

An Unexpected Confession;

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

CHAPTER V.—(Continued).

Miss Percival passed back the ring, and he was astonished to see that her hand was trembling visibly, and her face looked gray and sunken.

She made some remark about wanting to find Esther, and hurriedly left the room.

"Well, she is a queer old woman!" the young man muttered, as the door closed after her. "She may be good in spots; but I'll wager she is a close-fisted old miser, and hard-hearted as a flint, where money is concerned. The idea of taking that self-sacrificing girl 'at her word'!"

If he could have seen that same "close-fisted, hard-hearted old miser" a little later, on her knees in her own room, her head bowed on a chair, her slight form shaken like a reed by convulsive sobs, he might have discovered that her nature was not quite so flintlike as he had imagined.

That same day he had a confidential talk with Dr. Crawford, regarding his indebtedness to Esther, and the best way to settle the account.

It was finally arranged that he should purchase the entire contents of the cottage, giving about three times their value. They were then to be left in the care of the physician, to be sold over again at auction, the proceeds to be devoted to the canceling of his doctor's bill, and, later, the money he had paid for the furniture was to be forwarded to Esther.

No nothing more was said to the proud, spoiled girl regarding the contested question of remuneration for her services.

Her account book was simply returned to her, with the amount necessary to settle everything. She was even inclined to demur at this; but Miss Percival, who was present, curtly told her not to be foolish, so she quietly thanked them, and the matter was not referred to again by anyone.

For the next few days they were all very busy with preparations for their departure, and one morning Dr. Crawford and his good wife accompanied them to the station, where they were to take a through express for the East.

The physician purchased their tickets, attended to the checking of their baggage, telegraphed to Mr. Cushman the probable day of Esther's arrival; then, having made her promise to write to him occasionally, he bade them all a warm-hearted Godspeed, and they were gone. Esther was very quiet during the journey; she seemed sad and depressed; and it was no wonder, for she was going alone, and friendless, into an untried world, and she dreaded the future beyond expression.

Thus Miss Percival and Donald were left much to the companionship of each other, and there began to ripen between them a strange friendship—a friendship out of which wonderful revelations were to develop later on.

CHAPTER VI.

"I won't have her, John! I declare, I won't! The idea!—with three young ones already in the house. I should think you might be satisfied. It is a downright imposition for you to wish to saddle me with this little Western beggar."

"Really, Emelie, you are developing a refinement of language that is, to say the least, somewhat surprising, if not positively startling," quietly returned the high-toned John E. Cushman, but with a note of sarcasm in his well-modulated tones that brought a hot flush to the face of the handsome and elegantly attired woman who sat opposite him at their faultlessly appointed dinner table.

He held in his hand an open letter from which he had been reading when he had been interrupted by Mrs. Cushman, as quoted above.

"Well, you may thank yourself for it," she tartly responded to her husband's remark. "You drive me almost wild at times, with your Quixotic notions. First, you pick a miserable little boothblack out of the streets, and educate him; then you send a would-be artist off to Europe to study the old masters, and now it is this poverty-stricken waif from California who must be forced upon us to take the bread from your own children's mouths."

Mr. Cushman laughed musically at this last charge.

"I do not think the children are likely to suffer at present," he dryly remarked, as he glanced around the sumptuous apartment. Then he added, while the lines about his mouth became rigidly decisive:

"Emelie, little Esther Wellington is my sister's only child."

"There isn't a single drop of your blood in her veins," hotly interposed Mrs. Cushman.

"Well, that is true, I admit; but there never lived a sweeter girl than Dora Allen, and I loved her as well as if she had been my own sister," John Cushman replied in a repressed tone, and with a strange whiteness about his lips.

"If she had married differently, she need not have left her child in such straits," said the lady, irritably.

The man opposite her sighed heavily.

"Arthur Wellington wasn't a bad fellow," he said, reflectively; "he simply lacked ambition and energy; he was good-natured and kind-hearted—a sort of happy-go-lucky person, whom every one liked. But he certainly did not feel his responsibilities as a family man. His chief aim was to have a good time, and get through the world with as little trouble and friction as possible; and poor Dora had a hard life of it, bearing the brunt of everything, and trying to keep up appearances. I have often wondered how that poor little girl has fared since her mother's death—the thought of her has lain heavy on my heart many a time; and now that her father has appealed to me to care for her, when he is gone, I am going to do it."

