Holdenhurst Hall

A Novel.

BY

WALTER BLOOMFIELD

CHAPTER V.
Continued.

"Oh, Annie is a few months younger than I. When she was about fourteen her father apprenticed her in one of the big drapery establishments in the West End of London, but we don't know which. She didn't go to New Zealand with her father. Further than that we know nothing about her."

"Then I am not your youngest aunt?"

"I don't know, I am sure," was my reply.

"I am twenty-six," confessed aunt Gertrude.

"Then, if Annie is living, I have an aunt nearly seven years younger. As I said, she is younger than I by a few months."

Aunt Gertrude sighed, turned somewhat abruptly from the picture, and walked through the open window on to the verandah.

The view from our verandah is probably as good as from any point in Suffolk distant from the coast. Accepting as truth a popular fallacy some will think this is faint praise, but those acquainted with the county will hardly so regard it. No part of England is less esteemed by English people than the eastern counties, but this, like many other of our national prejudices, does not admit of any explanation. The absurd fact remains. A rolling country, highly cultivated here and there, interspersed with abundance of wild open spaces and woods which shelter immense quantities of game, with a rainfall the most moderate in Britain, would, it might well be supposed, attract many visitors—especially from London, but it is not so, and East Anglia is left very much to East Anglians, particularly in that part of it called Suffolk.

The weather was delightful, the clear blue sky being streaked here and there with slowly moving white clouds, the temperature mild and refreshing, the sunshine brilliant—a spring morning fraught with every condition to promote health and buoyancy of spirit. Aunt Gertrude shaded her eyes with her hand and looked out toward the old abbey town. Bury St. Edmund's, eight miles distant, could be faintly discerned, separated from us by a fine stretch of undulating country.

"How delightfully green everything is in England!" exclaimed my aunt enthusiastically.

"Particularly the people," observed a voice at our back.

The voice belonged to uncle Sam. Turning round we saw that gentleman just within the room, standing in a jaunty attitude, his hands in his pockets, chewing the end of an unlighted cigar. My father was with him and had a pair of field-glasses in his hand.

This unexpected interruption appeared to annoy my aunt. "You are not very complimentary to your own people," she said, slightly tossing her delicately poised head.

Her husband perceived her mood. "All right, my dear," he said, in his most affable manner, as he stepped on to the verandah, "I forgot for the moment that some Americans are more English than the English themselves. Just let me look at the boundary line of this place and I am gone." So saying he took the field-glasses from my father, who remained within, and surveyed the prospect for a couple of minutes. Having completed his observation he made no further remark, but re-entered the room and disappeared with his brother.

It was not long before my aunt and I followed. We went through a number of rooms, some of them named after distinguished guests who had occupied them long ago—Camden, Swift, Addison, Butler, Purcell and others of less note—the lady evincing greater interest in the quaint furniture than in the historical associations to which I endeavored to direct her attention.

In this way did I amuse my aunt for three hours, conducting her at last through the clean, dry stone crypt, which formed the basement of the house. This crypt was very ancient, being the only unaltered portion of the old abbey which supplied the site, and in part the material, for Holdenhurst Hall. The stonework of the spacious arches seemed quite uninjured by time; and, though they contained much lumber, there still remained ample room for a procession of monks to pass through them. Aunt Gertrude was much interested, and constantly plied me with questions about the habits of the original ecclesiastical occupants as I preceded her through this strange place, lantern in hand.

"Why is that last arch bricked up?" she inquired.

I looked at the object of her inquiry. "I haven't the remotest ide' noticed it before. It is rarely anybody comes down here," I said.

It was now time to prepare for luncheon, and we ascended the steps which led into the house. In the hall we again met my father and uncle.

"Well," asked uncle Sam, addressing his wife, "what do you think of the old place?"

"Very interesting, indeed. I have enjoyed myself immensely."

"I am glad to hear it," said my father. "You must be very tired. Lunch will be served in a few minutes. I have invited the Rev. Mr. Fuller."

"The devil you have!" exclaimed uncle Sam. "Is he a good fellow?"

