

# The Redemption of David Corson

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## CHAPTER II.

At the moment when Stephen was sounding the horn to summon the young mystic to his supper, a promiscuous crowd of loafers with chairs tilted against the wall of the village tavern received a shock. They heard the tinkle of bells in the distance, and looking in the direction of this unusual sound, saw a team of splendid coal-black horses dash round a corner and whirl a strange vehicle to the door of the inn.

There were two extraordinary figures on the front seat of the wagon. The driver was a sturdy, thick-set man whose enormous moustache suggested a crow with outstretched wings. As if to emphasize the ferocious aspect lent him by this hairy canopy which completely concealed his mouth, Nature had duplicated, in miniature by brows meeting above his nose and spreading themselves, plume-like, over a pair of eyes which gleamed so brightly that they could be felt, although they were so deep-set that they could scarcely be seen.

This fierce and buccanierish person summoned the drowsing hostler in a coarse, imperative voice, flung him the reins, sprang from his seat, and assisted his companion to alight. She gave him her hand with an air of utter indifference, bestowed upon him neither smile nor thanks, and dropped to the ground with a light flutter like a bird. Turning instantly toward the tavern, she ascended the steps of the porch under a fusillade of glances of astonishment and admiration. Young and beautiful, dressed in a picturesque and brilliant Spanish costume, she carried herself with the ease and dignity of a princess, and looked straight past the staring crowd. Her great, dreamy eyes did not seem to note them.

When she and her companion had entered the hall and closed the door behind them, every tilted chair came down to the floor with a bang, and many voices exclaimed in concert, "Who is she?" Curiosity was satisfied at 8 o'clock in the evening, for at that hour Doctor Paracelsus Aesculapius, as he facetiously called himself, opened the doors of his traveling apothecary shop and exposed his "universal panacea" for sale, while at the same time, "Pepeeta, the Queen of Fortune Tellers," entered her booth and spread out upon a table the paraphernalia by which she undertook to discover the secrets of the future.

When the evening's work was ended, Pepeeta at once retired; but the doctor entered the bar-room, followed by a curious and admiring crowd. He was in a happy and expansive frame of mind, for he had done a "land office" business in this frontier village which he was now for the first time visiting.

He looked over the crowd with an inclusive superiority and waved his hand with an inclusive gesture. The motley throng of loafers sidled up to the bar with a deprecatory and automatic movement. They took their glasses, clinked them, nodded to their entertainer, muttered incoherent toasts and drank his health. The delighted landlord, feeling it incumbent upon him to break the silence, offered the friendly observation: "S-s-see you s-s-tutter, S-s-stutter a little m-m-my own self."

"Shake!" responded the doctor, who was in too complacent a mood to take offense, and the worthies grasped hands.

"Don't know any w-w-way to s-s-stop it, do you?" asked the landlord. "No, I d-d-don't; t-t-tried everything. Even my 'universal p-p-panacea' won't do it, and what that can't do can't be d-d-done. Incurable d-d-disease. Get along all right when I go slow like this; but when I open the throttle, get all b-b-balled up. Had thing for my business. Give any man a thousand d-d-dollars that'll cure me," the quack replied, slapping his trousers pocket as if there were millions in it.

"Co-co-couldn't go q-q-quick as high as that; but wouldn't mind a h-hundred," responded the landlord, cordially.

"Tell you what it is, b-b-boy," said the quack, "if it wasn't for this impediment in my s-s-speech, I wouldn't need to work m-m-more about another y-y-year!"

"How's that?" asked someone in the crowd.

"C-c-cause if I could talk as well as I c-c-can think, I could make a fortune 'side of which old John Jacob Astor would look like a p-p-penny savings b-b-bank!"

"If you could?"

"If I can find a man that can do the t-talking (I mean real talk, you know; talk a crowd blind as b-b-bats), I've got something bett'n a California g-g-gold mine."

"Better get Dave Corson," said the village wag from the rear of the crowd, and up went a wild shout of laughter.

"Who's D-D-Dave Corson?" asked the doctor.

