

An Unexpected Confession;

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

CHAPTER XXIX.—(Cont'd)

"Lady Irvington, allow me to present you to some more of your countrymen," he observed, his genial face glowing with pleasure from the belief that he was contributing greatly to Esther's enjoyment in this surrounding her with a home atmosphere.

"Mrs. Cushman, of New York City, Miss Cushman, and Master Cushman."

Esther's heart seemed to cease its pulsations the moment her eyes fell upon the faces comprising this party, but she recovered herself before the ambassador had finished speaking, and then found herself looking straight into the countenance of the woman who had tried to make a slave and a drudge of her, some five years previous.

She bowed courteously to each, and was quite relieved to find that neither Mrs. Cushman nor Madge appeared to recognize her, although they regarded her curiously as if there was something about her that was intangibly familiar.

"I am charmed to meet Lady Irvington," said Mrs. Cushman, with a bland smile; "but if she is an American, her name surely is not."

A spirit of mischief took possession of and inspired Esther to prolong the farce, even though she knew that discovery must inevitably follow, for she had caught sight of Frank Cushman's look and start of astonishment the moment she had spoken, and felt sure that he had instantly discerned the truth.

"That is true," she politely responded to the matron, "the name is purely English, nevertheless America is my native land."

Evidently Mrs. Cushman now found something suggestive in her tones, for she scrutinized her more closely, while a look of perplexity swept over the face of Madge; whereupon Master Frank gave vent to a quiet chuckle of enjoyment, and bestowed a knowing smile and nod upon Esther, whom he had already known for almost instantly.

He had known her almost instantly, but how it was possible that the poor, despised nurse and seamstress had become transformed into this titled and brilliantly beautiful lady was more than he could comprehend.

"Ah, then of course you have married an Englishman," Mrs. Cushman resumed. "In what portion of the United States do you reside before coming to England?"

"My home, during most of my life was in California,"

"California!" repeated the matron, with another start.

"Mamma, does Lady Irvington make you think of some one whom we used to know?" Madge here interposed.

She had been intently studying Esther's face, and had begun to detect startlingly familiar lines upon it.

"No—I don't know—and yet—the woman began, when Esther, seeing that a denouement must soon follow, and wishing to save them the embarrassment of betraying their mortification in the presence of others, interposed with wonderful tact.

"There is an empty sofa," she remarked, indicating one near them that had just been vacated; "suppose we occupy it while we compare notes upon home life. Mr. Cushman, will you act as my escort thither?" she concluded, turning to Frank, who could have fallen at her feet and kissed the hem of her robe for her sweet spirit of charity and for according to him the honor of acting as her attendant.

He sprang to her side and offered his arm.

"Frank!" she breathed, as she gave it a friendly squeeze with her white-gloved hand, "I see you know me, and I cannot tell you how glad I am to see you once more."

"Esther," the boy exclaimed, in a delighted tone, under his breath. "I say you are an out-and-out trump! But what on earth does it all mean?"

"I will tell you presently," she returned, smiling kindly into his perplexed face; "but how did you happen to discover my identity so quickly?"

"By your voice, and that little trick you always had of sweeping up your eyelids in a certain way when you were startled. Jove! won't the madam and Madge rave when you tell them?"

"Hush!" said Esther, gravely, "that is why I brought them here, away from the crowd. I did not wish them to be made uncomfortable in the presence of strangers."

They had now reached the sofa, and Esther turned to ask her com-

panions to be seated, when Frank eager—boylike—to tell the wonderful news, blurted out:

"Mother! Madge! how blind you are! Don't you know her? Can't you see it's—"

"Frank, how excited you are! What are you trying to say?" Mrs. Cushman began, reprovingly, when she stopped and her eyes swept up to Esther's face with a wondering look.

"Mamma," faltered Madge, who now comprehended all; "I told you she looked like some one we knew; it is Esther!"

"Impossible!" burst from the startled woman's lips.

Yet, even as she spoke, she was convinced of the truth of her daughter's statement.

She realized, at last, that the wondrously beautiful, elegantly clad girl who stood before her with that air of refined self-possession had once been her despised seamstress and nursery maid.

What could it mean? How could anyone account for such a remarkable metamorphosis?

