Matrimonial Adventures

One Man's Meat

BY

Dorothy Canfield

Author of "The Brimming Cup," "The Squirrel Cage," "The Bent Twig," "The Day of Glory," "A Montessori Mother," "Mothers and Children," etc.

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SOMETHING ABOUT DOROTHY CANFIELD

Dorothy Canfield has so many successes to her credit and is so versatile a person that one despairs of chronicling even a small part of her achievements. When little more than a girl she had won two degrees, a Ph.B. and a Ph.D., and it was not many years after that that she became famous as an author.

Her books are the type that live. To speak of one of her latest big successes, "The Brimming Cup," calls up mention of her earlier work and starts discussion of "The Bent Twig" or "The Squirrel Cage," or away from her novels to her books on the Montessori method.

When war came, Mrs. Fisher (she is Mrs. Fisher in private life) went to France with her husband and two children—where she did big and important work. But all the time she was working abroad she was writing, too, stories that appeared in our leading magazines, and books that were published upon her return.

MARY STEWART CUTTING, JR.

The first time I ever heard the threadbare saying about a square peg in a round hole, was when my father used it in an attempt to excuse Aunt Emily. Up to that time I had never heard anyone say anything of her except that she was a detestable woman with the most infernal capacity for being perfectly wretched herself and making everybody else so. What a home she made for poor mild Uncle Charlie, and for their three nervous, scrawny, rabbit-faced children!

You are not to think she neglected her home or her children. Indeed no! She house-kept with a fanatical competence and expended on the up-bringing of her children an extravagant energy which filled the house to its remotest corner, as a sawmill is filled by the strident energy of the saw. Never were three children so brought up as my poor little cousins. Aunt Emily was determined that she should do her whole duty by them, that they should be perfect, and do everything exactly right. Of course she knew much better than they what was right, and hence had never an instant of repose from her labor of pushing and shoving them into the way they should go.

Oh, how we hated to be sent on an errand to Aunt Emily's house. I spare you the description of what a meal at Aunt Emily's table was, with Aunt Emily teaching the children table manners. There are plenty of intolerable things in real life, without dragging into a story what happened when Uncle Charles spilled gravy on a clean tablecloth.

You notice, perhaps, that I say "at Aunt Emily's table," and not "at Uncle Charles'"; and that sets me at another angle of their home life; what that home life meant to Aunt Emily's husband. He was what is known in America as a man "with no head for business," and yet there had never been anything but business in his life. He had been a handsome, dreamy-eyed, musical-minded young accountant in Emery's Emporium when Aunt Emily, very young herself, had married him; married him, apparently for the same reason that he was in business, because there seemed to be nothing else to do. But Uncle Charles was no money-maker, and imprisoned in a grinding round of petty economies and unescapable shabbiness, how Aunt Emily ate her heart out, and what a life Uncle Charles led! But not even Aunt Emily's terrible energy could put into her husband's gentle, artistic, uncommercial soul, a single gust of the stormy ambition which blew like a tornado in her harried heart. Uncle Charles hated all business desperately, and found the only pleasure in his life in his children.

My mother always said that those three Burton children would certainly just have wasted away, if it had not been for their father at this time. He had as great a gift for calming and cheering them as their mother had for damping the very life out of them. Whenever Aunt Emily was away from home for a few hours, and Uncle Charles was there with the children, what a good time they had in those short hours of respite, Uncle Charles in an easy chair, the children piled on top of him, his arms around them tight, while they had what they called a "visit." This meant a chatter of little voices, birdlike and free, which Aunt Emily had never heard in her life. Or perhaps they'd all sing together, for they had inherited Uncle Charles' gift for music.

If he had only had time he would have given piano lessons to all the children. But, dear me, he had no time except for that account keeping, and they had no money to pay a professional music teacher. Uncle Charles always looked ten years younger after such a visit with his children, whereas a rainy morning spent with the children in the house, always made Aunt Emily look a thousand years old, "they wore on her so," they upset so the perfect order of her wonderfully kept house. And yet they did their best not to wear on her, by keeping away from her as much as possible. They never went home from school until it was actually suppertime, and always played in our yard, not their own.

