

An Unexpected Confession;

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

CHAPTER XX.

The astonished girl turned a blank, white face upon her companion, as he made the startling proposal recorded in the last chapter.

"Will you marry me, my child?" Mr. Irving had questioned, looking into her wondering eyes with a grave seriousness that bespoke the sincerity of his purpose.

"My good friend," he continued, when he saw that she was unable to utter a word in reply just then, "I know that I have startled you. I told you, you remember, that I was going to put your friendship to another test, and you little realized how rashly you were promising to give yourself away when you said you were ready to serve me in any way. But, seriously, Esther, I am every much in earnest about this. The property, which has fallen to me is mine, to do with as I like. There is an estate, besides a handsome income, that will make you independent for life. You need toil no longer for your own support; you can go to school—as I have heard you wish so many times—for as long as you like; you can have every advantage, make yourself as accomplished as you will, then take your position in the world and live as you choose. I must do something with this property before I go. I have no relatives, save my brother, who, having already proved himself so unworthy, would only squander it, and bring dishonor upon our name. I could bequeath it to some public charity, it is true; but that I do not wish to do. I want it to remain what it is—a beautiful home, and to know that some one, whom I respect and esteem and who will cherish a friendly feeling toward me, will live there and enjoy it. I could leave it to you, independent of the formality of marriage; but in that case there is a liability that my will might be contested by my brother, and much trouble made for you. But if you be-

lieve that you have a right to bear my name, no one can annoy you, or take your wealth from you. Esther, what do you say?"

Now the hot color, wave on wave, surged the girl's neck, cheek and brow. Her eyes were downcast, and she trembled visibly with nervous excitement.

It was such an unprecedented proposition, her breath was fairly taken away, and she was speechless, from mingled amazement and embarrassment.

She had not once dreamed toward what all this confidential talk was tending, and now she shrank, sensitively, from becoming the recipient of such a heavy obligation from one who was a comparative stranger; while the thought of becoming his wife was absolutely paralyzing.

"Why! I did not know—I did not think," she at last began falteringly, to break the awkward silence that followed his last question.

"No, I know you did not once suspect my purpose in relating so much of my history to you," Mr. Irving quietly observed, to give her still more time to recover herself, "but, having conceived it, of course, I wanted you to know my past. And I have been studying your character also, Esther, ever since you began to care for me so kindly during my recent illness. I have found you to be a pure, true, noble girl; you have strong purposes—high aims; you are honest, sincere and generous. I know that whatever wealth was intrusted to you, you would use wisely. Besides, I owe you my life—yes, more; for you have saved me an eternity of remorse—have saved me from going into the presence of the woman I loved with the stain of a great crime upon my soul. I had become so embittered, by my unhappy experiences, that I was ready to curse all humanity, and even deny the existence of any overruling power, when you came like a sunbeam of hope to me and kindled anew my waning faith. You have taught me that

"'Tis only noble to be good; Kind hearts are more than coronets, And simple faith than Norman blood."

"Oh, Mr. Irving! you surely overrate the little that I have done!" Esther here interposed, with a deprecating gesture.

"I do not," he earnestly returned and with visible emotion. "If you could but know how your gentleness, patience and cheery presence have sweetened these, my last days on earth, you would not speak so slightly of your efforts, and you were not under the slightest obligation to serve me—you, a poor girl who have been obliged to toil for

your living at the same time. Now have I made you understand why I wish to make you some return? You have become like a dear young sister to me, and, as such, since you are alone in the world, I would like to guard you, as much as possible, from the annoyances and vicissitudes of life. This desire and the determination to preserve my inheritance from being squandered have prompted me to ask you to become my wife, and thus have thrown around you the protection of an honored name, together with ample means."

"But it does not seem right—I should feel like a usurper," Esther exclaimed, a troubled expression on her young face.

"Pray do not allow such a thought to disturb you for a moment," Mr. Irving returned, smiling kindly upon her. "I have grown very fond of you, my child, during these last few weeks, and could I but live to manage my own affairs I should ask you to allow me to adopt you as my daughter, and try, in a fatherly way, to make your future brighter than it might otherwise be. In proposing to you to go through the legal form of becoming my wife, I have no wish to fetter you in the slightest degree. You will simply bear my name, to seal your right to my fortune, and you are to be as free as you are now in all other respects, even though I should linger on for some weeks yet. It is only to secure you against all future annoyance that I suggest it at all. Now, Esther, tell me that you will grant my request," he concluded, appealingly.

Still the girl did not reply. She sat with averted face, scarlet cheeks and heaving bosom.