"Quaker preacher. Young fellow 'bout 20 years old."

"Can he t-t-talk?"

"Talk! He kin talk a mule into a trottin' hoss in less'n three minutes."

"He's my man!" exclaimed the doctor, at which the crowd laughed again.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked, turning upon them savagely, his loud voice and threatening manner frightening those who stood nearest, so that they instinctively stepped back a pace or two.

"No offense, Doc," said one of them; "but you couldn't get him. He's pious."

"Pious! What do I care?"

"Well, these here pious Quakers are stiff in their notions. But you kin judge for yourself 'bout his talkin', for there's

goin' ter be an appinted Quaker meetin' to-morrow night, and he'll speak. You kin go an' listen, if you want to."

"I'll be there, boys, and d-d-don't you forget it. I'll hook him! Never saw anything I couldn't buy if I had a little of the p-p-proper stuff about me."

"I say, Doc, that daughter of yours knows her biz when it comes to telling fortunes," ventured a young dandy, whose head had been turned by Pepeeta's beauty.

"D-d-daughter!" snapped the quack, turning sharply upon him; "she's not my daughter, she's my wife!"

In order to comprehend the relationship of this strangely mated pair, we must go back five or six years to a certain day when this same Doctor Aesculapius rode slowly down the main street of a small city in Western Pennsylvania, and then out along a rugged country highway. A couple of miles brought him to the camp of a band of gypsies.

Around a campfire was a picturesque group of persons, all of whom, with a single exception, vanished at the approach of the stranger. The man who stood his ground was a truly sinister being. He was tall, thin and angular; his clothing was scant and ragged; his face bronzed with exposure to the sun.

"Good morning, Baltasar," said the visitor.

The gypsy acknowledged his salutation with a frown.

"I wish to sell this horse," the traveler added, without appearing to notice his cold reception.

The gypsy swept his eye over the animal and shook his head.

"If you will not buy, perhaps you will trade," the traveler said.

"Come," was the laconic response, and so saying the gypsy turned towards the forest which lay just beyond the camp. The "doctor" obeyed. A moment later he found himself in a sequestered spot where there was an improvised stable; and a dozen or more horses glancing up from their feed whinnied a welcome.

A little rivulet lay across their path, and up from the margin of it where she had been gathering water crosses there sprang a young girl, who cast a startled glance at him, then bounded swiftly toward a tent and vanished through the opening. This keen admirer of horses was equally susceptible to the charms of female beauty. So swift an apparition would have bewildered rather than illumined the mind of an ordinary man. But the quack was not an ordinary man. He was endowed with a certain rude power of divination which enabled him to see in a single instant, by swift intuition, more than the average man discovers by an hour of reasoning. By this natural clairvoyance he saw at a glance that this face of exquisite delicacy could no more have been coined in a gypsy camp than a fine cameo could be cut in an Indian wigwam. He knew that all gypsies were thieves, and that these were Spanish gypsies. What was more natural than that he should conclude with inevitable logic that this child had been stolen from people of good if not of noble blood!

"Baltasar!" he said.

The gypsy turned.

"You are a girl-thief as well as a horse-thief. You stole this girl from the family of a Spanish nobleman. I am the representative of this family and have followed your trail for years. You thought I had come to get the horse. You were mistaken; it was the girl!"

"Perdita!" exclaimed the gypsy, taken completely off his guard.

"Lost indeed," responded the quack, scarcely able to conceal his pride in his own astuteness. And then he added slowly: "She must be a burden to you, Baltasar. You evidently never have been able or never have dared to take her back and claim the ransom which you expected. I will pay you for her and take her from your hands. It is the child I want and not vengeance. What will you take for her?"

The doctor drew a leather wallet from his pocket and held it up tantalizingly. Its influence was decisive.

"Pepeeta! Pepeeta!" called the gypsy.

Out of the door of the tent she came, her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her fingers picking nervously at the tinsel strings which fastened her bodice.

"Gif me ze money and take her."