"Then you are determined?"

"I am, Emelie," and the woman, though she flushed an angry crimson, and her eyes flashed with inward rage, knew that there was no appeal from that tone of quiet decision.

"The man writes," Mr. Cushman resumed, referring again to the letter in his hand, "that he has but a very short time to live—that it will take the last dollar he has to bury him, and he begs me to let him know at once if I will assume the care of his daughter until she can complete her education, when he hopes she will be able to teach, and support herself."

"Humph!" interjected the gentleman's companion, with an impatient toss of her haughty head.

Mr. Cushman paid no attention to the interruption.

"I shall write immediately, tell him that Esther will be very welcome to a home with us, that as soon as she is ready to start, she can telegraph us of the fact, also the day and hour when she leaves, then take a sleeper on a through express, and we will meet her here upon her arrival. But you will have to attend to her when she comes, Emelie, for, as you know, I sail for Europe a week from to-day."

"I don't like the arrangement at all, John," said his wife, complainingly. "I have cared enough, already, with Madge, Frank and Daisy to plan for. If you are determined to support this little pauper, you might at least board her out somewhere, and not insist upon her coming here, to make discord in the family."

"There need be no discord, Emelie, unless you wish to make it yourself," coldly returned her husband. "Esther will be my word, and she will understand that she is under my authority, and will doubtless be obedient to us. I wish her to fare, in all respects, the same as our own children."

"Oh, then you intend to adopt her?" snapped Mrs. Cushman, with a wrathful gleam in her eyes.

"I have not yet decided as to that—I must wait to see her first. But this will be her home for the present, and I intend that she shall be raised and educated as my sister Dora would wish, if she were living."

The gentleman wrote his letter, and it was duly received in that far Western home, as we know; while he expressed himself so cordially, and appeared to feel such an interest in her that Esther looked forward to a home in his family as to a haven of rest after the trials and hardships of the last two years.

Mr. Cushman was a wealthy Wall Street broker, and a whole-souled, high-minded man of forty, who never turned a deaf ear to the cry of the needy, and who was full of enthusiasm in forwarding all philanthropic enterprises.

He had married the beautiful Emelie Clifton, who had been a great belle in society, and who was still something of a leader in fashionable life.

They had three promising children—Madge, a handsome, dashing girl, who was about Esther's age; Frank, fourteen; and Daisy, the pet and baby of the family, who was three. They had lost two others who came between Frank and Daisy—two bright boys, for whom their father grieved long and sorely; the house had never seemed quite the same, since their death, and now the man looked forward to the coming of his adopted sister's daughter with real pleasure, although his wife's objections had been somewhat of a damper upon this feeling.

He regretted that he would be away from home when she arrived; but business of importance called him abroad, consequently he sailed the week following his reception of Arthur Wellington's letter, in accordance with his arrangements.

He begged that his wife would make the young orphan welcome and happy upon her arrival, for she would naturally feel lonely and homesick, coming such a stranger among them. The woman listened in sullen silence, her heart full of anger and rebellion, and thus their parting was attended with a coldness that had never existed between them before.

Mrs. Cushman was very jealous regarding the rights of her own children, and her high spirit could not endure the thought of the coming of this alien, who seemed to her like a usurper of their privileges. Besides, although he had always been exceedingly kind and indulgent to her, she had long suspected that she was not her husband's first love; the pained look that had always come into his eyes, and settled about his mouth, whenever any reference was made to his adopted sister, had told their own story, and caused a feeling of bitterness to rankle in her heart against sweet, unoffending Dora Allen; and now this antipathy seemed likely to be perpetuated in connection with her child.

As we know, Esther was detained in her own home, several weeks after the death of her father, by the illness of Donald Lancaster and Miss Percival; and thus it was fully two months after Mr. Cushman's departure for Europe, before the long-expected telegram came, telling his wife that "Miss Wellington left Oakland on the sixteenth, and would probably arrive in New York on the afternoon of the twenty-third of March, on the Wagner car Columbia."

Mrs. Cushman sat a long time, absorbed in disagreeable reflections after reading this message, a sullen light in her fine eyes, a heavy frown upon her brow.

