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Holdenhurst Hall



WALTER BLOOMFIELD

CHAPTER III. A FAMILY DINNER PARTY.

The dining-room at Holdenhurst Hall was a large, sombre apartment. The floor was of oak, uneven through age, and perilously slippery, and the walls of Dutch oak panelling, relieved here and there by portraits in oils of horses and dogs. Four windows did not admit sufficient light for the room, and on the spacious hearth no fire could be made large enough for comfort in winter. The centre was occupied by an enormous table, supported by legs about ten inches shorter than those with which a modern dining table is furnished, and round it were ranged thirty-two chairs, fifteen at either side and one at each end—cumbersome structures of oak and upholstered leather, mounted on wheels. Indeed, I never look at this table without recalling the ludicrous aspect presented by our friend Major Armstrong, of the Suffolk Yeomanry, when dining with us. Major Armstrong stands six feet four, and the distance from his plate to his mouth is so great that when he is engaged with the former it appears almost as if he were digging the ground with his fork. A large sideboard, loaded with silver, completed the furniture of the room. When I entered, it was at once apparent that this was a special occasion. The table was lighted by more candles, and spread somewhat more luxuriously than usual, and, inflexible sign of John, our one indoor manservant, had on his yellow silk waistcoat—a venerable and conspicuous article of his attire which I remembered from my earliest infancy, but had never before known him to wear except on Sundays—and was moving about busily between the sideboard and the table. I disturbed my relations in an examination they were making of the quantity carved maitrepiece. My father at once stepped towards me, and taking my hand in his own, led me towards a beautiful and very elaborately dressed lady, saying: "Permit me to introduce my son, Ernest, this lady is your aunt Gertrude."

Now though in the first blush of my youth I had suffered from overmuch self-consciousness, I had flattered myself of late that I had reasoned myself out of that malady, and was as self-possessed as a young man of nineteen need be. Yain delusion! Whether it was the striking beauty of my aunt, the splendor of her dress and jewels, or my intense surprise at finding her a woman of at most thirty, whom I had mentally pictured as about fifteen years older than that, I know not; but certain it is, I had never felt so awkward and foolish before. I cannot quite remember what I said, but I believe a few disconnected words escaped my lips to the effect that I was very pleased to make her acquaintance.

My aunt noticed my confusion, and with admirable tact endeavored to allay it. "I am sure I am much gratified to see you and your father," she said in a soft voice. "My husband has often talked to me of you both, and of his old home in England. Your house is perfectly delightful, and I long to see more of it. You must show me all over it when you have time."

Replying that nothing could give me greater pleasure, and that I would do so to-morrow if she was sufficiently rested to undertake the task, I shook hands with my uncle and felt rather more at my ease.

My father having taken his seat at the head of the table with his sister and I on the right, and his brother on his left, John removed the covers, and dinner was served.

"No," said uncle Sam, addressing my father, "the change is not all in myself as you suggest, though of course a man's ideas modify and expand a good deal in twenty years, especially if his affairs are extensive and he mixes much with business men. Positively, I believe what I have told you, that Englishmen are vastly altered from what they were when I lived among them. They are not so enterprising; they seem to lack guts and grit, and have fallen into a slow way. Everything in England is depressed—capitalists afraid to invest, laborers without work to do. Coming from London to-day, we saw a man and a boy with two horses plowing a field. Why, the scene would serve for an illustration to one of Pope's pastorals. No wonder that farming in England don't pay when you tickle and scratch the earth in such primitive fashion! And while the laborers are killing time in this way, your legislators are talking about small farms and allotments for laborers. Bosh, my dear sir, bosh! What is wanted is for at least a hundred landowners in each county to form a trust, and to employ modern machinery in cultivating their aggregated lands—that is to say, a farm of tolerable size. By-the-by, what is the acreage of this place?"

"Two thousand acres."