It was like the transformation of the ugly grub into the gorgeous butterfly.

"Yes," said the fair lady of Irvington, gently, "I am Esther; but I did not wish to tell you before those people."

"I should think not, indeed!" retorted the haughty woman, with spiteful asperity.

Esther lifted a wondering look to her.

Her only object in making the revelation private had been to save the woman and her children the misery of betraying their chagrin in the presence of the distinguished people around them, a circumstance which would surely have subjected them to unkind criticism, but now the woman's insolent tone and manner showed her that her motives had been entirely misconstrued.

"Esther, Wellington," she went on, with white set lips, and with a sullen fire in her eyes as they rested upon the regal figure and pure, flower-like face before her, "what shameless imposture is this? How do I find you masquerading here, at one of her majesty's drawing-rooms, under false colors?"

Esther flushed at the woman's overbearing tone and manner, but without losing in the slightest degree her self-control, she quietly returned:

"I do not quite understand your allusions to 'imposture' and 'masquerading,' Mrs. Cushman, and I would gladly have spared you this meeting, but since it was as unexpected to me as to yourself, I could only try to cover the embarrassment which I knew most inevitably follow the revelation of my identity by withdrawing a little from the crowd until the first shock of surprise to you should have passed."

CHAPTER XXXI.

While she was speaking, Mrs. Cushman and Madge had stared at her with rude curiosity, mingled with bitterest envy. Her language was choice, her manner elegant and refined, showing that she must have enjoyed the best of education at advantages since leaving them, more than four years previous.

Her apparel was of the richest; her jewels of the rarest.

They had been quick to observe and acknowledge this, whatever they might believe regarding her position in life.

"How exceedingly considerate!" mockingly observed Mrs. Cushman, when Esther concluded. "How about your own desire to conceal from the public the knowledge that you were once a nursemaid?"

"Mother! how can you talk so to Esther? I am sure it was very kind of her to wish to save you such a shock," Frank here burst forth in honest indignation, "and I am willing to wager almost any amount that there is no imposture or masquerading about her position. I know Esther right well, and that she is above deception of any kind."

"Thank you, Frank," said Esther heartily, and bestowing upon him a brilliant smile that brought a quick flush of pleasure to his face. "What you say is true. I am in no false position, here in London," she continued, gravely; "and I will tell you, briefly, how I happen to be here. As you know, after leaving your house, I went into business for myself, making aprons of various kinds, which I sold to wealthy ladies for their own and their servants' use. In the house where I lodged there was a sick gentleman. He seemed to be poor and friendless, and I tried to be kind to him, doing many little things for his com-

fort. A couple of days before he died he learned that he had fallen heir to some property, and he then asked me to marry him, saying that he wished to reward me for my kindness by leaving it to me. I was poor and homeless, and entirely dependent upon my own efforts for my support. I wanted an education, and although I did not feel that I was entitled to such a reward for my services, the sick man so strenuously urged me to grant his request, I finally consented. But it was not until after I was made his wife that I discovered he was a titled Englishman of great wealth, and that I should occupy a high position in the world. He had purposely kept those facts from me, lest I should shrink from the responsibilities before me. He died about thirty-eight hours after the ceremony, and the following Saturday I sailed for England, with Mr. King, his attorney. I immediately entered a good school, where for three years I studied most diligently. To-day I have been presented to the queen—have made my debut, so to speak, and for the first time have been publicly introduced by the name I bear."

"How exceedingly romantic!" sneered Madge, who was consumed with jealousy to learn that the girl whom she had once so snubbed in her own home was so superior to her in every respect, and occupying a position so far above her own.

"And you are really Lady Irvington—a titled lady!" said Frank, who had listened to her story with absorbing interest.

"I suppose I am," replied Esther, smiling at his eagerness.

"And are you very rich, too?" "I am afraid I am," she answered, with a little sigh.

"Afraid! Well, that is a good one! What do you mean?"

"I mean that the possession of great wealth seems a heavy responsibility to me."

"And have you a large estate, with a big rent roll and all that?" eagerly inquired the youth.

"Yes, there is an estate, and—"

"Oh, where? Has it a high-sounding name?"

Esther laughed out musically.