The result was that Aunt Emily was left quite to herself in a Sahara desert of lonely housekeeping and desperate economies with the poor pittance which was all that Uncle Charles could earn. Her thin face grew grim and dark, as she mended and patched and turned and dyed and performed miracles on tough necks of mutton and cheap curtain materials. All of it she did with superlative skill but burning and raging inwardly (and many times not so very inwardly) against the necessity of doing it at all, and crying out bitterly with many fits of hysterical tears that she was killing herself for her family, and nobody gave her a bit of credit for it.

Oh, yes, everybody dodged when Aunt Emily hove in view, father as much as the rest, in spite of all his extenuations. Whenever we did have to go there, on unavoidable errands, we children would stand in the doorway, and assure her volubly that we couldn't come in, because our feet were muddy. This brought about the desired result of being told severely to hurry along then, and not get the whole house cold, with that door standing open.

Then came the climax in their misfortunes, as if they were not already sufficiently singled out for misery. Uncle Charles fell on the stairs, and hurt himself terribly, threw several vertebrae out of position, I believe, so that he lay almost wholly paralyzed from the waist down. And not a penny of savings to pay the doctor, not even for the grocer's bill at the end of the month. It was disaster, absolute black, irreparable disaster. Aunt Emily was stunned into silence, a dreadful gray silence, as of some one whose grudge against fate is rising to mania. I remember hearing father say to mother, after he came back from his turn at spending a night of care for Uncle Charles, "I'm afraid of the woman, I positively am. She looks as though she'd go mad." "Well, it's not out of sympathy for her poor husband, that's sure," mother answered acidly.

What do you suppose was the result of that terrific accumulation of emotion in Aunt Emily? What was the momentous, tremendous decision to reach which, in 1885, it was necessary for her to rise to that pitch of frenzy? Why nothing more nor less than this . . . and in those days it was a decision both momentous and tremendous for any married woman with children . . . she put on her bonnet, yes, bonnet, it was in the last days of bonnets, when only young girls wore hats . . . and marched down town to ask for work in Emery's Emporium.

She got it, of course. Even if it had not been Aunt Emily, the humane head of the firm would have felt under some obligation to the wife of a faithful employee of such long standing. And in addition to this, it was Aunt Emily . . . of course she got what she went after.

She was put . . . well, I don't know that I ever heard just in what small corner she was put at first, as an experiment; something easy and simple to suit her supposed inexperience of business and her supposed feminine incapacity for it. The life at home was organized somehow, anyhow, as best they could with different cousins taking turns to go in and help out with the work. Uncle Charles did not suffer any pain, and was quite himself as far as his head was concerned, his body like a log in the bed, but his eyes bright, his fine sensitive face pale, but calm and philosophic as always. He was quite able to direct the children as they dressed and undressed themselves and studied their lessons and learned to do the housework.

As Uncle Charles got better so that he could sit up in bed, things ran more smoothly. His bed was moved down to a corner of the dining room, where he could look into the kitchen. He could work with his hands now, which he had always loved to do, and they were never still from morning till night. My father gave him a wheeled tray which was always piled with work, done or to be done. He did all the mending and darning and he and Phoebe did the cooking and the kitchen work together. The children all brought their school books to their father's bedside, and "did" their lessons there, to a running accompaniment of such sympathetic, helpful comments from him, as they'd never known before. By mid-winter of that year, Uncle Charles was well enough to sit in a wheeled chair, which Aunt Emily bought out of the first raise in her salary, and presented proudly to him on Christmas day. After this, he was all over the house at once, active and cheerful.