"A mere potato patch! I have a 'ol twenty-five times as large, as good or as better than the best soil in England,

York accounted a paragon of virtue who is as full of hypocrisy as ever was Holdenhurst Church on a Sunday. I like to deal with a man who I know will overreach me if he can, and who expects as much of me; matters are simplified, and the trade moves quickly."

"When you lived in England you had no such ideas. If I remember rightly, you used to read poetry, and were inclined to be moody and sentimental, as Ernest is now."

"True; but I am sorry to hear that your son is stricken that way. Look to him; watch him. So long as he continues himself to reading poetry there is some hope of him; 'tis when he attempts to write poetry that you must put him into a straitjacket. Let me take him with me to New York at the end of the summer; or, better still, take him there yourself. A temperature low enough to freeze Tennyson's brook, and a careful daily study of market prices in Wall Street, will make a man of him inside of three months. What do you say to that, Ernest?"

"I don't know what to say, uncle, only that I should very much like to visit America."

"A good answer. You shall certainly do so; and your father with you, I hope. We have a brown stone house on East Thirty-Fourth street, close to Fifth Avenue, and a frame cottage at Newport, Rhode Island, both telephonically connected with my offices in the Mills Building. We have also a private railroad car, which I would like you to compare with those rattle-traps your Great Eastern Company calls carriages. Our chef is as good as can be found outside Delmonico's. Come and stay with us, and we will feed you upon oysters, blue fish, Canadian ducks, terrapin, Canadian frogs, and sweet potatoes, won't we, Gertrude?"

"Of course, we shall be very pleased indeed to see you, and will do all in our power to make you comfortable," said my aunt.

My father thanked his guests; but I noticed that he carefully avoided committing himself to either an acceptance or a rejection of this invitation. Before we adjourned to the drawing-room it was arranged that I was to devote the following morning to showing my aunt over the house and grounds, while my father and uncle discussed a certain business matter. We were all to meet again at luncheon, and I was afterwards to exhibit the documents my father and I had been at so much pains to bring to light. My uncle, having approved of these arrangements, ignited a match on the heel of his boot, and applied the flame to a cigar, from which he proceeded to puff clouds of smoke larger and denser than I should have thought was possible to produce by such means.

CHAPTER IV. DISAPPOINTMENT.

There is a peculiar condition of mind incident to some persons whose correspondence is small, which induces them to carefully examine the envelope of a letter addressed by a strange hand—an indeliberate fascination in speculating as to who the writer may be and why he has written. It is seldom that this self-imposed doubt lasts longer than is necessary to make out the writing and postmark, and then the letter is opened—a thing which would have been done by a busy or practical man at the instant of its receipt.

Influenced by some such feeling, I delayed to open the copper box which I had taken from the oak chest in the library, though the nature of its contents strongly excited my curiosity. An instinctive belief that the contents were valuable had taken a firm hold of my imagination, though I could not in any degree support such belief by an appeal to reason. The contents of both the oak chests had doubtless been examined by bygone members of my family at least as often as the property had passed from father to son, and probably with greater frequency. It is true the chests had not been opened for a quarter of a century or so; but then the lid of the copper box bore the date

This 23d day Oct., 1671.

I could not do such violence to my credulity as to suppose that the contents had been suffered to remain so many years unexamined—which made strongly against the presumption that they were of any value. But the strongest human hopes are oftentimes reared upon the most unstable foundations. I had certainly suffered the hope to grow upon me that it had been reserved for me to make a valuable discovery; and knowing that my chances of doing anything of the sort were the most shadowy conceivable, I delayed to open the box, contenting myself for the present by carefully examining its exterior.

To be continued.

India-Rubber Corsets.

The corset, as all the world knows, is an essential detail of the costume of the modern civilized woman. The apparatus, in its present stage of evolution, has gained the wholesale contempt and detestation of all physiologists as an outrage upon the organs of respiration, circulation and digestion. Lovely woman, however, has carried her fashion a step nearer breaking point by inventing corsets of india-rubber designed for bathing purposes. The idea of thus converting what should be a most wholesome and health-giving recreation into a field for exploiting various kinds of irrational credulity had been engendered only in the brain of a latter-day fashionable woman.—London Medical Press and Circular.