The doctor counted out the gold, and then approached the child. For the first time in his life he experienced an emotion of reverence. There was something about her beauty, her helplessness and his responsibility that made a new appeal to his heart.

Yielding to the gentle pressure of his hand, she permitted herself to be led away. Not a good-bye was said. The doctor lifted the child upon the horse's back and climbed into the saddle. The beautiful child trembled; she also wept. She was parting from those whose lives were base and cruel; but they were the only human beings that she knew. She was leaving a wagon and a tent, but it was the only home that she could remember.

To have a fellow-being completely in our power makes us either utterly cruel or utterly kind, and all that was gentle in that great rough nature went out in a rush of tenderness toward the little creature who thus suddenly became absolutely dependent upon his compassion. After they had ridden a little way, he began in his rough fashion to try to comfort her.

"Don't cry, Pepeeta! You ought to be thankful that you have got out of the clutches of those villains. You could not have been worse off, and you have a great deal better! There

were not always kind to you, were they? I shouldn't wonder if they beat you sometimes! But you will never be beaten any more. You shall have a nice little pony, and a cart, and flowers, and pretty clothes, and everything that little girls like. I don't know what they are, but whatever they are you shall have them. So don't cry any more! What a pretty name, Pepeeta! It sounds like music when I say it. I have got the toughest name in the world myself. It's a regular jaw-breaker—Doctor Paracelsus Aesculapius! What do you think of that, Pepeeta! But then you need not call me by the whole of it! You can just call me Doctor, for short. Now, look at me just once, and give me a pretty smile. Let me see those big black eyes! No! You don't want to? Well, that's all right. I won't bother you. But I want you to know that I love you, and that you are never going to have any more trouble as long as you live."

These were the kindest words the child had ever had spoken to her, or at least the kindest she could remember. They fell on her ears like music and awakened gratitude and love in her heart. She ceased to sigh, and before the ride to town was ended had begun to feel a vague sense of happiness.

The next few years were full of strange adventures for these singular companions. The quack had discovered certain clues to the past history of the child whom he had thus adopted, and was firmly persuaded that she belonged to a noble family. He had made all his plans to take her to Spain and establish her identity in the hope of securing a great reward. But just as he was about to execute this scheme, he was seized by a disease which prostrated him for many months, and threw him into a nervous condition in which he contracted the habit of stammering. On his recovery from his long sickness he found himself stripped of everything he had accumulated; but his shrewdness and indomitable will remained, and he soon began to rebuild his shattered fortune.

During all these ups and downs, Pepeeta was his inseparable and devoted companion. The admiration which her childish beauty excited in his heart had deepened into affection and finally into love. When she reached the age of 15 or 17 years, he proposed to her the idea of marriage. She knew nothing of her own heart, and little about life, but had been accustomed to yield implicit obedience to his will. She consented and the ceremony was performed by a Justice of the Peace in the city of Cincinnati, a year or so before their appearance in the Quaker village. An experience so abnormal would have perverted, if not destroyed her nature, had it not contained the germs of beauty and virtue implanted at her birth. They were still dormant, but not dead; they only awaited the sun and rain of love to quicken them into life.

The quack had coarsened with the passing years, but Pepeeta, withdrawing into the sanctuary of her soul, living a life of vague dreams and half-conscious aspirations after something, she knew not what, had grown even more gentle and submissive. As she did not yet comprehend life, she did not protest against its injustice or its incongruity. The vulgar people among whom she lived, the vulgar scenes she saw, passed across the mirror of her soul without leaving permanent impressions. She performed the coarse duties of her life in a perfunctory manner. It was her body and not her soul, her will and not her heart which were concerned with them. What that soul and that heart really were, remained to be seen.

(To be continued.)

## A Moral Lesson.

Mike Powers, the Athletics' catcher, said at a recent baseball banquet in Philadelphia:

"All the talk there has been in New York about crooked foot races and crooked umpires and crooked fights—all this vague, formless talk about crookedness makes me think of a South Carolina meeting I once attended. At the end of this meeting it was decided to take up a collection for charity. The chairman passed the hat himself. He dropped a dime in it for a nest egg. Well, gentlemen, every right hand there entered that hat—every right hand—and yet, at the end when the chairman turned the hat over and shook it, not so much as his own contribution dropped out."