"I am afraid, Frank, you are looking for more romance than there really is concerned with my story," she said. "My home is called Irvington Manor, and it is not many miles from London."

"I suppose it is very grand."

"It is a fine old place, with handsome grounds surrounding the mansion, and an extensive park—"

Mrs. Cushman here arose quivering with anger, her face deeply flushed, her eyes blazing.

"I have heard quite enough of this romancing," she freezingly observed, "and I do not hesitate to say that I do not believe one word of the preposterous story. Of course, Esther, I have no means of knowing what kind of a life you may have led since you left the shelter of my home and recklessly took your fate into your own hands; but the idea of an English lord marrying a girl in your position, and elevating her to such a one as you claim to-day, is too absurd for credence. You may have been able to coax people in this country, by your assumption of the manners and title of a lady, and your lavish display of finery, but you cannot play any such game upon me, Lady Irvington! Irvington Manor, and a big rent roll, indeed! Faugh! I'd like to take a peep behind the scenes and know just how all these jewels, velvet and lace are paid for."

Esther's face was like sculptured marble—every atom of color had been driven from it by the unparalleled insult so spitefully conveyed in the woman's last words.

Madge stood by, an ugly sneer curling her lips, and showing her to be thoroughly in sympathy with her mother's insolence.

But Frank was crimson with mingled shame and indignation.

"I say, mother, that was downright cruel of you—" he began, hotly, when he was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Mr. Humbert King, who, with a menacing look upon his stern face and in his eagle eye, confronted Mrs. Cushman with a bearing that made her involuntarily cower before him.

"Madam," he said, in a tone that actually made her flesh creep, "you will be very careful hereafter that you do not repeat the remarks you have just made in connection with Lady Irvington."

"Lady Irvington!" derisively repeated Mrs. Cushman, nettled at the clear, incisive tones and menacing language of Esther's unknown champion; "that girl a titled lady of the realm?"

"Exactly, madam."

"And do you imagine for a moment that I am going to credit such an impossible story as she has just rehearsed to me?" spiritedly demanded the matron.

"Your belief or disbelief cannot affect the facts of the case in the slightest degree, madam," coolly returned the lawyer.

Mrs. Cushman began to lose some of her excessive color.

"Only indisputable proof would serve to convince me of the fact," she proudly retorted.

"And that I can furnish you with, madam," was the ready reply.

"To begin with, I was present at Miss Wellington's marriage to the late Lord Irvington—"

"You! and who are you?" demanded the woman, insolently.

For a moment the gentleman's strong white teeth gleamed brilliantly beneath his silken moustache at this rude interruption.

(To be continued.)

"AWFUL NOISES."

Hotel Guests' Complaints Were Never Pressed.

A story used to be told fifty years ago of a newly rich, overdressed, much-bedimmed dame who bounced angrily into the lobby of a fashionable hotel, and demanded of the clerk that her room be changed at once. The clerk told her politely that it would be impossible to do so, as there was no vacant room available; but that if anything were amiss in her present room which could be rectified, the management would attend to it.

It was considered one of the most desirable in the house; surely nothing important could be wrong.

"Important! Wrong!" echoed the woman, indignantly. "Well, I have you to know I'm fond of music, and I have a sensitive ear, and I'm staying here on purpose to go to the opera; and if you think, after hearing Patti at night, I'm going to put up with a squealing amateur on the other side of a thin partition next morning—well, you don't know me!"

"I am sorry, Madame Patti has annoyed you," said the clerk, suavely. "She is your next-door neighbor."

The late Madame Modjeska, the Polish actress, used to relate a somewhat similar anecdote. Among her friends she numbered those other distinguished natives of unhappy Poland, Paderevski, Madame Sembrich and the two De Reszkes.

At a time when she had been ill in London, they were all there fulfilling professional engagements. As her convalescence progressed, they visited her with affectionate assiduity nearly every day, and delighted the invalid with impromptu concerts, at which Paderevski played ravishing accompaniments to the golden voices of the De Reszkes brothers and Madame Sembrich.

But other persons in the hotel soon sent in complaints of the "awful noises" proceeding from Madame Modjeska's suite.