POPULAR SCIENCE

In the language of chemistry, pure radium has never been isolated. The metal seen in the laboratory is a compound of radium with chlorine or bromine, and is known as radium chloride or radium bromide.

Approaching the great centres of population the quantity of dust held in suspension by the air increases enormously. According to Sir James Crichton Browne, the air of London contains 150,000 proportional parts of dust to Paris' 210,000, while in Argyleshire, Scotland, there are only 200.

A new luminous fungus has been forwarded to Europe from Tahiti. It is said to emit at night a light resembling that of the glowworm, which it retains for a period of twenty-four hours after having been gathered, and it is used by the native women in bouquets of flowers for personal adornment in the hair and dress. It is believed to grow on the trunks of trees.

The great earthquakes are traced by a committee of the British Association to eight districts, of which seven are beneath the ocean. Five fringe the shores of the Pacific, one is in the Indian Ocean, one in the West Indies, and the eighth is in the Caucasian-Himalayan region. Each of these earthquakes shook the entire earth, while the broken up strata left gave numerous after shocks. The earth movement is propagated around the globe at the uniform rate of about two miles per second, but through the earth the rate increases with the depth of about seven miles per second.

A curious instance of the care and minuteness with which the human body is now studied, in the effort better to understand its powers and functions, is furnished by a paper read recently at a meeting of the Royal Society in London on the "Rapidity of the Nervous Impulse in Tall and Short Individuals." Even the difference in time required for a "nervous telegram" to traverse the bodies of different people is important. A series of observations has shown that the length of the nerves does not affect the velocity with which an impulse passes between the brain and the extremities, and consequently that more time is needed if the path is long than if it is short.

A JOKE ON A PROPHECY.

Balked His Well-Planned Effort to Wait on the Water.

"I have often heard my grandmother tell of a joke played on the so-called 'Prophet' Joseph Smith, Sr., of the Mormon Church," says C. H. Cartwright. "Some time in the thirties Smith and a party of his followers were proselyting in Muskingum County, Ohio. He appointed a certain day when he would show the people his wonderful powers, and that he was a second Christ, by walking on the waters of Mud Creek. The water was always muddy. A day or two before the time set grandmothers' brother Robert and a couple of neighbor boys were accidentally attracted to the Mormons working at the creek, and, concealing themselves, watched the Mormons put down stakes and put plank on them from bank to bank, the plank resting about six inches under water. After the Mormons left the boys went down and took out the centre plank, where the water was about ten feet deep. The next day 'Balaam' Smith came down to the creek, and, after a long exhortation, started across the creek. He was all right and on top till he came to the centre, where his 'powers' seemed to have left him, and he, like McGinty, went to the bottom. This was the end of Mormonism in that old tried and true Presbyterian County."—Chicago Tribune.

No Inspiration There.

"All I want is a room with an open fireplace in it," said the Literary Man. "I don't care how small the room is, or how bare, but it must have an open fireplace or I can't work in it."

"You see, in the summer a chap can get his inspiration from out of doors, but the rest of the year he has to depend upon what he can see indoors. Now, you can always see something in the open fire and get something out of it. But a steam heater is strictly business. There's not a spark of the artistic temperament in its make-up. That's why I have left my apartments and am in search of a little workroom with a fireplace."

"I sat and stared at my steam heater a whole night and not a suggestion did it give me. Finally I shut my eyes and imagined a fire, and had just managed to begin work when 'Thump, Thump, Thump-thump-thump' went the heater, and I couldn't write a line because it was beating the wrong time. No, sir, I want an open fireplace, please."—Philadelphia Press.

A Chance For the Millionaire.

