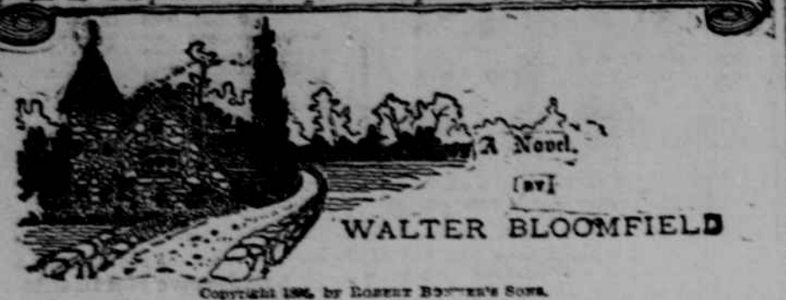
Holdenhurst Hall



A Novel.

[BY]

WALTER BLOOMFIELD

CHAPTER VI.

Continued.

Luncheon over, I sought to create a diversion by reminding my uncle of his engagement to examine the Holdenhurst deeds. He seemed very pleased with my attention to his wishes, and at once followed me into the library, my father and the other two guests adjourning to the drawing-room. It was then I learned that uncle Sam had been in the library with my father in the morning, and had looked through some of the deeds. He spent the whole of the afternoon in completing his examination of them, talking to me on various subjects meanwhile, and amusing me greatly with his blunt candor and his unsparing criticism of village communities in England. His strictures upon the Rev. Mr. Fuller were no less amusing than severe, and my sides ached so much from continued laughter that I was much relieved when at last he rose and said:

"There, my boy; I have done. Replace them carefully where you took them from, until I send your father a steel safe worthy to contain them. They are very interesting and ought to be carefully preserved if only for their historical interest. By-and-bye, your father told me just now that he has invited yet another parson to dine here this evening—the Vicar of Holdenhurst Minor. You know him, of course."

I replied that I knew him very well indeed.

"I would rather be at war with twenty brokers for a year," continued uncle Sam, "than talk with a parson for an hour. In a small company it is impossible to ignore an individual member of it, and I could never listen to anything from a parson without replying to it—except in church; and I have often been tempted to do so there. I am afraid I shocked your father somewhat at luncheon; though, Goodness knows, I said nothing either untrue or unreasonable. I speak as I think, and hope always to do so. However, I intend to be as reserved as my nature will permit at dinner to-day."

This declaration was a distinct relief to me, though in no case should I have much feared a meeting between my uncle and the Rev. Evan Price.

The Vicar of Holdenhurst Minor was a youthful bachelor, and enjoyed an income of £80 a year. There being no vicarage in the parish, the reverand gentleman lodged with a farmer, whose two daughters made it the chief business of their lives to please him. Indeed, the competition among the female community of Holdenhurst Minor and thereabouts for the smiles of the Rev. Evan Price was very keen, a condition of affairs to which the reverend gentleman owed many substantial benefits. Probably no man in England was better provided with slippers than the Rev. Evan Price; and there was a rumor that his name was recorded in the last will and testament of at least one wealthy old maid. The smallness of his income was balanced by his popularity, which was based upon his fine athletic appearance, his affable manner, his skill as a cricketer, and the brevity of his sermons. He had a great many friends and no enemies, and on less than a hundred a year contrived to live better than many another man with an income ten times as large.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSTANCE MARSH.

The visit of my uncle and aunt to Holdenhurst was soon ended. Uncle Sam tried hard to induce my father and me to accompany him to London for a few weeks, but father would not consent to such an arrangement. Several farms on the estate had been for a long time without tenants, and we were working them ourselves by the aid of a steward. The first week of April had now arrived, and my father did not feel himself justified in leaving the place. He agreed, however, that I should go to London with my uncle and aunt and remain their guest for three weeks, it being further arranged that on the termination of my stay in town I was to take my father's place at Holdenhurst, while he, in his turn, visited his brother, that our interests in Suffolk might not be left entirely to the care of dependents.