"The rector of Holdenhurst Major has been my friend for ten years."

"I hate parsons," said uncle Sam.

CHAPTER VI.

UNCLE SAM AND THE REV. SILAS FULLER

My father's intimation that he had invited the Rev. Silas Fuller to luncheon disturbed me. I knew Mr. Fuller very well, and I was beginning to know my uncle a little. Two men differing more widely in habit and opinion it would be difficult to find, and I feared that a conversation between them might afford my father and me more embarrassment than entertainment.

The Rector of Holdenhurst Major was a thin, spare man, a little on the wrong side of fifty, short of stature, neat in appearance, formal and precise in manner and speech. The deference which for many years had been paid to this reverend gentleman by the most tractable but ignorant peasantry in England, had bred in him a somewhat dogmatic style. Like most of his class, he had married early in life, choosing for his wife a portionless lady about three times his own size, who, in lieu of dowry, had presented her lord with seven daughters and four sons in the most rapid succession permitted by the laws of Nature. The living of Holdenhurst Major was worth £220 a year in money, with a tolerable house, and five acres of land all told. Such were the means at the disposal of this clergyman of the Church of England, and with them he had to support himself, his wife, his eleven children, two servants, one pony, one dog, and one cat, as well as take a material interest in the well-being of the poor of the parish—that is to say, of the entire population; for my father and the Rector were by very much the richest persons in the place. I remember also a canary, said to have been the pet of the eldest daughter, that was once a member of this clerical household; but it died—whether from the draught through the window, of inanition, or as prey to the hungry cat, I could never correctly ascertain.

I felt that my worse fears were shortly to be realized when—introductions over, seats taken, and grace said—my uncle opened the conversation by inquiring of Mr. Fuller how business was looking, hastily correcting his sentence, and substituting "church matters" for "business."

"I thank you, Mr. Truman," replied the Rector, with great deliberation, as he slowly smoothed the puckers in his waistcoat with his left hand, while his right grasped the wine-glass which he had been about to raise to his lips when addressed; "I thank you, Mr. Truman, for your kind inquiry. It is very considerate of you to ask such a question. Too little interest is taken in the Church by persons not immediately connected with the Church—far too little interest. Born in the Church, if I may so express myself (for both my father and grandfather held curacies at Splashmire-on-Orwell), and myself, I trust, a conscientious, hard-working minister of the Church, I fully appreciate the comprehensiveness and importance of the question with which you have been so good as to favor me. It is only on the occasion of my visits to the Hall that I find myself in a situation to be so intelligently interrogated. I fear my answer must be somewhat different from that which doubtless your position in life and your proper opinions induce you to desire. The Church, alas! has many enemies; and among her enemies are some who should be her friends; though I rejoice to inform you that we of this district are rather exceptionally free from such adverse influences. The unprecedented depression in agriculture, however, and the uncertain, though certainly unchristian, procedure of one whom I think, without the remotest exhibition of partisanship, I may stigmatize as the evil genius of England, Mr. Glad——"

Mr. Fuller had only proceeded thus far with his answer—the bare preliminary to a fifteen minutes' discourse—when uncle Sam's impatience, of which I had been watching the growth with alarm, reached an unbearable point, and he cried out:

"Was that your pony I saw coming up the path about half-an-hour ago?"

"It was," replied the Rector, much surprised at such an extraordinary interruption.

"The animal seems in a very bad condition," observed uncle Sam.

"Madcap is rather old," said the Rev. Mr. Fuller, looking very uncomfortable; "we have had him a good many years."

I think it must have occurred to my uncle that the subject of conversation which he had so unwittingly started could not be effectually dismissed in this unceremonious way, for after a brief pause, he himself re-opened it.

"I suppose there are not many prizes in the Church of England, and that the few which exist are well preserved by the cliques with a present grasp on them. For a professor of religion, if he has brains, I think, after all, Nonconformity offers the best field; but for a slow man, with a taste for a large family and a dull life, doubtless the Church is best."

