

SENTENCE SERMONS.

Malice always misconstrues. Long prayers often hide wrong practice. Formation is always better than reformation.

No man can save men without suffering with men. It is hard work growing saints in the soil of the pit.

You can measure any man's aspiration by his perspiration. No man has a large mission who neglects the little ministries.

Religious forms easily become castles in which faith is buried. This is a godless world whenever the divine is all in the past tense.

When a man is ethically wobbly he is usually theologically rigid.

Real prayers and real mountains always put a pick in your hand. You will not help the man who is looking to you by looking at yourself.

Greatness of character rises in willingness to make small beginnings. There's nothing a lazy man enjoys better than designing "Busy" signs.

The worst fools are those who worship a God in the hope of fooling him. Some men use the beam in their eye to pick out the mote in their brother's.

Too many measure their moral soundness by the amount of sound they make. The more a man talks about the next life the worse he is apt to walk in this one.

Don't abuse the rich; we can't all be paupers.

The Farm

WINTER CARE OF POULTRY

Keeping fowls over winter costs money. Nothing should be kept that does not pay its debts with interest. At the fall roundup make a thorough sorting.

Every fowl should stand squarely upon strong, well-developed legs, whose scales are clear and distinct, overlapping each other neatly. Next in importance is the head, which should be rather small with a compact comb of clear, healthy rose color, a firm beak and bright eyes.

Though much more rare, there are defects in the body to be looked after, such as crooked backs, clogged oil-glands, etc. The too numerous males, and the late pullets that will eat all winter and then help flood the markets with nine-cent eggs in the spring, should be sorted out. If there is a swelled head or a consumptive have it killed immediately. It is the more merciful way.

With a flock of sturdy, healthy fowls, not too numerous for their quarters, poultry keeping is usually successful; but to bring best results loving care is needed. Loving is used advisedly.

Be careful of the roosting places. A cold draught all night is as dangerous as roosting in the open air; corn fodder set up around the windiest sort of a hen house will make it habitable.

As for the roof, if no water drips directly on the roosts, and holes are not large enough for the hens to fly through, it will do.

Most important of all—feed and water, water and feed continually. Feed with a liberal but judicious hand as great a variety as possible, but regularly.

A good ration is to feed whole wheat on morning and on the next a warm mash of table scraps, meat, cooked vegetables or anything obtainable mixed up with hot water and meal into a thick mash, which should be carefully seasoned with pepper and salt. This is a handy way to feed a few red peppers occasionally or poultry food, for a tonic.

Every night, half an hour before sunset, give a good ration of corn heated until some of the kernels are brown.

The fowls should have fresh water or milk slightly warmed twice a day and plenty of cracked corn ground earth and bone, beside having water-slacked lime by them all the time.

If some snowy morning, the zephyrs are rather rough as you go forth broom in hand to sweep chicken paths, it may be some comfort to remember that business is business, and that profit and pains taking go hand in hand.

TELLING AGE OF CATTLE.

At twelve months, an animal should have its milk (ealf) incisors in place.

Fifteen months. At this age the central pair of incisors (milk teeth) may be replaced by a pair of permanent incisors (pinchers), these being through the gums, but not in wear.

Eighteen months. The middle pair of central incisors at this age should be fully up, and in wear, but the next pair (first intermediaries) not yet through the gums.

Twenty-four months. The mouth at this age will show two middle (permanent broad) incisors, fully up and in wear.

Thirty months generally shows six broad permanent incisors, the middle and first intermediary fully up and in wear. The next pair (second intermediary) well up but not in use.

Thirty-six months shows three pairs of broad teeth, which should be fully up and in wear, and the corner milk teeth may be shedding with the corner permanent just appearing through the gum.

Thirty-nine months. Three pairs of broad teeth will be fully up and in wear; the corner teeth (incisors) through the gums are not in wear.

FARM NOTES.

Keep the churning-room as near 60 degrees as possible. Never fill the churn more than half full of cream. Churn at medium speed. Always use a thermometer, and in summer churn at 60 degrees.

Of the absolute necessity of potash for plant food there can be no doubt. It is essential to the life of plants, and there seems to be no end to its combinations with other component parts of the soil, which are thus dissolved and made assimilable.