He always sat beside Phoebe, as she practiced her music lesson, to listen, to play the bass in a simple duet, and to teach. My mother says she never saw a child get forward with her music as Phoebe did, after her father began to teach her. In no time she was playing the accompaniment for his light, clear baritone, and then the little house rang with music like a shell with the murmur of the sea. We all used to love to go there, as soon as school was over to "have a concert." Sometimes they sang Scotch airs . . . the tears we have shed over "Loch Lomond," the zest for battle poured into us by "Scots wha' hae"; or it might be Irish, . . . how we have laughed over "Father O'Flynn," and yelled out the chorus of the "Cruiskeen Bawn"; . . . or negro. There never was anybody who could sing "spirituals" like Uncle Charles. Oh, they were great concerts, we'll never forget.

And what was Aunt Emily doing all this time? You know as well as I do what Aunt Emily was doing. She was rising like a rocket through every plane of the management of Emery's Emporium. She was passionately interested in her work, because she could use it to serve her ambition; and because she was passionately interested in it, she mastered it, and owned it, and put it in her pocket. Everybody in that line of business in that part of the country soon knew her; she was hail-fellow-well-met with all the traveling men, who liked her bluff manners and sharp tongue, feared her piercing eye, and respected her capacity always to get the better of them.

She was detested but admirably served by the staff of the store, who were bewildered by her really inhuman capacity for endless exactitude of detail, angry at the everlasting high tension of her demands, but placated by the growing fame of the store and by her instant recognition of business ability in a subordinate. "Business ability!" How Aunt Emily adored it! What a starved, wolflike appetite she had for all that it stood for. How intensely she lived in her new life!

Before long she had developed a new line, advertising (this was before the modern science of advertising was dreamed of) and while I dare say it would be an exaggeration to claim that she was the first to expand the present principles of psychological advertising, I know a good many people who think she came very near doing so. Merchants from other cities came to see her window displays, and talked with her about advertising. Aunt Emily, who never did anything for nothing, soon saw that she had a marketable product there, and proceeded to put it on the market. She organized what I'm sure was the first advertising agency, and ran it in odd moments of her busy days.

She was up and off to work early, reading the morning paper as she ate breakfast, which Uncle Charles had seen to. Then they saw her no more till night, when she came home walking strongly in the door, looking very distinguished and chic in the beautifully cut tailor suits of the best material that money could buy . . . I am speaking now, of course, of the times after that difficult beginning. That period lasted, after all, only till she could get her bearings in the new world. Very soon, she was earning more money than Uncle Charles had ever dreamed of making. By the time Uncle Charles was around on crutches, there was a good competent girl in the kitchen. This left Uncle Charles more time and strength to give to the children, more leisure to perfect his own music, and more energy to plan the thousand ingenious variations, on the theme of domestic life which made their home the most delightful one to visit in, you can imagine.

Aunt Emily fitted in it all very comfortably. She was always agreeably tired by night, and relieved of her surplus energy, she was astonishingly good-natured and easy to get along with. There was plenty of money these days, for competent help, which Uncle Charles managed smoothly; there was plenty of money for good clothes, and good food, and nice china, and pretty glassware, and fine linen, all of which Aunt Emily enjoyed with a hungry pleasure which was never blunted by ceaseless repetition. She was happy for the first time in her life, Aunt Emily was, and although she was by this time, middle-aged and gray-haired, she was handsomer than she had ever been in youth. She grew and grew in acumen and business ability, and ripened with experience, till our small city was not big enough for her. She soared off to New York, carrying the family with her to an expensive apartment, and from there to Paris, where they lived for many years, Aunt Emily being the Paris representative of a great New York department store.

To the day of his death Uncle Charles always kept the children close to his heart, and directed their growth just as lovingly and wisely as ever. Phoebe is a professional pianist now, well known all over America and Europe. For years she was usually companioned by her father, crutches and all. Charlie is a successful architect, with a lovely French wife and two babies. It was beautiful to see Uncle Charles with his grandchildren! Bobby would certainly have gone straight to the dogs, if he had not had the most inspired handling at his father's hands. He was a wild, temperamental, unreasonable, warm-hearted, hot-tempered boy, who could not get on an instant with his mother. But Uncle Charles held to him through everything, made a man of him at last, for he is a noted field worker for the New York Natural History museum.