These words plunged my father and me into great confusion of mind. It is true they were spoken by one who knew little or nothing of the circumstances of the Rev. Mr. Fuller—who indeed had never so much as heard of that gentleman until an hour before—but their effect was none the less disastrous. My father coughed, I choked, and aunt Gertrude asked me to oblige her by passing the water.

"I suppose the collections in a place like this are very trifling," said uncle Sam.

"We collected £8 last Harvest Thanksgiving," answered the Rector.

"What became of the money?" asked my uncle.

"All our collections are given away in charity. The £8 of which I spoke—the largest collection of the year—was paid over to the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Society."

"Oh, I see," said uncle Sam. "Now matter of collections in churches is one of the many things which we manage better on the other side of the Atlantic. I am not thinking of Holdenhurst, for of course there is no money here to collect anyway; I am thinking of New York and London. Why, I remember when I was a boy in England in some churches the collecting boxes were fixtures at each side of the door! Could anything have been more absurd? Any effect which the eloquent begging of the preacher had produced died away like the memory of a dream as one walked along the aisles, and the posts supporting the money-boxes were passed as heedlessly as the lamp-posts in the street. After that, if I remember rightly, the plan was to place a plateholder at each side of the door. This was better; but the plan had two glaring defects: nothing was easier than for the people in the middle of the stream of passers-out to affect not to see the plates, neither was there any check on the doings of the plate holders. The next plan to be adopted, which I recollect, was the passing of a bag in front of each person present in church. This plan, though an improvement, was not without a serious defect. A penny, skillfully dropped into the bag, chinked as loudly as half-a-crown or a sovereign, and produced as good an effect upon the other occupants of a pew as would have been produced by one or other of the more valuable coins. After a while, plates were substituted for bags, only partly removing this objection; and this, I think, is as far as you have got in England."

"How are collections taken in American churches?" inquired Mr. Fuller, with evident interest.

"By the envelope system. Two deacons pass round the church, the first carrying a tray full of envelopes and a pencil, the second an empty tray. Each contributor places his contribution in an envelope, seals it, and writes his name on the outside. Deacon number two collects the filled envelopes, and at the next service the name of each contributor, and the amount of his contribution is publicly announced, the giver of the largest amount first; and so on. When there are several persons who give a like amount, their names are announced in alphabetical order. It is a perfect plan, and I have unqualified admiration for the man who conceived it—he read human nature well. It meets all requirements, and nothing in it can be objected to. The man who wants to advertise himself is invited, as it were, to assist the Church equally with the simple-minded giver—for I assume that the motive for giving signifies nothing so long as the dollars are scooped. Fraud is checkmated, and it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of that; for surely no one will so abuse his intelligence as to deny that in every congregation Ananias and Barabbas find more imitators than any other Biblical characters."

"There is certainly a great deal of villainy in the world," confessed Mr. Fuller sadly.

"You would say so with greater emphasis if you were a member of the Stock Exchange," said uncle Sam.

At this stage my father made a commendable but not very successful effort to change the subject of conversation. Aunt Gertrude sat silent and neglected, and everybody in the room except uncle Sam appeared ill at ease. As for myself, I was desperately uncomfortable, and desired nothing so much as the termination of this memorable meal. My uncle, I knew, would not prolong it by one minute—that was not one of his faults—but the Rev. Mr. Fuller, who was a miracle of slowness, had to be reckoned with; and that gentleman ate as leisurely as he talked, which is saying a great deal. After some skilful fencing my father at last diverted his brother's remarks from church affairs to decimal coinage, of which monetary system uncle Sam was a redoubtable champion; and from that moment until he rose from the table the guns of his eloquence played mercilessly upon what he was pleased to call the absurd English chaos of fours, twelves, and twenties.

To be continued.

Stoddard's Modesty.

As is not the case with many present-day celebrities, no one could justly accuse Richard H. Stoddard with being puffed up with an exaggerated idea of his own greatness.

"Well," said a friend to him several years before his death, "the papers will say a lot about you when you die."

"My friend," was the poet's quiet reply, "I will scarcely be mentioned."

