FICTION HEIRESS
OF
DR. BURDELL.

CONFESSIONS OF THE ACCOUCHER.

EMMA A.

BOLD GAME OF MRS. CUNNINGHAM.

MRS. EMMA A. CUNNINGHAM.

[From a Daguerreotype by Wilton.]

BOSTON:
FOR SALE BY ALL PERIODICAL DEALERS.
1857.
MRS. CUNNINGHAM

AND HER ACCOMPLICES.

The public were set into a fever of excitement on Tuesday, August 4th, by the development of a new and bold manœuvre in the complicated Burdell murder and property case, a plot so audacious and so deliberately carried out that it looks more like the romantic invention of a novel writer than the sober reality of actual experience. The history of the transaction, fully and accurately detailed, is given in the following accounts: —

THE PLOT AND THE ACTORS.

While Mrs. Cunningham was confined in the Tombs, awaiting her trial on the charge of murdering Dr. Burdell, she sent for Dr. Uhl, who had long been her regular family physician, to attend her. Dr. Uhl, however, hesitated to comply with her wishes until he obtained a written order from the District-Attorney, which was readily granted. Upon visiting her, she intimated that she wished Dr. Uhl to prescribe for her as he would for any woman exhibiting symptoms of being in the family way. Upon hearing this remark from her, Dr. Uhl interrogated her as to her being enciente. Mrs. C., in reply, said that she could not then give any information on that point. Nothing further was then said on the subject; but in the course of a conversation between Dr. Uhl and Mrs. Foster, the matron of the City Prison, the latter observed that she had been given to understand by Mrs. C. that she (Mrs. C.) was likely to furnish an heir to the property of Dr. Burdell.

Although Dr. Uhl continued to visit Mrs. C. occasionally, at the Tombs, nothing further of interest transpired; but after her trial and acquittal, and her return to 31 Bond street, she again requested the attendance of Dr. Uhl, alleging that she had symptoms of pregnancy; and on one occasion she informed him that she desired to have his professional services during her approaching confinement. Dr. Uhl, not feeling exactly satisfied with the aspect of affairs, observed to Mrs. C. that in a case of this kind, where there had been so much notoriety given to every thing connected with her, he should require several physicians who were well known in the community, to be present when the anticipated interesting event should occur; that she should be permitted to select them, and further, that it was of the utmost importance that these gentlemen whom he should call in consultation should be allowed to make an examination of her person at the earliest possible opportunity.
Mrs. Cunningham apparently acquiesced in Dr. Uhl's suggestion, whereupon he mentioned to her the names of several eminent physicians he had selected for the purpose. From this time Dr. Uhl perceived a great change in Mrs. Cunningham's bearing toward him, and she endeavored as much as possible to avoid having any conversation on the subject, and appeared anxious to defer the examination of her person. These circumstances naturally aroused the suspicions of Dr. Uhl that all was not exactly as it should be. He was induced to intimate the nature of his suspicions to one of the gentlemen connected with the case, and pressed upon the latter the importance of having the proposed examination made immediately, to know if all was right. The person alluded to assured Dr. Uhl that all was straight in the matter, and that it was arranged for Dr. Catlin, of Brooklyn, and himself (Dr. Uhl), to attend her. [It may be proper here to observe that up to this time, Dr. Uhl had no acquaintance with Dr. Catlin.]

In the course of a few days, Dr. Uhl called again upon Mrs. Cunningham, when she confessed to him that she was not enciente, but that she should be obliged to produce a child, even if it should not be her own, and solicited the assistance of Dr. Uhl in the matter, for which service she promised to be quite liberal in a pecuniary point of view. Dr. Uhl apparently acquiesced in her plans, and without giving her any definite answer or satisfaction, promised to call again at an early day. Thus discovering that Mrs. C. had not only been deceiving him, but that she also proposed implicating him in her crimes, he proceeded to the office of his legal adviser, David E. Wheeler, Esq., laid the facts of the case before him, and asked his advice in the matter. Mr. Wheeler advised Dr. Uhl to remain quiet a few days and watch the proceedings and conduct of Mrs. Cunningham, and if any further progress was made in the fraud, to communicate with the District-Attorney.