It would be folly for any farmer to attempt to manufacture acid phosphate or dissolve bone fertilizer at home. The making of high-grade commercial fertilizer is a business requiring technical training, and for one who knows nothing about it, failure will almost certainly result. Before the bones are treated, they should be ground very fine, and the finer the grinding the more perfect will the acid act.

The wages may not be so high

on the farm as in the city, but still men are able to save more of them, and at the end of the month or year, the farm hand often has more money than had he been working in the city. Probably a reason why there is such an apparent antipathy to working on the farm is the false opinion men entertain that farm labor is degrading. At the present day, when farm work is performed by machinery largely, and business methods obtain to a great extent, there is no ground for such a thought. A more logical reason is perhaps the usually long hours for labor on the farm.

PLANT INTELLIGENCE.

Defensive Means Employed Against Insects.

Writing of the Italian catchfly in his essay, "The Intelligence of the Flowers," Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet and philosopher, shows how this simple little white flower goes with seemingly intelligent thought about the business of its own preservation. Apparently very timorous, very susceptible, to avoid the visits of importunate and delicate insects the *Silene Italica* furnishes its stalks with glandular hairs, when ceases a viscid fluid in which the parasites are caught with such success that the peasants of the south use the plant as a fly-catcher in their houses.

Certain kinds of caterpillars, moreover, have ingeniously simplified the system. Dreading the ants in particular, they discovered that it was enough, in order to prevent them from passing, to place a wide viscid ring under the node of each stalk. This is exactly what our gardeners do when they draw a circle of tar or other sticky substance round the trunks of the apple-trees to stop the ascent of the caterpillars.

In a popular work, "Les Plantes Originales," Mons. Henri Coupin examines some of the defensive means employed by plants. Some of these weapons are quaint and startling.

Monsieur Lothelier, a student at the Sorbonne, has made a number of interesting experiments with thorns, resulting in the conclusion that shade and damp tend to suppress the prickly parts of the plants.

On the other hand, whenever the place in which it grows is dry and burned by the sun, the plant bristles and multiplies its spikes, as if it felt that, being almost the sole survivor among the rocks or in the hot sand, it is called upon to make a mighty effort to redouble its defenses against an enemy that no longer has a choice of victims to prey upon. It is a remarkable fact, moreover, that, when cultivated by man, most of the thorny plants gradually lay aside their weapons, leaving the care of their safety to the supernatural protector who has adopted them in his fenced grounds.

Among the plants that have ceased to defend themselves the most striking case is that of the lettuce.

"In its wild state," says Monsieur Coupin, "if we break a stalk or a leaf, we see a white juice exude from it, the latex, a substance formed of different matters which vigorously defend the plant against the assaults of the slugs. On the other hand, in the cultivated species derived from the former, the latex is almost missing, for which reason the plant, to the despair of the gardeners, is no longer able to resist, and allows the slugs to eat it."

It is nevertheless right, comments Maeterlinck, to add that latex is rarely lacking except in the young plants, whereas it becomes quite abundant when the lettuce begins to "cabbage," and when it runs to seed. Now it is especially at the commencement of its life, at the budding of its first tender leaves, that the plant needs to defend itself. One is inclined to think that the cultivated lettuce loses its head a little, so to speak, and that it no longer knows exactly where it stands.

Certain plants, among others the Boraginaceae, supply the place of thorns with very hard bristles. Others, such as the nettle, add poison. Others, the geranium, the mint, the rue, steep themselves in powerful odors to keep off the animals.

But the strangest are those which defend themselves mechanically. Monsieur Maeterlinck mentions only the horsetail, which surrounds itself with a veritable armour of microscopic silica. Moreover, almost all the Gramineae, in order to discourage the gathering of slugs and snails, add lime to their tissues.

DIFFERENT.

"Mrs. Jones is different from most women."

"How do you make that out?"

"I was invited up there to dinner the other night, and she didn't once apologize for the meal she was serving."

A NEW WRINKLE.

"That's a sign up there, daddy, what says 'Don't blow out the gas.'"

"Well, who blowed it out? I jest hit it a lick with my britches an' I hain't seen othin' er it sence."