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Holdenhurst Hall. Copyright 1886, by Robert Bennett's Sons.

CHAPTER XVII. EXIT UNCLE SAM.

"Truly, the ways of the parent are peculiar! If you wanted your son knocked on the head, were there not enough people in London able and willing to execute your commission, but you must needs send for him to this place? Come, tell me how it all happened."

"Thus spake the cheery voice of uncle Sam as he entered our drawing room the next morning after the events narrated in the last chapter. Though still depressed in spirit (now chiefly because of the horrible suspicion which I knew my father entertained), I was fairly well in health, and was dressed to receive our visitor. My father's melancholy was more apparent than mine, and his serious demeanor contrasted strangely with the buoyant gaiety of his brother."

"Ernest had an awkward fall on the stone floor of the crypt late on Monday night or on Tuesday morning, and lay there unconscious for some time before he was discovered. That is all," answered my father, "but he is nearly, if not quite, well now."

"On the floor of the crypt?" echoed uncle Sam, in a tone of surprise. "What was he doing in the crypt at that unwholesome hour? No, no, I beg your pardon. Don't tell me, I don't want to know—I remember my own little escapades when I was about his age. Really, the faculty of blushing in a young man will delude even the old and experienced more effectually than the most skillful lying. So, Ernest, you young dog, you are no better than other people, eh? But enough of this. How are Knight and Faulkner getting on with the renovations? I hope they are pushing the work vigorously. I would like to see the place completed and decent before I return to New York. I gave them carte blanche to do everything necessary to be done, and particularly insisted on despatch."

"My father looked intensely glum as he listened to this speech, and some moments elapsed before he spoke. As for myself, it was a considerable time before I could resolve my uncle's words; and desiring not to commit myself, I remained silent."

"Your judgment or motive is not so good as it might be in this case, Sam. My boy has discovered perfectly reliable evidence that a quarter of a million Venetian sequins were concealed by old Roger Trueman in the Abbot's Cell here, and wishing to pleasantly surprise me decided to withhold his information until he had verified it. This is why he visited the place on Monday night, when he found the place and ten chests as indicated by Roger Trueman himself; but with this difference, that all the chests had been opened, and every sequin stolen."

"Stolen!" exclaimed Uncle Sam; "how do you know that? And if so, how can you tell whether they were stolen a year or a century ago?"

"Very easily. By merely examining the cell and the chests, and considering the attendant circumstances, anyone endowed with common sense is bound to conclude that the robbery was committed as recently as four or five days ago."

should be wise, for you are certainly the son of a fool."

He turned to go, but I clutched his arm and prevented him, crying out despairingly—"O father, father, what have you done? Unsay your words, and believe with me that uncle Sam has done us much kindness and no wrong."

My passionate plea received no answer. Uncle Sam gently disengaged himself from my grasp and moved towards the door. "If at any time you should need a friend," he said, addressing me, "I hope you will think of your uncle. Stay; I had almost forgotten to give you this," and taking a letter from his pocket he tossed it to me; and I was too dazed to catch it, and it fell on the carpet. Then, waving his hand in token of farewell, he hastily quitted the room and was gone."

I looked at my father. He was sitting on a low seat, his elbows resting on his knees, and his head buried in his hands. I spoke to him—I forgot what it was that I said—but he took no notice of me, when through the open window I saw uncle Sam passing out of our gate. As soon as he was off our premises he stood still and looked intently at Holdenhurst Hall for a little while, then turned abruptly and walked at a great rate down the road which led towards Bury St. Edmund's."

"This spectacle, in itself pathetic, and symbolizing as it did, the collapse of my fervent hope, enraged me. Being weak from loss of blood and other consequences of my recent accident, I think my reason must have succumbed beneath my accumulated load of disappointment and anxieties, for in a sudden burst of artificial strength I rushed at my father, laid my hands upon his shoulders, and forced him into an upright position, while I screamed out—"It is false! It is false! I will go to my uncle and beg him to pardon you."

My father started to his feet, and grasping me by the wrists, held me at arms' length. "I would to Heaven it were false," he exclaimed, "but it is true—too true. Shall I show you the proofs?"

"You cannot," I shouted; "you have no proofs."

Then for the first and last time in his life did my father burst out in anger against me. "Is everybody in conspiracy to madden me?" he asked excitedly. "I tell you, your uncle has stolen those sequins, and that recently. Still, I would not have told him so, or complained to anyone, if he had not sought to extort a contrary declaration from me. Do you think I would denounce my own brother on doubtful or slender evidence? If you can think so badly of me, where then shall I turn for sympathy in my trouble? Must I publish what I would fain conceal in order to induce you to believe your own father? Look at that," and he took from his pocket a large thin gold coin and placed it in my hand; "that is one of the sequins you went into the crypt to fetch—one of the two hundred and fifty thousand sequins you ought to have found there. Where the others are I don't know; but what I do know is that your uncle found means to convey them away from here about a week ago. I will tell you the details, if you want to know them, when you come to your senses and remember that I am your father."