I am of the opinion that if any millionaire wished to build himself a lasting monument in the affection and homage of the English people he could not find a surer means of gratifying his ambition than by putting down £1,000,000 to build and endow a national theatre. And I think that before many years we shall probably find that some American millionaire, with the cuteness of his race, will so establish and endow an American theatre and will thereby earn the lasting gratitude of the American nation.—Henry Arthur Jones, in the Nineteenth Century.

OUR BUDGET OF HUMOR.

The Wife No One Wants.

There was a young lady at Bingham, Who knew many songs, and could sing 'em; But she couldn't mend hose, And she wouldn't wash clothes, Or help her old mother to wring 'em.

Wise Man.

Guest (in cheap restaurant)—"Here, waiter! This food is vile, and I don't propose to pay for it. Where's the proprietor?"

Waiter—"He's gone home to lunch, sir."—Philadelphia Ledger.

An Exceptional Case.

Smith—"You wouldn't take Rocksley for a self-made man, would you?"

Rogers—"I should say not! Why, he uses good English and doesn't weigh more than one hundred and eighty pounds!"—Town Topics.

Taking Chances.

"That land," said the city nephew, "is valued at \$800 a front foot."

"Thunderation!" exclaimed the old farmer, hastily moving back on to the sidewalk, "Am I stood on it most five minutes! Do you reckon they'll charge me rent?"—Chicago Post.

Lucky.

"I dislike to keep you in after school," said the teacher. "Aren't you sorry you were naughty and have to stay?"

"No'm," replied Johnny. "Pie-face is waitin' out there to lick me."—Indianapolis Sun.

Turn About.

Aunt Mary—"Nora, you're a cruel child. Let that cat go at once."

Nora (banging the cat)—"But she's been naughty, Aunty, an' I'm punishin' her. I told her it was for her own good, an' it hurt me more'n it hurt her."—Brooklyn Life.

Judge's Regret.

"Your Honor," said the young lawyer, "I demand justice for my client."

"I'd be only too glad to accommodate you," answered the Judge, "but as the law won't allow me to give him more than six months I am practically helpless."—Chicago News.

Proper Reverence.

Mamma—"Now, Willie Jones likes to go to Sunday school, I'm sure."

Tommy—"I guess he does, the way he talks about it."

Mamma—"Why, what does he say?"

Tommy—"He calls it 'Sabbath-school.'"—Philadelphia Press.

She Knew Him.

"You say you don't know Mr. Rocks very well."

"Only slightly. Let me see, I believe we were engaged once."—New York American.

Man's Modesty.

"Do you believe," she asked, "that a genius can possibly be a good husband?"

"Well," he modestly replied, "I would prefer not to answer that question. But my wife ought to be able to tell you."—Chicago Record-Herald.

The Next Best Thing.

"I thought she was determined never to marry any man whose ancestors had not come over in the Mayflower."

"Yes, but she changed her mind when she met this fellow whose ancestors went to California in a prairie schooner."—Chicago Record-Herald.

Parental Wisdom.

"I shouldn't think the Smiths would name their new baby 'John'—there are so many John Smiths."

"That's a good thing one way. If his name ever gets in the police reports' folks won't know whether it's he or some other John Smith."—Puck.

The Girls That Buy 'Em.

American Girl—"We haven't been over long, you know. I suppose your people always lived here?"

Augustus—"We came to England with the Normans, don't you know?"

American Girl—"Oh, indeed, the Normans! I'm afraid I don't know them."—Tit-Bits.

Use of Synonyms.

A teacher in one of the Brooklyn schools, wishing to enlarge the vocabulary of her class in English composition, asked each member of it to write a sentence containing synonyms of the word "ran" and "told." One little fellow having laboriously looked up the definitions in his small dictionary, submitted the following highly descriptive result:

"A dog trickled down the street with a tin can tied to his narrative."—Brooklyn Eagle.



FOR THE HOUSEWIFE

Potato Pie.