She was almost appalled by the thought of having a fortune thrust upon her in such a way—of mounting to do all the good she wished for others.

Oh, it was an outlook that was almost bewildering! But dare she accept it by becoming a wife? Had she any moral right to marry this dying man for his money, especially when her heart was given to another?

She loved Donald Lancaster with a love so intense—so deep-seated that she knew she could never entertain an atom of wifely affection for any other man; and now, since learning within the last hour that Donald could never be anything to her—that he was pledged to another, she had told herself that she should live out her life alone. Then why, since the hopes which were stirred within her during that short, blissful half hour spent with him that morning had been so ruthlessly destroyed, why should she not avail herself of Mr. Irving's desire to give her his inheritance?

She would regard it as a sacred trust—she would preserve his name spotless, and dispense his wealth as nearly in accordance with his wishes as would be possible. And, oh! it would be such a relief not to have to work.

"From early morn till dewy eve" for the little that she was able to earn—not to be obliged to come in contact with supercilious people, submit to their rude treatment and cater to their arbitrary demands.

She was peculiarly sensitive in some respects, and she shrank from contact with these women of the so-called "upper crust," who always made her feel the great social distance between them.

"Esther, I am waiting for your decision," gravely observed Mr. Irving, breaking in upon these reflections.

Then he leaned forward and tried to study her downcast face, a startled expression creeping into his eyes.

"But possibly, dear, you are not free to give me the answer I desire. I had not once thought of that until this moment," he said, a trifle unsteadily. "Perhaps you are already pledged to some one whom you love."

"No; oh, no!" Esther exclaimed, a vivid scarlet mounting to her brow, yet with a note of keen pain in her tones, "I am pledged to no one; I am free—free to do as I like."

"Then will you do as I wish? Will you marry me to-day, Esther?"

"To-day!"

"Yes, the sooner the better," he gravely answered.

"Oh, do you think I ought to?" she cried, almost wildly. "It seems such—a such a mercenary thing to do."

"No, dear," he interposed, gently, "your honest, conscientious heart could never have conceived such an idea. The plan is mine, and, in according to it you will simply be gratifying the wish of a dying man, who desires that his home may be occupied by those who will appreciate it, and his wealth preserved from wasteful and unworthy people. Now say yes, my child; then we will have everything quietly settled at once, and my mind will be at rest. Here, put your hand in mine, and tell me that you will give it to me, for the little time that I am to stay here," he concluded, as he extended his palm to her.

She lifted a tearful glance to him—the bright drops glittering upon her long dark lashes. She was trembling, too, for she was deeply moved in view of the decision required of her.

She studied his face intently for a full minute; then she quietly laid her hand in his and murmured tremulously:

"If you think it is right—if you are sure it is best, I will do as you wish."

"I know it is right; I am confident it is best, dear," he said, as his fingers closed firmly over hers. Then taking a little box from the table beside him, he opened it, and taking from it a beautiful ring set with a simple glittering stone of great value, he slipped it upon the third finger of her left hand.

"This was my mother's engagement ring, Esther," he observed, in a reverent tone, "and it shall also be the seal to our betrothal. You may know in what esteem I hold you, from the fact that I give you this jewel, which has always been very sacred to me. I have also her wedding ring, and with you, too, shall be wed."

Esther's lips quivered and her heart beat with almost audible pulsations as she listened to this.

The next moment, unable to longer control her emotions, she had bowed her head upon their clasped hands and burst into tears.

"I'm afraid I am not worthy, it seems such a great responsibility," she murmured, brokenly.

Her companion smiled, and there was a very tender light in his eyes, as he gently laid his free hand upon her bowed head.

"That very thought is a better proof to me of your worthiness than any other to which you could have given expression," he said, in a gratified tone. "Now, dear," he continued, as he released her, "wipe these tears and do not allow yourself to be burdened by the fear of care or responsibility, for I have no idea of permitting you to wear any yoke. Your future is to be as bright as plenty of money and good counsel can make it. My friend King will be here presently; he is an attorney—a man among a thousand; for sound judgment and integrity, and he is to be my administrator. I could not leave you and your affairs in better hands, and you may safely rely upon him in every emergency. As I said before, he knows and approves of my intentions, and to save time he has been preparing the documents necessary to put them into execution. I know, if I failed to secure your consent, they could easily be destroyed. Ah! he is coming now. I hear his voice in the hall below."

Mr. Irving concluded, as he turned an expectant face toward the door. A moment or two later there came a tap upon it.