The liberality of uncle Sam astonished everybody with whom he came into contact during his stay in Suffolk, and it would exceed the limits of this chapter to recite his benefactions, but it is essential to the purpose of these memoirs to refer to a few of the more remarkable.

In addition to clearing off the large mortgage upon the Holdenhurst estate he paid to the credit of my father's banking account no less a sum than £5000, "for present use," as he said. He advocated the laying waste of every farm in both the Holdenhursts and converting the entire estate into a large park. "That done," said he, "and the hall thoroughly repaired and partly refurnished, the place will be worth living in for six or eight weeks in each year."

To the first of these proposals my mother declined to agree, whereupon uncle Sam remarked that he considered him a fool, but the proposal to renovate the hall was accepted. Any unfavorable impression which uncle Sam might have created on the mind of the Rev. Mr. Fuller at their first meeting was speedily removed when next they met, and my uncle announced his intention, if permitted by his brother, of restoring the church of Holdenhurst Major, an ancient edifice much decayed. The necessary permission being at once given, uncle Sam said he would have the church examined by an ecclesiastical architect, and order the restoration to be made at once. "I don't suppose the job will cost more than £1000 or £1500," said he, whereat Mr. Fuller dropped his lower jaw on his white tie, aghast at the presence of a man who could talk so arily of such large sums of money.

The moment of our departure having arrived our comfortable old carriage, drawn by a pair of greys, stood ready at the door, old John—among whose duties was numbered that of a coachman—sitting on the box. As uncle Sam, aunt Gertrude, my father and I passed through the hall my uncle hesitated and stopped. "Where are the servants?" he asked, and being told they were in the kitchen he desired them to be called. Our entire domestic establishment, consisting of four women and a boy, responded to the invitation. Hastily giving two sovereigns to each of the women and a half sovereign to the boy he stayed not to hear their thanks, but handed his wife into the carriage. Uncle Sam and I followed, the driver cracked his whip and the horses walked slowly down the path as we waved our hands to my father, who stood outside the house in the porch.

It was some minutes before the hall was lost to our view, and to the last moment it seemed to engage my uncle's attention. "There, Gertie," said he, pointing to the old house from which we were now rapidly receding, "to think that it was a mere accident—a woman's feeble will—that saved me from spending my life in that place!"

I was surprised and not altogether pleased at hearing my home—where no effort had been spared to make our guests comfortable—spoken of in this contemptuous manner, but concluded from my uncle's munificence that he was an extraordinarily rich man, accustomed to the best of everything the world could supply, and consequently quite out of his element in a Suffolk village.

"Don't you think, Sam, the antiquated appearance of the old hall will suffer from the repairs you are going to make?" asked aunt Gertrude.

"Not a bit in the world. The main structure won't be interfered with."

"I think I would prefer it as it is, if it were mine."

"All old places have to be repaired—some of them pretty much and often," said uncle Sam, selecting a cigar from his case. "I don't doubt but Queen Anne would have some difficulty in recognizing Windsor Castle if that lady could come to life again to look at it; it is continually being patched. As for Westminster Abbey, I question if a handful of the original structure remains. A small snuff-box would contain the dust of all the Pharaohs. Everything substantial is transient and passes away. Human nature alone is unaltered and unalterable. Consider that parson Fuller. Two days ago he could hardly disguise his horror of me; yet when I offered to restore Holdenhurst Church did you notice how his tongue fell out of his mouth as if he wanted to lick my boots on the spot? I suppose the poor chap hopes for a commission from the contractor. Well, I'll see that he's not disappointed."

"Sam, Sam, how you do talk," said his wife reprovingly; then turning to me as I sat silent with folded arms, "I am afraid, Ernest, it will take you some time to understand your uncle. He's awfully cynical, but those who know him best like him best."