This course was pursued. After stating the facts to Mr. Hall, Dr. Uhl remarked that he desired to make an affidavit in the case, and retire, as he should then feel that he had done his duty to the public without appearing conspicuously in the matter. The District Attorney would not agree to this course on the part of Dr. Uhl, and insisted that the latter should aid him in every possible way in making a perfect job of the case, by insuring the detection of the accused in the crime she then intended to commit. With the understanding of having another interview in reference to this matter at an early day, Dr. Uhl left, and proceeded to consult with his legal adviser, some gentlemen of the medical profession, and other friends, as to the course he ought to pursue in the matter; and, without a single exception, they not only urged but insisted that he do all in his power to further the ends of public justice, by assisting Mr. Hall. After mature deliberation, he concluded to do so, and acted thenceforward under the District Attorney's directions.

According to the suggestions offered by Mr. Hall, Dr. Uhl occasionally called upon Mrs. Cunningham, and conversed with her relative to the approaching event. It was finally arranged that Dr. Catlin, of Brooklyn, should attend her, and that Dr. Uhl should be called in to consult. In the course of a conversation between Dr. Uhl and Mrs. Cunningham, the former inquired whether Dr. Catlin could be relied upon in the matter, or in other words, whether he could
be intrusted with the secret, and in reply, Mrs. Cunningham assured him that such was the case,—"For," observed she, "I have him completely under my thumb."

About the same time, in a conversation between Dr. Catlin and Dr. Uhl concerning the respective parts which they were to take in the approaching event, Dr. Catlin admitted that he had devised this scheme of having a fictitious accouchement from the beginning, and that he had done so because he thought she was an abused woman, who ought to be revenged; but he concluded that they needed another physician, and was pleased to find that Dr. Uhl had been selected.

It was finally arranged that the great event of producing an heir for Dr. Burdell’s property should take place some time this week, and to Dr. Uhl was intrusted the task of hunting up the "little stranger." Things having advanced thus far, Dr. Uhl, accompanied by Dr. De la Montagne (a brother-in-law of the District Attorney), immediately sallied out in quest of suitable apartments, of which they could obtain temporary occupation. Rooms were met with at No. 190 Elm street, and there, it was represented to Mrs. Cunningham, resided a married lady, who, during the absence of her husband in California, had been rather easy in her manners, and was about to give birth to a child, which she under the circumstances would be glad to dispose of. The room was at once neatly furnished with furniture from the house of the District Attorney. The rooms were taken possession of by Dr. Montagne, under the name of Karl L. Herring, to correspond with the initials upon a trunk purporting to belong to the California widow.

All things being ready for action here, and the Bellevue Hospital furnishing on Monday a fine new-born infant, it was resolved by those in the secret to bring matters to a crisis at once. Mrs. Cunningham was accordingly notified that the heir had been born, and could be obtained that evening. Upon receiving this information, Mrs. C. said she would send a lady (whose name she refused to give) to look at the place so as to know where to go to at a later hour. Dr. Uhl returned to No. 190 Elm street, and kept watch for the lady who was to be sent to reconnoitre the premises; and in a short time a person made her appearance, passed by, and inspected the place. That lady, although in the disguise of a Sister of Charity, Dr. Uhl recognized as Mrs. Cunningham herself. As soon as she had left the neighborhood, Dr. Uhl again visited No. 31 Bond street, when Mrs. Cunningham called a lady, whom Dr. Uhl recognized as her sister (Mrs. Burns), into the room, and asked her if she was ready to go for the child, when Mrs. Burns asked for the dark dress, and Mrs. Cunningham told her where it was. It was then arranged between Mrs. C. and the Doctor that he should go to No. 190 Elm street, and wait at the front hall till the lady to be sent should come; and in order to avoid any mistake in the matter, the lady was to carry a white handkerchief in her hand. After waiting about fifteen minutes, the lady appeared who had previously reconnoitered the premises, carrying a white handkerchief in her hand as agreed upon. The lady wore a long, black dress, and hood or close bonnet, after the style worn by the Sisters of Charity — her face being almost covered; but from her manner, form, and general bearing, Dr. Uhl again recognized her to be none