"Fo' de lan's sake!" he cried. 'Ah's eben los' de dime Ah stashed wiv'!"

"All the rows of faces looked puzzled. Who was the lucky man? That was the question which tormented all. Finally the venerable Calhoun White summed up the situation.

"Breddern," he said, solemnly, rising from his seat, 'dar 'pears ter be a great moral lesson roon' heah some whar.'"

## A Matron for Sympathy.

Two matrons of a certain western city whose respective matrimonial ventures did not in the first instance prove altogether satisfactory, met at a woman's club one day, when the first matron remarked:

"Hattie, I met your 'ex,' dear old Tom, the day before yesterday. We talked much of you."

"Is that so?" asked the other matron. "Did he seem sorry when you told him of my second marriage?"

"Indeed, he did; and said so most frankly!"

"Honest?"

"Honest! He said he was extremely sorry, though, he said, he didn't know the man personally."—Lippincott's.

## Proof He Was "Dazed."

He had pleaded the "detailed at the office" and the "balancing the books" excuses so often that they had become transparent, so when he arrived home late on a recent evening he determined to lean on the truth.

"Theodore, you've been drinking!" said his indignant wife.

"Selma, my dear, I cannot tell a lie—I—" stammered the delinquent.

"Then you're even more intoxicated than I thought. Go to bed."

# FOR AND ABOUT WOMEN

## Suppress That Nervous Laugh.

A musical laugh is a rare gift; a hearty one is infectious; but if you are incapable of either, suppress a laugh that means nothing. The woman who really laughs is a joy to those around her. It may not possess a pitch that delights a musician's ear; it may have infectious little notes that do not stand for harmony; but if it is real and joyous it will make all those who hear it smile.

The laugh that is annoying is the one without meaning. It is a nervous ripple that is often used as a period or an exclamation point. It is placed at the ending of every sentence, and takes from the spoken word any meaning or emphasis it might have. Many women who do it are not conscious of it. They are far from silly women. They have poise and sense, and are not as easily confused as one would judge by the futile laughter they give after their sentences. If this idea impresses you at all, watch your own style of talking when outside the family circle and intimate friends. You may not be given to laughter, but again you may find that you unconsciously punctuate your most commonplace sentences with a laugh that is as artificial as your back puffs.

If you do this, stop it. This noise, which is a giggle in girls, an inane laugh in women, is the result of pure thoughtlessness.

The remarkable sound, given to man alone, called laughter, should be used only to express mirth. When it is not spontaneous it is not laughter, and the men who write dictionaries should give it another name. Giggle is the only substitute so far, but it does not designate that insipid, mirthless sound that hundreds of women permit themselves.

**Corset Does Not Pinch.**

A corset that can be hooked without pinching the body and tearing the underwear to bits is that invented by an Illinois woman.

The advantage of this is derived from the fact that the hooks are located just to one side of the lacing and are prevented from injuring either flesh or clothing by a flap extending under them.

In most corsets the steels and hooks extend down the center, and in pressing the hooks and eyes together it is no uncommon thing to pinch a ridge of flesh between them or tear a garment. With the stays shown in the illustration this annoyance is eliminated. They lace down the center and the hooking arrangement is to one side. Underneath the hooking device is a shield which presents a perfectly flat surface at all times to the body and no matter how hard it is to get the corset together, there is never any danger of squeezing or injuring the flesh or clothing in the operation.

**Health and Beauty Hints.**

The woman who exercises can more safely indulge in rich foods, fat meats, sweets and pastry than she who leads a sedentary life.

Forcing food is one of the surest roads to dyspepsia. Except when not in normal health the average person should skip a meal occasionally when not hungry.

Eyes which have become inflamed from exposure to the sun can have the bloodshot condition quickly reduced by bathing them for five minutes in water as hot as is comfortable.