"I am sure I shall hate the girl," she muttered, at last; "it was enough before to have a suspicion of John's love for her mother, without being obliged to have a visible and constant reminder of it in the house. I wonder what she is like; her mother must have been very beautiful, if the picture John has does not flatter her. Oh, dear! I know she will be to me a veritable 'thorn in the flesh.'"

The days that intervened between the receiving of Dr. Crawford's telegram, and Esther's arrival, only served to increase the antipathy which the jealous woman had conceived against her; but she was obliged to meet the inevitable, and so, a little before four o'clock—the hour at which the Western express was due—on the afternoon of the twenty-third, Mr. John Cushman's handsome carriage and span drew up before the Grand Central Station, and Mrs. Cushman, handsomely arrayed in an elaborate driving costume, alighted and made her way into the place, to await the incoming train that was to bring her husband's protegee.

It was promptly on time, and as it rolled slowly into the station, and stopped, the woman approached the porter of the Columbia, and inquired if there was a girl by the name of Wellington aboard this car.

"Yes, madam," the man obsequiously replied, "and there she is now," he added, as a tall, slender girl, with an awkward stoop, made her appearance upon the platform, and the next moment descended the steps.

But Mrs. Cushman's sharp eyes had discerned a familiar countenance just behind her, and, without giving Esther a second glance, she eagerly approached the young man, and smilingly extended her faultlessly gloved hand.

"Why, Mr. Lancaster! this is an unexpected pleasure!" she graciously exclaimed. "Are you direct from the far West? And what have you been doing to yourself that you look so white and thin?"

Donald Lancaster cordially returned the lady's greeting.

"Yes, I am from the far West," he smilingly responded, "and my thinness and paleness are owing to an ugly accident that occurred just as I was starting for home, about two months ago. I was one of the victims of that Oakland railway disaster. I presume you read of it."

"Yes; and were you badly injured?" the lady inquired, with an air of deep concern.

"Yes, I got a vicious cut and thump on the head, that resulted in brain fever, which has laid me up all these weeks," Donald explained.

"How unfortunate! Your father and mother must have been very anxious about you."

"Luckily, they knew nothing about it," the young man returned; "as you doubtless know, they are travelling in Europe, and it was very easy to keep the knowledge of my accident from them. They probably have learned about it ere this, however, for as soon as I was out of danger, and able to write, I explained my long silence to them."

"I trust you fell into good hands," Mrs. Cushman observed, as she gazed with admiring eyes upon the fine form and handsome face before her.

The Lancasters occupied an enviable position in New York society. Mrs. Cushman met them in the circles which she frequented, and more than once, the thought of Donald Lancaster, with his great expectations, as a possible and desirable husband for Madge, had taken form in her fertile brain.

"Thanks; yes, I fell into the best of hands—I had the kindest and most devoted care. You must allow me to introduce you to my faithful little nurse," Donald replied, as, with a kind smile, he turned to Esther, who had remained quietly standing beside Miss Percival during the conversation recorded above.

"Miss Esther, I want to present you to an old friend," he remarked, as he brought her forward. "Mrs. Cushman, this is the young lady, Miss Esther Wellington, to whom, I am told, I owe my life; and let me say, she has the lightest step, the gentlest manner, and the rarest patience imaginable, in a sick room," he concluded, with an appreciative look at the young girl.

"Oh, then you are Esther Wellington," Mrs. Cushman coldly observed, as she touched Esther's extended hand in the most lifeless, indifferent manner conceivable, while her feeling of animosity was intensified by the fact that handsome Donald Lancaster owned her so heavy an obligation.

A sudden light fell over the young man's face at her words.

"Why! are you the Mrs. Cushman with whom Miss Esther is to make her future home?" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise. "She said she was going to live with a family of that name, but, somehow, I did not associate you with the fact."

"Yes; Mr. Cushman has consented to act as her guardian for the present," the woman frigidly returned, while her critical glance swept over the girl's figure, taking in every detail of her plain face, ungainly figure and humble, though neat, attire. "He is in Europe, also," she went on, turning smilingly back to Donald, whose face grew grave, and a trifle stern, as he observed the sensitive flush that mounted to Esther's temples, at the cool greeting and slighting treatment he may run across your father and mother, as he will be absent some four months longer."

Donald merely bowed in reply to these remarks; then brought forward and introduced Miss Percival, explaining also that she also had been dependent upon Esther's bounty and care.

