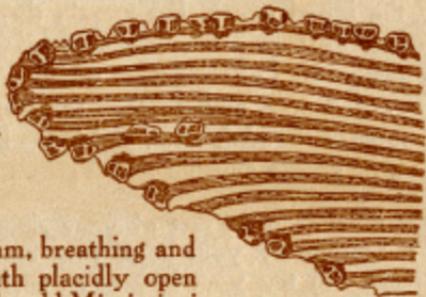


# The Story of My Life by "Billie Button"

## CHAPTER III. *The clam's halcyon days—with a forewarning of trouble.*

THE glochidium, when thrust out by the mother clam into the cold and cruel world, closes its embryo shell on the fins or gills of the first fish that comes along, a sac or cyst forms about it, and it lives in this state for a few weeks, during which time it develops into a full fledged mussel. This doesn't hurt the fish at all, and is mighty beneficial to His Clamlets. The time spent as a parasite differs from two to six weeks, depending upon the particular kind of clam that is making its way in the world.

Bye and bye the glochidium gets tired of being dependent upon other folk, opens up the door of its house on the fish's fin and drops off to the bottom of the stream, where it takes its place in the clam bed as a fully developed, (although not fully grown), clam, breathing and sleeping, and keeping its mouth placidly open for the generous food supply the old Mississippi brings along. If the water is pure and runs rapidly, all's well and the clam thrives, but if a sewage system or factory pours its polluting waste into the stream, its existence is likely to be cut prematurely short.



"Very well," you say, "but is this the life story of a Clam or of a Pearl-Button?" Be patient, I'm coming to that, but first I must tell you how the clam's lot nowadays isn't such a soft snap after all, how it's worried and flurried, hunted and harried, and finally dragged forth from its bed to a slaughter of the innocents.

Here's how: For many years the clam from whose shell I sprang lay in a Mississippi clam-bed, with millions of its relatives. There it staid, eating its fill and growing in Summer, in Winter lying dormant; each year of its life marked by lines and grooves on its shell. For the first few years it grew rapidly, then slower and slower until—



ONE DAY SOMETHING HAPPENED.