Peel and slice half a dozen potatoes and chop three small onions. Butter a deep baking dish and lay in a layer of potatoes, then one of onions, and a sprinkling of chopped cold meat. Season with salt and pepper; then repeat the layers and cover the whole with a crust made as for pies and rolled twice as thick as for the ordinary pie. Bake slowly until the vegetables are done.

Colliflower.

Equal quantities of mashed potatoes and boiled greens, salt, pepper, butter, one egg. Mix the potatoes and greens together, season with salt and pepper, add a little butter and the egg well beaten. Butter a basin and shake in some browned bread crumbs; put in the potatoes and greens, and bake in a hot oven for three-quarters of an hour. Turn out of the basin and serve in a vegetable dish.

Whole Wheat Gems.

Mix two cupfuls of whole wheat flour with one teaspoonful of salt and two teaspoonfuls of sugar; beat the yolks of two eggs and add one cupful of milk to them; add the milk and eggs to the flour, beat until smooth and add one cupful of lukewarm water; when well beaten add the whites of the eggs beaten stiff and two level teaspoonfuls of baking powder; mix hot greased gem pans and bake in a hot oven twenty-five minutes.

Fish a la Reine.

Free one pound of cod cooked codfish or haddock from all skin and bone; pick it into small pieces; put two level tablespoonfuls of butter in a frying pan; when it has melted add two level tablespoonfuls of flour; stir until smooth; then add one cupful of cold milk a little at a time, one level teaspoonful of salt and a little pepper; put this over hot water; beat the yolk of one egg; add it to the fish and cook one minute; add a little chopped parsley; serve on toast or fill paper cases or shells; spread over some buttered crumbs and brown in quick oven.

Ribbon Cake.

One cup of sugar, one-half cup of butter, two-thirds of a cup of sweet milk, two eggs, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, one-half teaspoonful of soda and two cups of flour. Flavor with lemon or almond. Put two-thirds of the mixture in two oblong pans, and to the remaining third add one large tablespoonful of molasses, two-thirds cup of chopped raisins, a little sliced citron, a little grated nutmeg, and one tablespoonful of flour. Bake in one sheet. Put the sheet together while warm, with cranberry or any tart jelly.

Hunt's For the Housekeeper

To restore the color of cashmere that has been splashed with mud, sponge the discolored parts with water, with a small piece of soda dissolved in it.

Toilet soaps may be bought in quantity as advantageously as laundry soaps. Fine toilet soaps need drying and ripening, just as much as the coarser varieties of the laundry.

Mix fresh Philadelphia cream cheese with cayenne pepper and paprika. Mold in a ball and send to the table to be eaten with apples or pears at dessert. It is good with saltines or other crackers with the salad.

A bedroom set for a young girl in white enameled wood with pink roses was admired. The bed was of wood, with a rather high headboard of a graceful shape, and the roses were disposed over it carelessly. The dressing of the bed was original. There was a roll bolster covered with cretonne pink roses on a cream ground, and the spread was of the same material. This was cut to exactly fit the top of the mattress, and had a full ruffle, which did not, however, hang over the sides, but were tucked in along the sides. The effect was of a full puff. All the cushions, etc., of the room were in this cretonne, and the curtains were barred dimly, with a quaint, old-fashioned valance of cretonne.

The use of cooking thermometers, which until recently was almost thoroughly confined to hotels and restaurants, is increasing in private kitchens. Most modern housekeepers count them nowadays as necessities, and they are to be found in any house-furnishing shop. They register a scale of temperatures which somewhat exceeds 400 degrees. In addition they indicate at what temperature different meats should be cooked. Mutton needs the lowest temperature, 300 degrees; beef requires 330 degrees, and pork and veal each 320 degrees. Bread and pastry need 400 degrees, but biscuits must have 450 degrees. Plain cake bakes well at 320 degrees, while sponge cake needs only 300 degrees. The thermometers, which cost from \$3 to \$5, can be used in boiling water or fat as well as in the oven.