I forget what answer I made, but certainly I was not disposed to converse much. The novel experiences of the last few days, and speculations as to my visit to London engrossed my thoughts. Though I had more than completed nineteen years of life I had seen little or nothing of the world. Eleven of those years had been passed in a school at Bury St. Edmund's, with the exception of the interval between Friday night and Monday morning each week, which was spent at home. During the school holidays my father had been accustomed to take me with him to the seaside—Lowestoft, Yarmouth, Aldborough, or some other of the summer resorts on the east coast—and occasionally to London. My acquaintance with the world being comprised within these narrow limits, and the present being the first occasion on which, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, I had left home, I was moved to contemplation. Particularly did I regret my defective education—defective because of the idleness of my nature and my love of reading poetry and fiction. I had been well and carefully taught, but was never able to acquire more than a smattering of Latin, Greek and French, insufficient to enable me to read with interest a book in any of those languages. English I had mastered fairly well, and developed some facility in its composition; while for music it was acknowledged that I had more than ordinary ability. I was painfully conscious that my mental equipment was a very poor one, and wondered whether my uncle would keep much company during his stay in England, what sort of people his friends were, and in what manner they would regard a young gentleman of such slender attainments as mine.

Both my uncle and aunt endeavored to make me talk, but they were not very successful in their efforts, and little more was said before our carriage passed rapidly through Northgate street, Bury St. Edmund's, and dashed into the station yard there.

Uncle Sam was the first to alight. "See to your aunt and the luggage there, Ernest," he said, and then ran up the stairs three steps at a time.

"He is always like this when we start on a journey," observed aunt Gertrude, as I assisted her out of the carriage. "We have ten or twelve minutes to spare, and during that time he will despatch at least that number of telegrams. I have never known him to content himself so long without business as during his stay at your house."

The luggage had been labeled and put into the brake, my aunt and I were comfortably ensconced in opposite corners of the first-class compartment which had been specially reserved for us, and the train began to move out of the station before uncle Sam emerged from the telegraph office. But he was equal to the occasion. Jumping lightly into the carriage he shut the door with a slam, and seated himself as far from us as possible. Begging his wife to entertain me as well as she could, he produced a large pocketbook and pencil, and at once became engrossed in some study, nor did he again open his lips until we reached London.

The changeful weather—exhilarating sunshine alternating with gloomy clouds from which descended heavy showers of rain—greatly interested my aunt, who for my edification compared the climates of England and North America as our train sped through the low-lying Essex meadows. Like most Americans who visit England she was uncomfortably affected by the chilly dampness of our climate, and visibly shivered, though she was enveloped in a thick wool rug. Though our acquaintance had been so brief, I had developed a very real regard for my youthful American aunt, whose kindly consideration and uniform gentleness excited my admiration. As I scrutinized her delicate features I noted their wistful expression, and experienced a feeling akin to pity for her—for I instinctively felt there could exist no bond of sympathy between this gentle lady and her husband.

No other part of England is so depressing as the horrid region between Romford and Liverpool street through which the Great Eastern Railway Company conveys its London-bound victims. Between those places the senses of sight, hearing and smell are grossly outraged, and when the unfortunate traveler finds himself once more on terra firma he staggers like one awakened from a nightmare, his limbs stiffened by the close packing to which they have been subjected, and his mind and stomach disgusted by the abominations he has seen and sniffed.

It was with great relief we alighted from the train. A splendid carriage awaited us, into which we at once entered, our luggage being piled upon a cab which was to follow. Dark clouds had gathered in all around, and the rain descended in torrents as we drove westward out of the city. At a few minutes past 5 p. m—nearly four hours after we left Holdenhurst Hall—our carriage turned out of the main road into De Vere Gardens, Kensington, and drew up in front of my uncle's house there.

It was a large house, furnished as luxuriously as possible, illuminated throughout by electricity, though here and there was an oil lamp which shed a subdued light on the objects around. Everything in the place seemed absolutely new—as I have no doubt it was—and the best of its kind obtainable, the evidences of wealth on every hand contrasting strongly with my comfortable but unpretentious home in Suffolk.