Biliousness should be fought in the first stages. Try regulating diet. Take glass of hot water half-hour before each meal and at bedtime. In either morning or evening glass squeeze juice of half a lemon.

Do not neglect the value of fruit in improving the complexion. Nothing equals the juice of oranges and lemons to clear up the skin and brighten eyes. The latter must be diluted and taken without sugar, a half lemon in a glass of water.

Perfect cleanliness of the teeth is most essential and can be secured by a thorough brushing in the morning and after each meal and using an antiseptic lotion. Dental floss should be drawn between the teeth after each meal and before retiring.

You must not stop laughing, or you will be like the woman who at an advanced age had not a line or wrinkle in her face, but whose countenance was entirely expressionless. Dreading these same lines and wrinkles, she had all her life schooled her features to express neither joy nor sorrow.

**Good Work of Women.**

The mayor and councilmen of Des Moines have asked the Civic Committee of the women's clubs of that city to present to them their plan for a city beautiful, and it is possible that the first step will be the engaging of a civic expert, who will consult with the city authorities and the ladies, and a plan be formed.

**Lack of Reverence for Women.**

Mr. Edwin Markham's observation that the chief social shortcoming of the United States may be our increasing lack of reverence for women will not meet with general acceptance. But

## THREE LATE STYLES.



Rose Beaver Hat with a Scarf of Satin and Marabout, a Scarf and Muff of Gray Chiffon and Ermine, and a Hat and Muff of Pleated Rose Silk and Fur.

It deserves consideration. It is perfectly possible that women may have the largest rights where they have the smallest reverence. And if this reverence of men for women be really lacking, it is certain that the respect of women for men will fall also. And when the relation between men and women shall be thus degraded, nothing can save the whole fabric of life from a process of swift deterioration.

—Chicago Examiner.

**Fads and Fancies in Dress.**

The cuirass has suddenly become a fitted garment of silk elastic, smooth as a glove from neck to wrist and hip line.

The newest sleeveless coat is cut out generously under the arms and the sides are held together by cords instead of bands and straps.

The fichu of Marie Antoinette folds round the shoulder, forms a sleeve, crosses in front and ties at the back, concealing much of the figure.

The outline of the Watteau plait grows almost a familiar sight. It is belted in or allowed to fall loosely, according to the gown and the occasion.

Some charming old-world frocks are carried out in soft taffetas, shot with three or four pale colorings, such, for instance, as mauve, pink and periwinkle blue.

Leather hats promise to be particularly popular with the traveler. They are to be had in patent leather as well as suede, and in a wide range of shapes and colors.

The modified kimono, which is the old wrapper with a Japanese touch in the sleeve and banded edge around the neck and downward, remains a favorite for bed-room wear.

The center parting of the hair with the wide Racamier chignon and wide puffs at the sides comforts well with the big millinery of the day. Women with small, delicate features find it especially becoming.

Sashes worn with the cuirass gown of the moyen age are fastened so that their flat folds lie close upon the lower edge of the cuirass, while the bow, tied to the right of the center back, falls among the lower plaits of the skirt.

**Keeping Table Linen.**

In keeping the table linen that is not in daily use many a housekeeper is annoyed to find that it has yellowed badly and must be washed again before it can go on the table again.

This can be overcome if, after being laundered, the cloths and napkins are carefully wrapped in deep blue paper or in a sheet that has been heavily blueed.

**Mending with Machine.**

Table linen and tears in clothing can be darned better and in one-tenth the time it takes to do it by hand. It needs a double-thread machine, as it cannot be done on a chain-stitch machine. Use fine thread, about 100 or 120 for table linen. Remove the foot of the machine, or leave it --

**Waiting Yet.**

Man was before the woman made, And sat anticipating; And she has kept him ever since Just waiting, waiting, waiting. —Judge.

**Gloves with Circles.**

The smart glove that many fashionable women are wearing has the back heavily embroidered with circles in colored silk. This is in the color, if not tone, as the kid of the glove.