Miss Percival was in haste to go about her own affairs; so, after acknowledging the presentation, she bade young Lancaster and Esther farewell, and abruptly hurried away, curtly refusing the offer of the former to secure a carriage for her.

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"You have a trunk, I suppose," Mrs. Cushman observed, with brevity, addressing Esther.

"Yes," she replied, as she produced a check from her handbag; but her lips quivered painfully, and it was with great difficulty that she restrained herself from bursting into tears, for she was nearly heartbroken, in view of the chilling reception that she had been accorded.

"William," said Mrs. Cushman to her footman, who had accompanied her to the train, "take this check, find Miss Wellington's trunk, and have it expressed to the house; meanwhile we will go directly to the carriage, and you can follow us there."

"Allow me to see you to your carriage," Donald remarked, as he took Esther's bag from her, at the same time giving her an encouraging smile, for her heavy eyes, her weary and disappointed air, smote his heart with keen pity for her, and the three proceeded directly outside, while the man went to attend to his business. Esther's eyes were full of tears as they reached the coach—so full that she blundered awkwardly into it, and sank, crimson with embarrassment, upon the seat.

(To be continued.)

A KING'S BANK.

Double Bottom of His Bed Was Filled With Gold.

The practise of hiding money away in all manner of out-of-the-way corners is by no means modern. In the old days, according to "Gleanings After Time," secret receptacles were often made in the bedsteads, and contributed both to safety and romance.

On August 21, 1855, Richard III. arrived at Leicester. His servants had preceded him with the running wardrobe, and in the best chamber of the Blue Boar a ponderous four-post bedstead was set up; it was richly carved, gilded and decorated, and had a double bottom of boards.

Richard slept in it that night. After his defeat and death on Bosworth Field it was stripped of its rich hangings, but the heavy and cumbersome bedstead was left at the Blue Boar.

In the reign of Elizabeth, when the hostess was shaking the bed, she observed a piece of gold of ancient coinage fall on the floor. This led to a careful examination, when the double bottom was discovered, upon lifting a portion of which the interior was found to be filled with gold, part coined in the reign of Richard III. and the rest of earlier times.

The Farm

THE FARM HORSE IN SPRING.

One of the greatest improvements seen in the management or care of horses on the farm is the practice, which is so greatly on the increase, of clipping off the heavy coat of hair in the spring. This improvement has only been made easy for the average farmer within the last score of years through improvement in machinery made for that purpose.

A correspondent says:—I used to clip by hand, but it was a tedious job to clip even one horse, and to clip all the farm horses—well, it didn't get done, but the flexible shaft clipping machines now on the market are so simple in construction, easy to operate and perfect in their working that there seems to be no reasonable excuse for neglecting this very necessary item in the care of the farm horses during the heavy work that is required of them at this time of the year. Neglect of this care must always mean a loss to the owner, both in extra expense of keep and also in the amount of work the teams are able to accomplish and the ease with which they may do it.

The exceptions are so few that I may safely say that every farm horse should be thoroughly clipped early in the spring, as the weather gets so mild that the winter coat of hair is no longer needed as a protection. I have never seen many farm horses that I thought would be benefited by being clipped in the fall, as their coat was given them as nature's protection against the cold of winter, and as a rule when it is taken off it is either for the purpose of gratifying the foolish vanity of a foolish driver or else to relieve him from the labor necessary to keep the horse properly groomed. I never saw many farm horses that would not be benefited by being clipped early in the spring, as they no longer need the protection of the heavy coat of hair grown for winter's comfort, and it is really a burden to them in the warm days of spring. So just at the time when we begin to feel the need of lighter clothing the horses should be relieved of the burden of their winter clothing. I never fully realized the benefited of the spring clipping

of horses until I bought a sheep shearing machine, with which also came a set of clippers for use on horses. So after the sheep were all shorn, we went to the horse barn and clipped every horse on the farm, and from that time I have been an ardent advocate of the practice of clipping every horse from the hoofs to the tips of his ears, the only long hair being left that of their tails. The mane is a nuisance on a farm horse and should be cut close, thus keeping the horse cooler about the neck and also relieving him from the danger of scalded shoulders.

The advantage of clipping the farm horses are found not only in the greater comfort and ease with which they will do their work, but also in the fact that when the day's work is over they will dry off very quickly, thus being in a condition in which the dust and filth from the day's work may be brushed off and the horse made perfectly comfortable for a good night's rest.