The footman had just closed the door after admitting us, and I was devoutly hoping that I might neither see nor be seen by my aunt's sister before I had had an opportunity of making myself tolerably presentable—which could certainly not be the case with any one immediately after a seventy-five mile journey on the Great Eastern Railway—when the young lady of whom I was thinking tripped lightly down the stairs, and throwing her arms around my aunt, embraced her in a manner which drove me wild with envy. The next minute, however, Miss Marsh was herself seized by uncle Sam, who held her gently but with an iron grip while he gave her more kisses than I had presence of mind to count. When at length he desisted, he pointed at me, saying, "There, Connie, my pet; I have brought you home the husband I promised you. What do you think of him? Looks innocent, don't he, Con?" Then, turning to his wife, "Suffolk boys make the best husbands in the world, eh, Gertrude?"

To be continued.

"I am glad," said Willie's mamma proudly, "to hear that my little boy chose to apologize rather than to fight." "Sure," replied Willie. "The other fellow was a good deal bigger than me."

IN WOMAN'S REALM

More Fur on Hats Next Winter.

"Ostrich feathers will be the predominant style when fall rolls around," said I. I. Block, who is here in the interest of a millinery firm which he represents. "No radical changes will be made in the headgear of women, either in price or otherwise. The hats will be expensive enough, but no more expensive than they have been since the first society woman tried to outdo all of her associates. The winter styles will probably see more fur on hats than has been the case for a long while."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Light-Weight Cloths.

Really the most practical and satisfactory gowns are those of lightweight cloths, says the Pilgrim. For these, voiles and veilings are the materials to buy. The most expensive grade of nun's veiling can be made up into charming dresses. These veilings tuck most successfully. A skirt with several wide tucks or two or three broad clusters of narrow tucks needs no other trimming; or, if one does not care for tucking, two or three bands of silk of different widths may be used on rows of silk pleating, putting on the first row twelve to fifteen inches below the girdle.

Harmonizing Tempers.

Unless tempers can be harmonized, no marriage can be truly happy. Some may say that to resort to reasoning out every little quibble will lead to a melancholy existence. Reason should never be considered a tyrant, as Bryant said, but a counselor. However hard the struggle may be, it is sure to lead to wonderful results, and as nothing in this life is gained without struggle and honest effort, married couples who are not happy only because they can not harmonize their tempers, will find that the struggle, even if it has taken years and years, will be worth the while, says Success.

Fashionable Summer Colors.

In millinery this season all the shades of green are the height of fashion, particularly a very vivid apple-green. Though flowers are the favorite trimming for summer-time hat, yet fruit is considered extremely smart, particularly currants. Not only are clusters of red currants used, but green and white currants.

It is distinctly fashionable this summer to have the gown and its every accessory match in color. Pongee tan is one of the favored shades. The latest low shoes are made in this color, and with them stockings are worn which exactly match. Laces are also dyed in this same shade.—Woman's Home Companion.

The Mother's Son.

When the mother sees how eagerly her baby turns to the father for praise and how happy he is to be a "really, truly boy," her heart rebels, as she puts away the dainty little dresses, the lace-trimmed coats and the tiny white shoes, to make room for the sort of clothing boys must have when they have outgrown their babyhood. In her heart the mother wishes her boy had been a girl, and in fact a great many mothers keep their poor little chaps in dresses until they are ashamed to go outside of the house for fear of the ridicule from the other boys; and he hails with delight the arrival of the sister who can take his place and give him a chance to be like other boys.

Child Hints.

In bringing up our children, we have learned that in regard to religious matters, the sacred needs to be diluted with the secular. In other words, religious instruction in the abstract is not nearly so efficacious in character building as the making a few principles of righteousness a vital part of life. Practice is better than precept. My boy quickly learned the Bible's injunctions as to kindness and generosity, says a thoughtful mother, but when he gave ten cents of hard earned money to help a poor woman, the act made a greater impression upon his nature than all his Sunday schooling. Most of us parents need to realize that actions speak louder than words—that a good example and right deeds by parents during the week have more effect upon the child than church going alone.