I sat down on a couch and burst into an agony of tears. In a moment my father was at my side, holding my hands in his, and earnestly endeavoring to comfort me. Presently I grew calmer and got up—that unnatural and piteous product of adverse circumstances, a youth without hope. The kindness of my father was such as none but the parent of an only child can understand. In endeavoring to alleviate my distress he appeared to forget his own. "This is a great misfortune," he said, "the greatest which has befallen me since your dear mother died; but we must try to forget it. I care nothing for the loss of the money—I would it had been sunk in the sea or that the Turks had had it—but I regret my brother's conduct, more especially as he has won your good will, and I had hoped and believed that good would come of it."

After a space my father resumed: "When you feel disposed to hear the story I will relate all the circumstances of your uncle's recent conduct, as far as you are concerned, and he paused, as if unable to find the precise word he wanted—"act, or Adams shall, if he recovers sufficiently to do so; he was an eye-witness of the act. But I have grave fears the old man will die, and even Dr Thurlow admits such an event is not improbable; he is an old man, and these troubles are more than he can bear. It pained him keenly to show what he did against my brother, for he was much attached to Sam as a boy, and often inquired of him after he had gone away to America."

"I don't want to know any more about it now, and perhaps I never shall," I replied, as I rose from the couch, picked up my letter, and read it. It was from Constance Marsh and ran as follows:



LITTLE THINGS. Copyrighted by W. B. Ewing.

Girls dressed in gaudy red, black and white uniforms are selling butter and cheese in the streets of Berlin for a new company.

The baboo trees of Senegambia are believed to be the oldest living trees on earth. Some scientists have put the age of one of these trees at 6000 years.

The oldest love letter in the world is in the British Museum. It is a proposal of marriage for the hand of an Egyptian Princess, and it was made 3500 years ago. It is in the form of an inscribed brick.

Leather shoes are seldom worn in Algeria by the natives of Arabian descent. Their footwear consists of pieces of camel's hide bound around the feet with thongs, or of sandals made of braided twine.

"Falsehood, thy name is woman," is tattooed on the arm of a convict who has just escaped from the prison in Graz. The police have advertised a description of him, of which the above tattoo mark is the most salient feature.

A yard of rain—to be precise, 38.52 inches—is the recorded downfall of the last year in London. It has been an exceptionally wet year even for the British Isles. The record is five inches above the highest previous total, that of 1879.

A motherless pig has been adopted by a hen belonging to Mrs. Henry Landers, of Mantua, N. J. The hen had been sitting on a nest of eggs, but these she kicked out of the nest when she took charge of the little pig, which lies contentedly under the hen's wing.

The carcass of an elephant in the Ghent Zoological Gardens, which had to be killed, was bought by a local pork butcher, who transformed it into Frankfurt sausages. He was able to manufacture no fewer than 3800 pounds of sausages, which sold like hot cakes.

An English watchmaker has just finished making a tiny watch in the form of a shirt stud. Its dial is two-sixteenths of an inch in diameter and it is to be worn with two other studs. By turning the upper stud the watch is wound, while by turning the lower one the hands are adjusted.

Humor of Today

Repertoire. The intrepid De Soto, When the Indians said what they'd do to him and his pack If they didn't turn back, Told those savages where they could go to.—Town Topics.

A New Team to Him. "I notice that the Turner decision shut the Anarchists out." "The Anarchists? Never even heard of the team!"—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Limited. Henrique—"I understood you gratify your wife's slightest wish." Ottinger—"Yes; it is only her more expensive wishes that I do not gratify."—Judge.

All Serene. "Has Jones an assured reputation as an author?" "Absolutely. Why, he says he can now turn out poor work all the rest of his life."—Life.

The Line of Least Resistance. Barber (to absent-minded old gentleman, who has called for a shave)—"Can't shave you, sir, unless you 'old yer head up."—London Tatler.

A Sprinter. "Here's an explorer claims that steved boe constrictor is equal to calf." "I'll bet a live boe constrictor wouldn't be equal to two calves if I saw it coming."—Houston Post.