They were greatly disconcerted when they were informed of the source of the disturbance, and the complaints were never pressed. Instead, it became noticeable that most of the hotel residents soon found errands which took them through the nearest corridor when the "noises" were in progress, and if no one ever fell so far from good manners as to listen at the keyhole, "That was, perhaps, because a key-hole accommodates but a single ear, and there are as yet no rules for precedence in eavesdropping."

A DREAM CAT.

Repeated Appearances Premonitory of Disease.

"Some years ago early in the summer," says H. Addington Bruce in Success Magazine, "I dreamed that while out taking a walk I was suddenly attacked by a huge cat, which clawed ferociously at my throat. That was all there was to the dream, or at any rate that was all I remembered on awakening in the morning, and naturally enough I dismissed it from my mind as nothing but a dream."

But when I found myself dreaming the same dream again and again I began to wonder what significance it would possibly have. Usually it varied greatly in minor details. Alas, however, the climax was the same—the cat had me by the throat and was biting and scratching viciously. Altogether, I dreamed this dream not less than a score of times in six months.

Shortly before Christmas I took a cold which settled in my throat, affecting it so badly as to require the attention of a specialist. Much to my astonishment it was then discovered that a growth had been developing for some time and that an immediate operation was necessary.

Several weeks later, the operation having been performed successfully, it suddenly occurred to me that I was no longer being troubled by the phantom cat. For the first time the meaning of the singular dream dawned upon me.

"It had been a genuine premonitory dream. Consciously I had been in utter ignorance of the dangerous growth in my throat. It had not progressed far enough to give me any pain or even to cause discomfort. At the same time the organic changes it involved had produced sensations plainly felt by what psychologists call the subconscious and manifesting through the subconscious to the conscious in the form of a symbolic dream."

NOT PREPARED.

Mother, may I go out to skate? "No," my darling Sue; Postpone it, dear, till we can get some arnica for you.

The Farm

TREATING FOR TICKS.

It is essential to the health and thrift of sheep that they be treated for destruction of ticks and other vermin twice a year, namely, in the spring, soon after shearing, and again in the late autumn, before going into winter quarters. Such treatment is not only necessary as a safeguard against ticks and lice, but also against scab or other disease of the skin, while the increased growth and quality of the fleece, owing to a healthy condition of the skin, more than repays the cost of the treatment. As a rule, the dipping of the lambs a few days after the ewes are shorn in the spring fairly well answers the purpose, as ticks leave the closely-shorn ewes and seek shelter in the longer wool of the lambs. But, as a precaution against skin diseases, it is wisdom to dip the whole flock at that season, or at least to pour on the ewes, and rub in, a solution of the dip.

For a small flock, a dipping tank may be made of plank, either tongued and grooved, or lined with zinc or galvanized iron. If used only for dipping lambs, it need not be more than 4 feet long, 2½ feet high, and 20 inches at the bottom, spreading to about 2½ feet at top. A slatted drain is used, placed at one end of the tanks, on which to lay the lamb while the surplus of the solution is squeezed out of the wool, and runs back into the tank.

In the case of a large flock, and where it is necessary to dip ewes, as well as lambs, a much larger tank and draining device is necessary, and the outgoing end of the tank should be sloping and slatted, so the sheep can walk out of the tank and up to the drainer. But, by good management, a flock can be kept clean by dipping the lambs in spring, and pouring the solution on the entire flock in the late fall or the beginning of winter. For this purpose, the advertised proprietary dips are generally satisfactory if used according to directions. The solution should be kept quite warm while being used, as it spreads more thoroughly over the surface of the skin while warm.

The pouring may be done from a coffee pot, and one quart to each grown sheep is generally sufficient. To make rapid progress, the services of three men or boys is required, one to hold the sheep, one to open the wool at intervals of four or five inches, and one to pour the solution along these openings. The sheep is first placed upon its rump, its back resting against the knees of the holder, while the wool is opened down the brisket, belly and thighs; the animal is then turned first on one side, then on the other, while the wool is opened lengthwise of the body, and is then turned over, and the wool is opened the whole length of the back, from tail to head, and the pouring process completed. By this process, a flock of 60 or 70 sheep may be treated in a day or six or seven hours, and the owner will feel more comfortable, as well as his flock, from the knowledge that the animals are free from blood-sucking vermin, and their skin in a healthy condition, calculated to increase the growth of wool, as well as of flesh.