"Come in," said the invalid, while Esther sat erect and hastily wiped the tears from her cheeks, and the next instant the gentleman, whom she had admitted the previous evening, entered the room.

He was a fine-looking man of between thirty and forty, of medium height, broad-shouldered and stalwart of frame, with an honest face, a genial eye, and a smile that at once attracted Esther and won her implicit confidence.

"Ah, Bert, I am glad to have you back," said Mr. Irving, greeting him with a smile of welcome.

"You will be glad to know that I have succeeded in my project; and now allow me to introduce to you my advanced wife, Miss Esther Wellington. Miss Wellington, Mr. Humbert King."

The lawyer bowed with courtly grace, as he greeted the beautiful girl, and warmly shook the hand she extended to him, his keen eyes sweeping her face and figure at a single glance.

"She is like a young queen; she will make a glorious woman, one of these days. It is a thousand pities that Russ cannot live to see her reign in his home," was his mental comment, while he verbally expressed his pleasure in meeting her and his gratification over the fact that his friend had gained her consent to his wishes.

(To be continued.)

LIVED 94 YEARS IN ONE HOUSE

The death has occurred at Braintree at the age of 94 of G. P. Hartnoll, who had been church warden of St. Brannock's Church, Braintree, for fifty years. He was born in the house in which he died and had only slept away two nights during the whole of his life.

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The Farm

FEED FOR PIGS.

In Bulletin No. 73 of the Montana Experimental Station, Dr. Lindfield gives the results of several interesting experiments in pig-feeding. This bulletin is summarized as follows:

(1) Experiments 2 and 6 are illustrations of the economy of feeding young pigs, when they receive the proper ration. In experiment 2, pigs averaging 35 pounds in live weight gained an average of 1.2 pounds per day, and put the one pound of gain at a food cost of 3.5 cents. In experiment 6 pigs averaging 40 pounds gained .92 pounds per day, at an average cost of 3.62 cents per pound.

(2) Peas make a more efficient hog feed than does barley, but because of the greater cost of the peas the barley makes a more economical ration.

(3) A ration of gain, with skim milk as a supplemental food when fed to hogs gave: First the most rapid gains, and second, the most economical gains, but took second place to tankage as an efficient ration.

(4) A ration of gain with tankage as a supplement food came second in rate of gain, but first in efficiency ration. Because of the high cost of tankage, it makes an expensive ration when fed in the proportions given in these tests.

(5) Roots as a supplement food also make a valuable addition to the ration, coming next in value to skim milk and tankage.

(6) Clover or alfalfa fed as hogs will eat it, together with a grain ration, improves materially the rapidity of the gain and the feeding.

(7) In these tests the hogs fed grain alone made economic gains, but the lowest daily gains, and on the average the most expensive gains were made on such a ration.

(8) Hogs fed a half grain ration on clover and half alfalfa pasture made, in proportion to the grain fed, much faster gains, and much more economic gains than those fed a full grain ration.

(9) The central thought in these tests is that some supplement food is necessary in feeding a grain ration to hogs if the most rapid economic gains are to be had.

For conditions in Montana the value of the supplement food is: First, skim milk; second roots; third tankage; fourth pasture; fifth, clover and alfalfa.

THE USE OF HEN MANURE.

The following suggestions concerning the use of hen manure are worth consideration at this season by all so fortunate as to have a supply of this valuable fertilizer:

There are two general methods of using hen manure—one is to put it on grass land as soon as it is taken from the house, the other to mix it with chemicals into a fertilizer. Some also use hen manure for corn and potatoes by scattering it in the hill or drill when planting. Such men probably claim that the increased labor and cost of mixing the fertilizer would not pay them. Another class of farmers claim that this mixing is very profitable. They keep the manure in a dry place through the winter. By dusting plaster or "floats" under the roots and in the shed the manure is kept in hard, dry chunks. Early in spring this manure is crushed as fine as possible. This is usually done by spreading it on a hard floor, smashing it with a heavy spade or maul and sifting it through a coarse sieve. Just before planting a mixture about like the following is made; 900 pounds sifted hen manure, 150 pounds nitrate of soda, 750 pounds acid phosphate and 300 pounds sulphate of potash. In some cases 250 pounds of fine bone are used in place of an equal weight of the acid phosphate. This combination has given good results as a potato fertilizer.

Like Britain's island lies our steak, A sea of gravy bounds it; Shallots confusedly scattered make The rockwork that surrounds it.

LIVE STOCK NOTES.

It takes as much judgment to

buy stock to feed the butchers as it does to purchase a stock of merchandise.

It is natural for hogs to root. They find things in the ground that their systems need. Hogs do better when permitted to live naturally.