This story sounds as though it were petering out, doesn't it, and as though this was about all there was to it? But there is something else, something I never told anyone but father. It was the great shadow secret of my childhood, something father and I knew, and nobody else. But now that Uncle Charles and Aunt Emily are gone, I can tell it.

This is what happened: When I was nine years old (about three years after Uncle Charles' accident) I chanced to stay at their house over night. I had a bad dream, out of which I woke up with a start, and unable to get to sleep afterward, I got out of bed and wandered to the window to look out into the moonlight. And, there in front of the house, walking round the garden paths, what do you suppose I saw? You will never guess. I saw my Uncle Charles, walking nimbly and briskly without his crutches.

I went home the next morning in a maze of bewilderment, and climbed up to my father's attic study. Speaking all in an excited hurry, I told him what I had seen. His first expression was one of utter amazement, "Your Uncle Charles walking without his crutches!"

And he fell into a long, thoughtful brooding silence, looking over my head, and not listening to my rush of exclamations. Finally he glanced down at me, with a strange, anxious look and with a voice of deep earnestness, such as I have never heard addressed to me before, as though something of terrible importance depended upon me, upon me!

"See here my darling," he said urgently, "you must never, never, never tell anybody else what you have seen. Promise me you will never speak of it again, not even to me. Just put it right out of your mind, as if you had not seen it. Lift your hand and promise."

As soon as I could recover from my awe at the solemnity of his look, I lifted my hand and promised, and a silence fell between us.

Then I said, "Father, please, I want to ask just one thing. If Uncle Charles doesn't need his crutches . . . " But I got no further.

"Doesn't need his crutches . . . what are you talking about?" exclaimed my father. "He needs his crutches! What in the world makes you think he doesn't need his crutches? He couldn't get along a minute without them."

I stared at him, beside myself with astonishment. My father went on: "They are his only defense against the Inquisition."

"The Inquisition," I faltered, "Westward Ho" in my mind, "We haven't any Inquisition in America."

"Oh, yes, we have," said my father. I struggled up through the overwhelming flood of my bewilderment, till I could get breath enough to speak, and protested. "But father, the only Inquisition I ever heard of is . . . you know, that thing that tortures people because they don't conform to the religion of the particular country they're in."

"Well, that is the kind we have in America, all right," said my father, "and if it weren't for your Uncle Charles' crutches, it would seize right on him and torture all his family, including Aunt Emily."

"I don't understand a word of what you're saying," I cried out desperately.

"Well, maybe you will, sometime," answered my father.

ESSENTIAL TO MAKE CHOICE

Excellent Advice Which Young Mother Will Do Well to Give Deep Consideration.

Take the case of any young mother who has two or more children, no nurse and no maid. Life feels like a fight. There are certain things in that mother's life that have to be slighted. It mustn't be her children. It mustn't be her husband. And it mustn't be her charm.

What then?

Her house; her social duties. Put away all the knickknacks. You can have more elaborate beauty when your children are older. Have simplicity now. Have your house bare as possible and get your beauty in harmonious colors. Have one room where the children's toys can be dumped, and then have enough control to think about the disorder of that room. Back of all the clutteredness in this world there is a law of order. Back of the messiness of that room is a bigger law of order than the mere orderliness of a room—it is the orderliness of a mind that has decided to keep its charm, its beauty, its strength, so that there will be a personality as the mother of that family instead of just a driven, patient, sweet woman. Take the dining room, if you have to, and have a jolly kitchen and eat there or in the living room. If you've got a spare bedroom, take that. Don't be an immaculate housekeeper—be an irresistible human. —From the Delineator.

Divided Skirt Is Old Idea.

No one thinks twice today of seeing a woman in breeches or a divided skirt. This fashion is much older than that of the crinoline, for so long ago as the Thirteenth century women rode astride in divided garments. In 1568, when France was in the throes of a terrible civil war, women again took to divided skirts for greater ease and comfort in riding.