Not only is there greater comfort and a better physical condition in the case of the clipped horse, but there is less danger from scalded shoulders and from harness galls and the clipped horse, always being dry at night, is in less danger from colds, will work more easily and keep in good condition on enough less feed to pay the cost of a machine and the trouble of clipping, which is very simple open action and may be done by any farmer or ordinary skill and a good machine should last an ordinary farmer a score of years. Really the only difficult part of the whole work is in making up one's mind to do it.

SEA FOOD.

A half-pound herring contains 45,000 eggs.

The hog-fish, swimming down the cod's throat, kills its host and eats its way out.

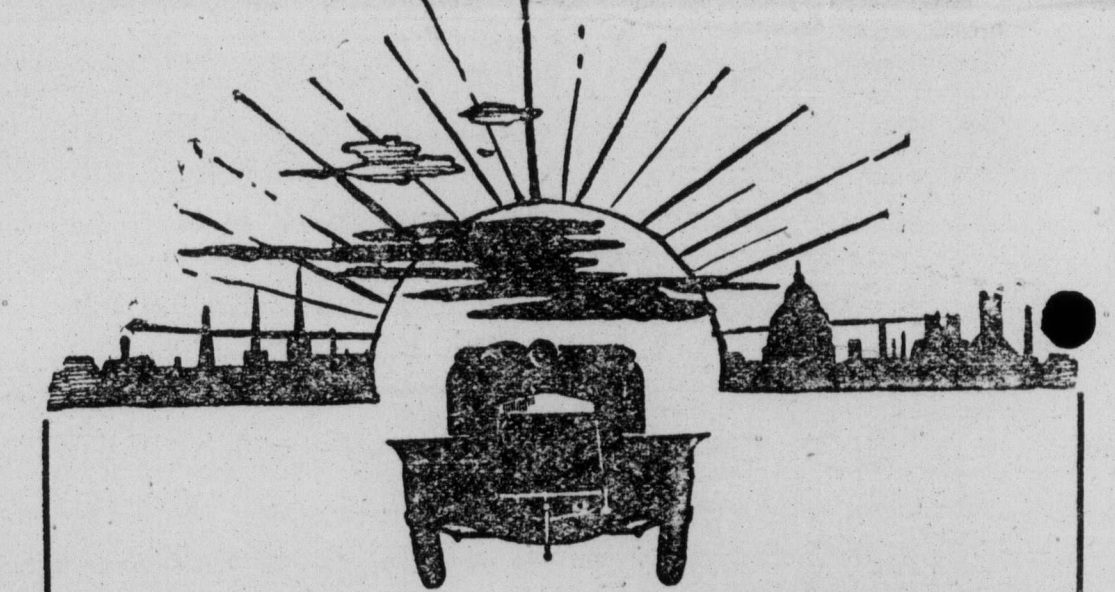
Crabs and lobsters are said never to nip epileptics.

Sword-fish, though little eaten, is only excelled in delicacy by the far-famed fish of the Mediterranean.

Cuttle-fish (for India ink) are kept on farms and milked regularly like cows, in China.

Genuine Russian or, more properly, Astrakhan—caviar is in gules almost as big as buckshot, and cost \$5 a pint.

"The doctor thought I might be carrying a ball from the time I was wounded in the army, so he went at it, and probed it for about two hours." "Did he extract anything from you?" "Yes—Five dollars!"



The New DAIMLER

Extracts from a few of the letters received by the Daimler Co. bearing out the claims made for the 1903 engine.

CHAS E. MARTIN, ESQ. 12, 12, '03
"I have never experienced such a delightful feeling as when gliding along silently and smoothly on the New Daimler."

THE RT. HON. LORD BURTON. 20, 12, '03
"She runs very quietly and smoothly, even on very bad roads, and she pulls beautifully up hill. It is a real pleasure to ride in her."

MONSIEUR GIRARDOT. 8, 1, '09
"I have noted that its chief qualities are its extraordinary flexibility, its absolute silence, and its marvellous efficiency, in comparison with tappet valve engines."

CHAS. HAY WALKER, ESQ. 28, 12, '08
"The way she crept along on her top speed at about 3 miles an hour was marvellous."

The Daimler Motor Co., (1904) Ltd.
COVENTRY, ENGLAND.