Fashion Notes

New York City.—Pretty house jackets are among the comforts of life that no woman should be without. This one is quite novel, inasmuch as it includes

HOUSE JACKET.

garments of the sort are appropriate for immediate wear, challie, albatross and the like for cooler weather. The shaped back gives admirable lines and a yoke collar that extends well over the shoulders, and is both simple and attractive. The original, from which the drawing was made, is of white batiste, ring-dotted with blue and trimmed with bands of embroidery, collar and cuffs being of white, but all the pretty washable fabrics used for also an effect of neatness, while the loose fronts are both graceful and comfortable. When liked the box pleats can be omitted and gathers used in their stead.

The jacket consists of the fronts, joined to a round yoke, backs and side-backs with full sleeves. The yoke-collar is separate and arranged over the whole and there is a choice allowed between a turn-over and a standing collar. At the wrists are shaped cuffs that harmonize with the yoke-collar and are exceedingly effective.

The quantity of material required for the medium size is four and three-quarter yards twenty-seven inches wide, four and three-quarter yards fifty-two inches wide or two and five-eighth yards forty-four inches wide, with four yards of binding to trim as illustrated.

Sage Green Silk and Voile.

Sage green silk and very thin voile were combined in a graceful gown. The skirt was laid in very tiny pleats and was a triple affair. The first skirt ended in a deep hem like a tuck, under which was a band of silk shirred very closely. A second pleating and band of shirred silk and a deep tucked flounce finished the skirt. The bodice was pleated and had a collar and stole of heavy white lace. The silk-shirred bands appeared on the elaborate sleeves, which had cuff bands of the lace. High silk girdle.

About Crush Belts.

Many who started in to wear the crush leather belts have ruined one or two already by drawing them too tight. You cannot draw the crush belt up as you would a plain belt.

Fancy Sleeves.

Fancy sleeves make features of the season too apparent and far too charming to be overlooked. The three shown are all graceful, all smart, yet all simple withal and can be utilized both for the new garments and for those of last season, which must be made up to date. The model to the left, in elbow length, is made of white chiffon louisine over cream net and is trimmed with lace applique. Its lines are admirable, and it suits all the soft fashionable materials. The sleeve in the centre is full length, with cuff and frills of cream lace, sleeve and under-sleeve of white mercerized batiste, and the sleeve to the right is shown in simple sheer lawn with the frill of net top lace falling in becoming folds, but combinations of many sorts can be made.

The sleeves are all made over fitted foundations on which the full portions are arranged and which serve to keep the puffs in place. In the case of the sleeve to the left the under puff is cut off several inches below the upper edge and the outer sleeve is gathered. The full length sleeve includes a deep cuff, faced onto the lining, under-sleeve and outer sleeve exactly like those already described, except that the latter is tucked, and is finished with double frills. The third and last sleeve is a simple drooping puff that is shirred to fit the upper arm snugly, and is finished with a single shaped frill.

The quantity of material required for the medium size is for elbow sleeves one and seven-eighth yards twenty-one inches wide, one and one-eighth yards twenty-seven inches wide or five-eighth yards forty-four inches wide, with one yard eighteen or one-half yard forty inches wide for under-sleeves and two and a half yards of applique; for full length sleeves three and five-eighth yards twenty-one, two and a half yards twenty-seven or one and three-quarter yards forty-four inches wide, with one-half yard of all-over lace, four yards of lace for frills and two and a half yards of applique; for elbow sleeves with frills two and a quarter yards twenty-one, one and seven-eighth yards, twenty-seven or one and three-eighth yards forty-four inches wide, with two yards of lace to make as illustrated.

FANCY SLEEVES.

A Late Design by May Manton.

END OF BREESE TRIAL

Alleged Wrecker of Asheville Bank Gets Seven-Year Sentence

TRIAL WAS LONG AND TEDIOUS

After Being Out for a Little More Than Seven Hours, the Jury Returns a Verdict of Guilty of Abstraction and Misapplication of Funds, But Not Guilty of Embezzlement.

