

# The Story of My Life by "Billie Button"

CHAPTER V. A very important chapter, for it chronicles the author's birth.

A FEW days before this clam I've been telling about was dragged to its doom, a buyer for the Wisconsin Pearl Button Company, of La Crosse, Wisconsin, happened along and gathered up samples of shells from this particular "bed." At the factory these samples went through searching tests for color, lustre and breakage, proving up so well that the buyer contracted for the season's shell output from the bed.

The Upper Mississippi Clam, by the way, yields a superior grade of shell, for the changes of the Northern Climate make it rugged and vigorous. Its character reflects the stern and upbuilding experiences of northern climes. Let other buttons trace their source to the Arkansas or the Wabash. I am proud that I got my start "Up North."

In the carload, with my progenitor, were hundreds of different kinds and grades of shells. But no two of these can be cut precisely alike, so, as soon as the factory is reached, in steps an army of sorters, keen-eyed judges of family likenesses, and presently every kind and size of shell in the car has found its way to a bin filled with its "nearest-like" relatives.

## AND HERE'S WHERE MY OWN LIFE STORY REALLY BEGINS.

"Once upon a very fine day," as the stor, book says, the head "cutter" called for the particular grade of shells to which my ancestral clam shell belonged. For a week it had been preparing with his fellows for the ordeal in which ITS identity was to be lost and MINE begun—soaking in a vat of water to make it tougher and less brittle. But finally up to the cutting room it went. Here a man specially trained in cutting this one kind of shell seized it, put it on a lathe beneath a little cylindrical saw, applied the power, and—b-z-z!, the miracle had been wrought—I was born.

Not yet, however, was I a full fledged button—only a BLANK—one of hundreds of the same size, with dozens of other sizes and grades dropping out of machines all around.