Self-Confessing. Miss Borde—"Oh, horrors! here comes Miss Tawker. She's been abroad this spring." Miss Sharpe—"Yes, any one could tell that. She's got a broad grin on her face."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Practical Demonstration. "Oh, how could you?" exclaimed the fair maid who had been kissed unexpectedly. "It will afford me pleasure to show you," calmly replied the audacious young man.—Indianapolis Sentinel.

The Reason Why. "Are you going to the seashore this summer?" "No; mamma thinks we can spend more money here in New York."—New York American.

Still Others. "Ah," said the fair widow, "you have been in some pretty tight squeezes, haven't you, Colonel?" "Yes," answered the old warrior, putting his arm around her waist, "and I'm not the only one."—Indianapolis Sun.

Time Was Too Short. "So," snubbed Ilma Vaselinovitch, "Ivan Ninespotski died in battle! Do you say he uttered my name as he was dying?" "Part of it," replied the returned soldier; "part of it."—Fort Worth Record.

Not to Be Fooled. Mrs. Subbubs—"I told Bridget to string the beans this morning." Mr. Subbubs—"Yes, well?" Mrs. Subbubs—"Well, she flared up and told me I couldn't string her; that we'd eat them loose or not at all."—Philadelphia Press.

Truthful. "Didn't you say you had all the comforts of a home?" asked the indignant guest. "Well," answered Farmer Cornstossel, "after you folks are gone we do have 'em. That's what we take boarders for."—Washington Star.

Too Changeable. "Here, young man," said the old lady, with fire in her eye, "I've brung back this thermometer ye sold me." "What's the matter with it?" demanded the clerk. "It ain't reliable. One time ye look at it it says one thing, and the next time it says another thing."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Ups and Downs. Lady (who is on a visit to her native town)—"How is Mrs. Grabb? I haven't seen her in a long time." Hostess—"She is having her usual ups and downs." Lady Visitor—"And what may they be, I pray?" Hostess—"Oh, running up bills and running down her neighbors."—Town and Country.

A Philosopher. Kloseman—"I'll enter be economical while you're on your vacation." Spenders—"Not much. It's too hard." Kloseman—"It is, eh? Well, if you don't live economical then you'll have to afterward." Spenders—"Yes, but it isn't so hard to be economical when you have to."—Philadelphia Public Ledger.



FOR THE ADVENTURE.

Hickory Nut Macaroons. One pound of powdered sugar, one pound of chopped hickory nuts, the whites of five unbeaten eggs, half a cup of flour, one teaspoonful of baking powder. Drop on buttered paper and dry in the oven. These are delicious.

Cream Rarebit. Melt a tablespoonful of butter, to which add one-half pound of cheese cut fine, one teaspoonful of salt, and one-fourth as much pepper. When the whole has become creamy, add gradually one cup of cream and the beaten yolks of two eggs. Serve on toast or light crackers.

Plain Layer Cake. Cream a cup of butter with two of powdered sugar and when light beat in the yolks of four eggs, a small cup of water and three cups of prepared flour or enough to make a good batter. Lastly fold in the stiffened whites of three eggs, reserving the extra whites for the filling. Bake in greased layer tins in a steady oven.

Egg-Plant. Peel and slice egg-plant and leave it in cold water for an hour. At the end of that time take it out, wipe it dry, lay it on a flat dish and pour over it five tablespoonfuls of olive oil and two of vinegar. Leave it in this for fifteen minutes. Remove the egg-plant, sprinkle with salt and pepper and broil it on a gridiron before a clear fire or in the broiler of a gas stove. Cook five minutes on one side, turn and cook on the other side.

Queen Pudding. One pint of nice, fine bread crumbs, one quart of milk, one cup sugar, yolks of eggs, beaten, the grated rind of a lemon, a piece of butter the size of an egg. Bake until done. Whip the whites of the eggs stiff, beat in a teaspoonful of sugar, which has been strained, the juice of a lemon. Spread over the pudding a layer of jelly. Pour the whites of the eggs over this, replace in the oven. Bake lightly. To be eaten cold with cream, if preferred.

Vanilla Souffles. Heat one cupful of milk, rub two level teaspoonfuls of cornstarch and four level teaspoonfuls of flour in a little cold milk; pour into this the scalding milk and stir until it thickens; add beaten yolks of four eggs and a pinch of salt; remove from the fire; beat the whites of the eggs stiff and stir them carefully into the hot mixture; fill souffle cups two-thirds full; stand in a pan of hot water and bake in a quick oven fifteen minutes. Serve with a vanilla sauce.

HINTS FOR THE HOUSEKEEPER. An easy way to keep enamel saucers, pie dishes, etc., clean: Take a small piece of emery cloth, damp it, and rub all soiled parts; rinse well first in soapy, then clean water, when they will be found quite spotless and quite new.