The third great revival of the fashion was in 1850, when an American lady, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, adopted the much-discussed "bloomer" costume.

Another feminine fashion much older than most suppose is the form of hat called the "toque." This was first worn by ladies of the court of Henry III.

To Make It Permanent.

"Lawd bless muh soul!" exclaimed good old Brother Buckover. "Yo' doesn't tell me, sah, dat Jim Dinger, de gamblin' man, has done fuhsook his nickerties, 'knowledged de urror of his ways, axed to be took into de fellership of de church, and begged de bruddren and sistahs to pray for him dat he never backslide!"

"He sho' did, sah!" replied Brother Lump. "And I advocate dat de deacons take him out and ca'mly and delusively 'sassinate him befo' he slips ag'in into de sasspofe o' sin."—Kansas City Star.

LOWERED OVERHEAD HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR PRICE SLASHES

(Continued from page one)

manufacturer while to the charge of "skimping" here and there to cut costs to the bone.

Materials Used.

But think a moment before you pay heed to folks who talk without knowing facts. Those of us who have been working with the plants for ten years and longer can attest from first-hand knowledge that the materials of today are far superior to those of even a few years back. Then years ago vanadium steel was just getting a toe-hold—was just breaking in to replace alloys then commonly employed for steering knuckles, crankshafts, and other parts subjected to severe vibration. And why? Because it was a better material for these parts—it would resist fatigue, crystallization, sudden breakage better than the steels they were using then. Hence maker after maker adopted it.

Would any one of them think of going

TAXI IS DESCENDANT OF ANCIENT CHARIOT; PEBBLES KEPT COUNT

The taxicab, in its present day period of greatest numbers and greatest usefulness, is now said to be the descendant of a metered chariot. It goes back to the days of gladiators and [illegible] grandeur that was Rome—it [illegible] believe recent research revea[illegible] it was only a day or two ago [illegible] National Automobile Chamber of [illegible] merce admitted them as [illegible] hicles to the National Automob[illegible]

The Romans knew the taxi[illegible] before the time of Julius Caesar, [illegible] told. How far beyond that it [illegible] not yet been found. But Vitru[illegible] scribed as the man who [illegible] classic volume on architecture [illegible] Emperor Augustus, called the [illegible] of these days the metered [illegible] invention of some utility, one of [illegible] ingenious things that we derive [illegible] ancients."

This taxicab of which Vitruvius [illegible] with a meter like a sundial [illegible] is now resurrected by Phil Ritt[illegible] and art critic of the Boston [illegible] has a faculty for digging up [illegible] the unusual. He describes it as [illegible] been operated "by some [illegible] (which would correspond with [illegible] ent-day meters) by which a [illegible] dropped into a bowl under the [illegible] (rheda) for every 1,000 paces [illegible] At the end of the journey the [illegible] counted the stones and thus [illegible] the fare to be paid.

"'The noise that each pebble [illegible] make in dropping into the bowl [illegible] form the passenger that he has [illegible] 1,000 paces,' Vitruvius wrote.

"A similar contrivance was [illegible] travelling by water.

"An elaborate description of the [illegible] cab is given by Vitruvius in his [illegible] book. Chapter IX, 'Quae ratione vel vecti peractum iter dimetiamur.'

"This (rheda) was used for [illegible] a man could take with him his [illegible] and baggage. Driving in the [illegible] supposed to be forbidden except [illegible] umphators, higher magistrates, [illegible] priests on solemn occasions. We [illegible] learn from certain Roman [illegible] the law was not strictly observed.

"Thus Juvenal, telling why [illegible] not sleeping in Rome, wrote: 'The [illegible] of chariots in the narrow turnings [illegible] streets and the bawling of the [illegible] when there is a full stop will [illegible] even drowsy Drusus or the [illegible] calves so much as to nod.' We [illegible] there were traffic policemen in [illegible]

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