To Flare More Than Ever.

Word comes from Paris that the flaring hems of our fall gowns are to flare more than ever, and that crinoline and featherbone are to be used to make them stand out. Moreover, says the New York Post, the many ruffles we are wearing are to be increased rather than diminished. It is not artistic to cut up a fabric too much, and it really seems a frightful waste of time to cut one's clothes into a thousand pieces and then sew them together again. We have been through the 1830 period, and are passing through the 1890's. It would be too bad if we were forced into the early seventies with its long-trained, tight-fitting, beruffled gowns. The possibility reconciles us to the widening of the skirt. Still, if it keeps on much longer it will require thirty yards of silk to make a gown, especially if sleeves grow with the skirts.

American Women Are Prettiest.

Herr Hugo von Kupffer, editor of the Lokal Anzeiger, of Berlin, who has been studying American life and institutions during his six weeks' stay in this country, sailed for Germany recently aboard the Princess Alice. Previous to his departure, he said he was much impressed with the increasing influence of American women in public affairs of all kinds. Germany, he thought, had much to learn from America's institutions, especially in the liberality of her citizens to charities.

"Since I was here ten years ago," said Herr von Kupffer, "I think American women have improved in good looks, and at that I've always considered American girls the prettiest of any in the world. But the influence of your women has increased to a remarkable degree.

"The average American woman likes to push herself forward and enlarge her mental horizon. This is made all the easier for her, as she enjoys more independence than her European sister. And yet, with all her independence and her inclination to rule, I can't find that she's lost a bit of her womanliness. And the American woman, from what I have observed, is, contrary to the popular belief in my country, a far better housewife than the German."

Emancipated Housewives.

There are emancipated housewives who have had the courage to fashion their establishments upon advanced lines. These leaders are, as a rule, daughters of sensible mothers, brought up on old school ideas, or graduates from schools where hygiene and domestic science were component parts of the course. Household economic sections of department clubs, too, have not failed altogether in their efforts to encourage common sense ideas, says the New York Sun. One finds in such homes a turning more or less radical toward simple living.

Take a house of this city as an example. The wife and mother, with comfortable means, provides red meat twice a week. Excepting occasional bacon and sausage, which her family demands, meat never appears at breakfast. Luncheon, being a woman's meal, consists of a light-made dish or salad with tea and fruit. At dinner more than five courses are never served, soup, meat or fish, salad, dessert, fruit and coffee.

For the invited guest or chance visitor no change whatever is made in the bill of fare. "What is good enough for my family is good enough for my guest"—a watchword handed down from her grandmother—is this housewife's motto. Such a thing as an annual doctor's bill was never known in the house and domestic service as a problem seldom enters it except when matrimony carries off the kitchen prize.—Mirror and Farmer.

The girl who rows wears a tweed skirt, short, a full three inches from the boat bottom, and any thin old shirtwaist and a smart sweater.

The woman who cherishes the proper feeling about such things sees to it that the sleeves of blouses—especially if they are made of soft fabrics—are stuffed, when not in use, with tissue paper.

Imported dress patterns of hand-embroidered linen are remarkably reasonable in price, and are shown in very elegant designs. Dainty colors predominate, but perhaps the favorites are red, green and blue.

Taffeta traveling coats, suitable for brides and very stylish women, are made with shirred effects at both waist and shoulder line, and some are finished with beautiful silk applique collars, which add an air of elegance to these particularly smart garments. Similar coats are shown in Jasper silk.

Dressing sacques of all descriptions were never so pretty or so reasonable as now. The range in price is as wide as the variety of materials. Nearly all sacques have large collars, and the drooping effect is noticeable even in these. The ruffles around the bottom are quite full and are trimmed handsomely with lace.