Quaint and Curious

Baldness is much rarer among middle-aged persons in Japan than in Europe and America owing, it is believed, to the Japanese custom of using no head covering as a rule.

The Bank of England notes are made from new white linen cuttings—never from anything that has been worn. So carefully is the paper prepared that even the number of dips into the pulp made by each workman is registered on a dial by machinery.

The deepest hole in the earth is near Ketschau, Germany. It is 5735 feet in depth, and is for geological research only. The drilling was begun in 1880, and stopped six years later because the engineers were unable with their instruments to go deeper.

One of the most durable woods is sycamore. A statue made from it, now in the Museum of Gizeh, at Cairo, is known to be nearly 6000 years old. Notwithstanding this great age, it is asserted that the wood itself is entirely sound and natural in appearance.

Soldiers are despised in China. They belong chiefly to the coolie classes. The German officers engaged some time ago by the Chinese Government found that their most important task was to overcome the soldiers' own feelings that they were a lower order of beings than other Chinamen.

Crete pays a bounty of \$200 a ton for locusts' eggs. Five years ago sixty tons were destroyed in one year, equal to 680,000 locusts. It is calculated that locusts annually devastate 8,000,000 acres and destroy half the crop on an area double that size, that is to say, this insect alone lessens the world's food supply by \$200,000,000 a year.

The largest plow in the world is owned by Richard Gird, of San Bernardino County, Cal. This immense agricultural machine stands eighteen feet high and weighs 36,000 pounds. It runs by steam, is provided with twelve twelve-inch plow shares, and is capable of plowing fifty acres of land per day. It consumes from one to one and a half tons of coal per day, and usually travels at the rate of four miles an hour.

As nearly as possible 8000 gallons of fresh water are used in a large battleship daily. About two-thirds of this is taken up by the boilers, and the remainder is used for drinking, washing, cooking, etc. When the store which she has taken out with her from port has been used up, a vessel has to depend upon her evaporators for further supplies. Every modern warship is fitted with evaporating machinery to distill the salt sea water.

SIGNALING UNDER WATER.

The Cause of the Majority of Shipwrecks About to Be Removed.

The cause of three-fourths of the shipwrecks and loss of life at sea seems about to be removed. It is not a wire or even the air, but the water itself that is used to transmit sound vibrations. For some years there has been installed on the steamers of the Metropolitan Company, of Boston, an apparatus which may yet make it possible for the vessel beating about the coast in a storm to know where the rocks and shoals are when the fog will not permit the light to be seen and the noise of the wind drowns the sound of bell-buoy or the siren; for a battleship to know of the approach of a submarine and a fishing smack of the approach of a liner off the banks of Newfoundland.

The apparatus is extremely simple. It amounts to nothing more or less than ringing a bell under water, which the pilot or captain can hear telephonically. Screwed on both sides of the vessel's hull are two receivers, which are connected by wires with the wheel house. These receive the vibrations from the bell hanging in the water on the side of the battleship. The navigator has only to put the ear-piece to his ear and ascertain on which side the vibrations are the louder, in order to know the direction of the battleship and his own position in the fog with comparative accuracy.

For fishing vessels a bell receiver has been provided, and this is used also to get more delicate intonations aboard a steel vessel. The value of the apparatus was put to a good test recently, when the steamer James S. Whitney was approaching the Boston lighthouse on her return from New York. The lighthouse was obscured by rain and fog. Thanks to the signal apparatus, the captain immediately heard the bell and got his direction. It was not until five minutes after that he heard the lighthouse's whistle for the first time.—Collier's Weekly.

Cord Long Time in Tree.

While clearing the lot for J. H. Webster at Wendell, Mass., the choppers recently found in the top of a large hemlock tree, more than forty feet in height, a cord which the neighbors assert to be the one used to secure the runaway balloon used by the woman balloonist from Lake Pleasant some years ago.