Do not allow farm stock to tramp around beehives, for they often disturb the bees, and cause them to fill themselves unnecessarily with honey, frequently producing dysentery, and death will be the result.

If horses or colts have worms, try feeding them raw potatoes, thinly sliced. You will probably have to mix the potatoes in grain at first to get the horses to eat them. A few raw potatoes each week are good for a horse at any time.

If permitted to follow their own inclination, ducks will hasten to the ponds and streams before they have laid, and drop their eggs wherever they chance to be. The eggs thus become chilled and will not hatch well. Confine them to the yard or house until they have been fed and have deposited their eggs.

Every farmer will concede that it costs no more to feed and care for a good horse, or good animal of any kind, than a cheap and unsaleable scrub, yet many will go on breeding and raising such horses as will only sell at plug prices when they could as easily and cheaply raise an animal that will sell readily at a profitable price.

The mistake made in raising pigs, too often, is the radical change made in their diet at weaning time. Weaning should be an evolution, not a revolution, of their habits. They should be early taught to eat slop made of middlings and skimmed milk, or a mixture of middlings and cornmeal. By the time they are ready to wean they should be getting two-thirds their living from the feed trough. Pigs stunted at weaning time will never make the hogs a steady growth would have made.

When bees really require attention give it to them and then quit. Do not tinker and fuss with them every day. Every time bees are disturbed it takes them two or three hours to get settled down again to the natural order of things and to gathering honey. Sometimes when their hive has been hastily taken apart, and combs taken out and handled, they will be more or less confused for a whole day. If from a desire to study bee habits and ways, it seems necessary to handle them, select one or more colonies for this purpose and let the others alone. Bees stirred up until they are in a frenzy will not work, they will sometimes start to robbing.

When several days had passed and the monkey had not eaten, Mrs. Leech and her daughter realized that the little animal was slowly taking its life. They called several friends of the family, but none of them could induce Monk to take nourishment. They even attempted to force food down its throat, but it was much like the saying that "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink."

"Doctor always used to come home at 4 o'clock in the afternoon," said Mrs. Leech, "and Monk was always at the front window watching for him. It seemed as if the little fellow could tell time the same as a human being. The last thing Monk did was to crawl feebly to the front room and take its old position before the window. It died, there, and if I ever saw a look of intelligence it was in that little monkey's eyes as it gazed longingly out of the window."

"After the doctor's death we had to remove all of his pictures from the rooms because of Monk. Whenever it would see a photograph it would seize it in its arms and cry and

SOB LIKE A LITTLE CHILD. When we went to take it away Monk would fight desperately for its possession.

"Whether anyone believes it or not, we know and our friends know, Monk committed suicide because the love in its animal heart was so great that it could not bear to live without its master. It seemed to know Dr. Leech was going to die for several days before my husband's death. It would climb up on the bed and hold its ear down to the doctor's mouth to listen for the breathing."

Monk's attributes in life were a loving and affectionate disposition and a passion for bathing. It insisted on having a bath every morning, and if anyone forgot it the pet would go down to the basement of the house and turn on the water itself. It also had a rubber doll that it bathed until most of the rubber came off. It had a table of its own, ate with a knife, fork and spoon, and otherwise conducted itself as a well educated monkey.

As monkeys are not permitted to be buried in cemeteries, the body of Monk was interred in a little patch of woods south of Chicago. A regular coffin was used, with silver trimmings and flowers and the family declares that the grave always shall be well cared for.

In Japan 5,000,000 people depend upon the sea for their livelihood.

MONKEY ENDS HIS LIFE

PINED AWAY AFTER THE DEATH OF ITS MASTER.

Watched in Window for the Man Who Never Came—Would Not Touch Food.

Grief over the death of Dr. Monro S. Leech, of Chicago, caused the suicide of the physician's pet monkey, which refused to touch food after its master died.

Three years ago Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hartman of Irving Park made Dr. Leech a present of a baby monkey. The serious-faced animal grew and prospered under the care of the physician and his family. While it was friendly with Mrs. Leech and Miss Anna, the only daughter, Monk, as it was called, gave most of its affection to the physician.

When Dr. Leech finally was taken ill, Monk took up its post at the sick bed and refused to leave. On the day the physician died it is declared by members of the family, the animal whimpered like a child.

At the funeral Monk was permitted to look for the last time on the face of its dead master. With shrill, it clung to the casket and strong hands were necessary to pull it away.

All efforts to comfort and console Monk were useless. The night following the funeral the cries of the monkey were heard by several neighbors in the block.

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