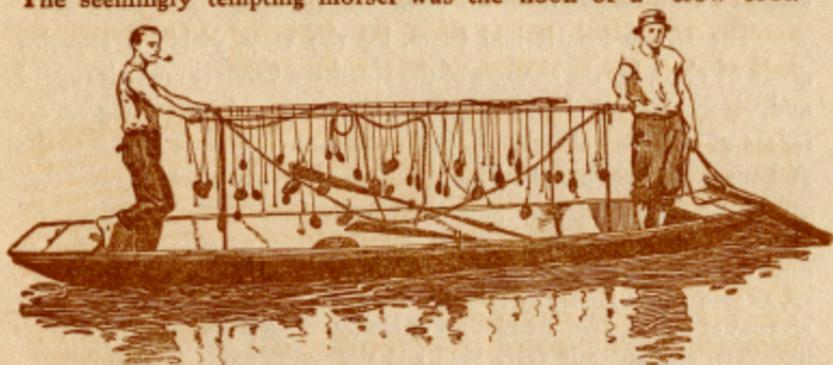


# The Story of My Life by "Billie Button"

## CHAPTER IV. A good thing that turned out badly. The Clam's Calamity. Prizes of Pearls.

A LONG smack into its open mouth came something black that looked like a luscious bite, so it closed down its shell. But somehow this bite didn't prove as toothsome as it seemed, and pretty quick, "Whish, Whoosh" up it came, carrying the clam with it alongside a boat, and before slow-thinking Mr. Clam could let go, he was picked off and thrown down in the bottom of the boat, along with hundreds of others of his unsuspecting family. The seemingly tempting morsel was the hook of a "crow foot."



"What IS a 'crow foot?'" Well, it's what clam fishermen use in their business. To make it they take an iron bar ten or fifteen feet long and fasten to it twenty strings with stout three pronged hooks at the end of every string. The bar floats along in the water and when the clammer thinks he has a good catch he simply draws it in, pulls up the lines and takes off the clams which have fastened themselves to the hooks. When this particular clam was caught, most of the prongs on most of the hooks on most of the lines had a nice, fat clam hanging on for dear life.

Farewell to the contented idleness of the family Clam Bed—farewell to the generous feeding of the mighty river. My ancestor now becomes a martyr—not to SCIENCE but to COMMERCE.

When the clammer who caught him went ashore they dumped their load into a big vat of water, and built a hot enough fire under it to kill their catch; remorselessly, relentlessly and chuckling with unholy glee. In death the clam's jaws relaxed and he opened up. Then with his fellows he was thrown upon a sieve and his meat searched for pearls, and (tradition says) yielded one of the big pearl finds of the season.

For pearls, as you may know, are the object of the clammer's warfare on the clam. Hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of them are every year taken from the clams of the Mississippi, and several times single pearls valued at more than a thousand dollars have been found. The clammer, however, believes in utilizing the by-products, and after throwing away the clam meat or selling it to neighboring farmers to feed their hogs, starts the shells on their way to the button factory.