Skirts are growing fuller and fuller in Paris, and if predictions are to be relied on, the end is not yet in sight. Dressmakers are demanding almost twice as much material. The all-white gown is not expected to be as conspicuous as last year. It will be modified by introducing some form of color, such as colored embroidery or a fancy sash.

Newspaper Reporting in Japan

"Newspaper reporting in Japan is by no means an unattractive business," said Masanao Hanihara, third secretary of the Japanese legation, who was himself at one time on the local staff of a Tokio newspaper, and who later branched out into special work, eventually establishing a magazine of his own.

"I remember the time," continued Mr. Hanihara, "when there were objections to reporting as a profession, but that was in the days when the government had a strict supervision of the newspapers. One couldn't be too careful then, but we have a free press in Japan now. Our newspapers are just as independent and enterprising as the American press, and every printing establishment is equipped with the most up-to-date apparatus. The facilities for collecting news are in line with the best methods of today.

"How are we handling the war news? Well, in very much the same fashion, I suppose, as an American paper would handle it. Nearly every one of the Japanese journals has a corps of special correspondents at the front, and they hurry the news back to the central office as fast as they can. I do not know after what school of journalism the Japanese newspaper is fashioned, but I do know that there is a corps of editors with designations just like yours, such as managing editors, news editors, city editors, etc.

"In Tokio there are about twenty daily newspapers. These sell on an average at about one cent a copy. All classes are omnivorous readers of the newspapers, and around the tea shops and in the homes you will find the sheets in eager demand. With Tokio's population of over a million souls the circulation of these newspapers is considerable.

"The duties of a Japanese newspaper staff are much the same rules as would be expected of a newspaper man in this country. The 'routes' for each reporter and the special assignments are just as well defined. The city editor of a Tokio paper usually has about thirty smart and alert young men under him. Police news when it is important is handled in American style. There is always a good man at police headquarters. Our police system is one of the finest in the world. Arrests are made promptly by the blue-coated officers who are stationed about the street and when the offenders are arraigned the next morning they are given a full measure of justice.

"Several men, of course, are assigned to the various executive and municipal offices, but of late the greatest feature has been the political reporting in which prominent statesmen and leaders in the nation's affairs are interviewed, and their views expressed in the public prints. At the Japanese diet special seats are assigned for the reporters, who take down the proceedings from their 'press gallery,' and are given every consideration.

"The Japanese reporter is provided with a typewriter, just as the Japanese newspaper is provided with the most modern press, and in that way no time is lost in the mechanical features of collecting and printing the newspapers. The typewriters are made with the Japanese characters on the keys.

"In handling social news, our newspapers are not as prolific as your American press, but in gatherings of State importance the names of those present are always given, and a special column is reserved for events of this kind. Perhaps the greatest social event of the year is the grand ball given by the Secretary of the State, at the Imperial Hotel, in Tokio, on November 3. This is attended by all the functionaries, and the leading society women of Tokio. The newspapers invariably give a full list of those who attend."

Mr. Hanihara long ago gave up the newspaper business to enter the diplomatic career in which his promotion is already assured, but during his connection with publications in Tokio he wrote many articles for Japanese magazines which attracted wide attention, and later he made arrangements to start a magazine of his own called the Diplomatic Review, of which he is still the owner, and which is rapidly gaining a very large circulation throughout the island kingdom.—Washington (D. C.) Times.

Puss in China.

Cats in China are regarded as very precious animals. Severe retribution will follow any cruelty to poor puss, so says tradition, while kindness will meet with great regard and success in life. Still, this belief does not prevent beggars in some provinces from prowling around the streets to catch pet cats to sell their flesh and fur, garments of catskin being costly and much prized. Cats' flesh is much eaten in China, especially for lung diseases, as it is supposed to be as efficacious as cod liver oil. Black cats furnish the best meat and in some districts are regularly reared for sale, says the Hour Glass. Some superstitious Chinese still believe in the "cat spirit" entering human beings by witchcraft and playing many malicious tricks.