Charlotte, N. C., Special.—The jury in the Breese case returned a verdict of guilty at 12.25 Saturday morning, and the former president of the First National Bank of Asheville was at once sentenced by United States District Judge B. F. Keller to serve a term of seven years in the penitentiary. The verdict was found on 42 counts out of the sixty-six, or those charging abstraction and wilful misapplication of the funds of the bank.

Seven years ago to a day the First National Bank of Asheville closed its doors. Such is the co-incidence that the closing day of a trial lasting for 17 years should have ended seven years after prosecution and publicity began to beat like a fierce white light on the management of the affairs of the wrecked bank. In a little more than seven hours, the verdict was returned. At 11.45 the jury returned to their box. The defendant and his counsel being absent, they were immediately sent for, and soon, Major William E. Breese, the defendant, accompanied by Judge C. A. Moore and Mr. J. S. Adams, arrived in the Federal Court room. This was a few minutes past twelve o'clock. At 12.12 the jury was polled, and three minutes later, Col. H. C. Cowles, clerk of the court, asked in a solemn tone:

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon your verdict?"

"We have," responded J. K. Patterson, who had been selected to speak for them.

"How do you find the defendant, William E. Breese?"

"Not guilty of embezzlement, but guilty of abstraction and wilful misapplication of funds."

Major Breese sat perfectly still. He looked a little haggard, but beyond a biting of his lips, he showed no sign of emotion.

The clerk asked counsel for the defense if they wished the jury polled. Upon their reply in the affirmative, Col. Cowles called each juror to his feet, asking each of them, "How say you" and receiving the answer of the verdict as first spoken. Judge Moore then made a motion for arrest of judgment and for a new trial, both of which were overruled by Judge Keller.

District Attorney Holton prayed the judgment of the court at 12.25 o'clock. Judge Keller asked counsel for defense if they wished to say anything for Maj. Breese. They had nothing to say. Judge Keller then instructed the defendant to stand up, and addressed him as follows:

"Mr. Breese, you have been convicted after what I am persuaded is a fair and impartial trial for abstraction and wilful misapplication of the moneys, funds and credits of the First National Bank of Asheville. As a man I feel sorry for you, but I have my duty to perform.

"It is ordered and adjudged by the court that you, William E. Breese, the defendant, be imprisoned for the term of seven years, in the penitentiary, at Atlanta, Ga., and that your sentence begin this, the 30th day of July."

Judge Moore applied for a writ of error to the Circuit Court of Appeals at Richmond, Va. On account of the lateness of the hour this matter was left open until Saturday morning. The minimum sentence would have been five years, the maximum ten years, on each count.

Counsel for the defense will try to secure a new trial on a writ of error to the Circuit Court of Appeals at Richmond, Va. Should they fail in this they may apply to the Supreme Court of the United States for a writ of certiorari, which, if obtained, would mean that the lower court must review the case anew. This was the fourth trial the defendant had been subjected to. In one he was convicted, and there have been two mistrials. As trial after trial has come up, the mass of evidence has grown, as may be inferred by the long term of time required for its disposal here. The most intense interest has been manifest throughout the trial, not only because of the notoriety of the Asheville bank failure, but also on account of the remarkable personality of Major Breese. He has not flinched under the most rigorous assaults of the prosecution, and it is agreed that Mr. Holton and his assistants have spared neither energy nor brain nor money to secure conviction. Major Breese is a veritable man of iron, of splendid physique, distinguished looking, and with a big brain and an impertable nerve. Some of the jurors were heard to express the deepest sympathy for Major Breese, after they had returned the verdict.

Galveston's Sea Wall Complete.

Galveston, Texas, Special.—This afternoon the last skid of concrete was placed in the mold, marking the completion of Galveston's sea wall. The wall represents an expenditure of $1,198,318 by the county, and has taken one year, four months and fourteen days to build. The first pile was driven on October 27, 1902, and the first concrete placed January 27, 1903. It is 17,593 feet long, 16 feet high and 5 feet wide on top.