WINTER FEEDING OF SHEEP.

No farm stock can be housed more cheaply for winter and feeding than can sheep. Any old barn or shed with a roof that will keep them dry answers the purpose practically as well as an elaborate and expensive building, provided the ewes are bred to produce their lambs in April or May, and for the average farmer there is no advantage in having the lambs come earlier. If one chooses to prepare for raising show sheep, or cater to the early lamb market, which latter is very profitable, provision must be made for keeping frost out of their quarters at lambing time, but that need not be expensive, as double-boarded walls, with felt paper between, will make the place perfectly safe, and a cheap class of lumber will answer the purpose. Sheep thrive better in open, airy quarters than in close, warm buildings, and prefer to lie out on the ground, even in winter, as long as it is dry and clean.

No class of stock can be more cheaply kept. The writer for many years successfully wintered a flock of breeding ewes in an open-faced shed, with unthreshed peas, thrown into the rack twice a day, as their only provender, and they kept in good condition, and produced strong, healthy lambs, with never a case of goitre, and always plenty of milk supplied for their lambs.

Clover hay is the standard provender for sheep in winter, and for convenience in feeding, is best stored over their pens. The ewe flock will do fairly well if fed well-saved pea straw up to near lambing time, when they should have roots or a light ration of oats daily, and they would be better for it all through the winter, if pea straw is the only fodder available. But the lambs should have clover hay, some sliced roots and oats, or a mixture of oats and bran, to keep them growing. Roots are not a necessity for the ewe flock previous to the lambing season, nor after, if a fairly liberal ration of oats and bran be given them, though roots are very helpful to ewes when nursing their lambs, but should be sparingly fed before lambing, as an excess of roots fed at that period often has an injurious effect upon the lambs they are carrying, causing them to come weak and flabby, lacking in ambition, and subject to goitre, an enlargement of the thyroid glands of the neck or throat, a disease which in some years proves fatal to a considerable percentage of lambs soon after birth. To avoid this trouble, it is well to give the ewes ample room for exercise in winter, and mainly dry feed.

MISERY OF LONDON'S POOR.

Magistrates Deal Tenderly With Victims of Cruel Want.

Three unusually poignant narratives of poverty and slow starvation were related recently to London (England) magistrates.

Arthur Davis was charged at the Southwestern Police Court with attempting to commit suicide by cutting the veins of his left leg with a boot-knife. He was discovered lying on Wimbledon Common. He had been employed at Smithfield Market for twelve years, but was discharged through slackness of work, since when he, with his family, had drifted to the verge of starvation. His late employer having offered to give him work, the magistrate allowed his discharge.

A laborer named William Boughton was charged at the Guildhall Police Court with frequenting Wood street for the purpose of stealing from vans.

Detective Shuard said when he visited Boughton's lodgings, he found the wife and three children on the verge of starvation. He bought food for them. He had made inquiries, and ascertained that two former employers gave the man excellent testimonials. They were very clean and industrious people, and both willing to work.

Sir John Bell dealt with him as a first offender, and bound him over, to attend a Salvation of free in attendance to try and get the man work, and said the woman should be looked after and food found for her until such time as her husband was at work again.

A constable who gave evidence at Highgate Police Court against Mrs. Beatrice Haggerty, twenty-one, of Antill-road, Hottenham, charged with peddling without a certificate, said the woman, who had a baby in her arms, was trying to sell post-cards. "Her baby was famished. We gave it some warm milk," he added.

The woman's husband said it seemed "real hard" that his wife should have to sit at home with two starving bairns while he was looking for work.

Mr. Fraser Black—"She must not do it. She will be discharged." He gave the court missionary money for the use of the couple.

THE EASY MAN.

"Sometimes a man dat is easy an' good-natured," said Uncle Eben, "spoils the disposition of several other people dat has to fight his battles fur him."

SAVING.

"But, Bertha, it was only last month that I paid a dressmaker's bill of fifty dollars, and here is another one for this month for forty dollars."

"Well, dear, you see that shows that I am beginning to spend less."

THE RIGHT WAY

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