To clean silmy sponges mix together one tablespoonful of salt and one tablespoonful of common soda, with enough boiling water to cover the sponge. Place the sponge in the mixture and allow it to stand twenty-four hours. Afterward wash the sponge in warm water until quite clean.

To test the purity of water take some of the suspected water in a clean, glass-stoppered bottle; add a little purple sugar; expose, having well stoppered the bottle, to the light, in a warm room. Should the water, even after a week's exposure, become turbid, it is dangerously impure for drinking; if it remains clear, it is safe.

Keep a string bag. It will be found most useful in the kitchen. It should be hung up in some special place, and all pieces of string that come tied round parcels should be put in it. String is constantly required, and it is far better to know exactly where to find a piece than to be obliged to hunt about and waste time in searching for this necessity.

Table silver, such as knives, forks and spoons, can be made to retain its new, unscratched look indefinitely by being provided with little chamois cases, in which they can be slipped after being properly washed. These cases are easily made. They take a little time and trouble at first, but last for years, and their use becomes a habit. Canton or outing flannel may be substituted for the chamois, if preferred.

Make at least one raffia pillow just to see what comfortable rests they are for piazza or summer cottage. Get several colors (the reliable colors) and weave the pillow in blocks of color just as you used to weave colored papers when you were a kindergarten, and leave fringe at the edges or turn the ends of the raffia in, making it plain. Stuff the pillow with curled hair and you will have a nice cool pillow, and a pretty one.



GOOD ROADS.

City Friends. AMONG those interested in road improvement, the farmers of course stand first. The character and condition of the roads are of vital interest to them every day in the year. The farmers, until recently, have been compelled to struggle with the road problem without much help or encouragement from any other class. Now, however, some strong elements of the city population are rallying to their support. Among these may be named the manufacturers of road building machinery; the makers and users of bicycles and automobiles, and the moneyed men of the cities who have money invested in the country. These people are entering into the work for road improvement with even more enthusiasm and zeal than the farmers.

Just now the farmers who want better roads are brought face to face with a most important question. Will they accept the assistance of these city allies? Will they welcome the aid of the machinery man, the capitalist, the bicyclist and the automobilist? Or will he treat them as schemers who are trying to meddle with his affairs? The answer to these questions ought to depend on what these city friends of good roads are proposing to do. If they propose to have the country roads improved in order to increase their business, and enhance their pleasures, wholly at the expense of the farmer, then he should spurn the proffered alliance. If, on the contrary, they are proposing, through State and National taxation, to lift a large part of the burden off the farmer and place it on the taxpayers of the cities, he ought to bid them welcome, and extend the glad hand.

This is a live question for the farmer to consider and answer. Already the opponents of State and National aid are at work trying to sow seeds of suspicion in the minds of the farmers, and they will do their best to prevent any co-operation between the country and city friends of good roads. As a matter of fact, State and National aid offer the only hope of general road improvement, and such aid can never be secured if the city people array themselves against it. Unless the farmers are wholly blind to their own interests, they will welcome aid from any and every source, and will make every effort to secure the powerful aid of the State and Federal Governments.

Depends on the Farmers. The candid and unprejudiced opinion of a public man on a question concerning which he is well qualified to speak is nearly always of interest. Such an opinion concerning the prospect for National Highway legislation was recently received from a gentleman who is a close observer of men and events, and who has spent many years at the National Capital. He says: "I have watched the growth of the so-called 'good roads movement' with much interest, and especially since Colonel Brownlow introduced into Congress his bill providing that the Government should pay half the expense of improving the roads. As regards the prospect of such a measure ever becoming a law, I will say that it all depends on the farmers. If the agricultural classes go to work in earnest for Government aid, they will get it; if they do not, Congress will never enact such a law. In Government affairs, as in most other affairs, I have noticed that the people who go after things are the people who get them. The farmers as a class receive comparatively little serious consideration from Congress simply because they don't demand it. Every Congress now appropriates more than a billion dollars, but how much of this is spent in the rural districts? Almost nothing. Millions are spent for public buildings in cities; millions for improvement of rivers and harbors; millions for the army and navy; millions for the Government at Washington, etc. Occasionally a few thousand dollars go for something that directly benefits the farmers, but that is all. Of course there isn't as much chance to give the farmers direct benefits from the spending of public money. But national aid to road improvement furnishes an ideal opportunity. It would even give things to some extent. It would certainly be a big thing for the rural districts. The money spent would of course make good times; but the main benefit would come from the improvement of the roads. It would increase the value of farm lands; it would enable the farmers to market their crops to better advantage; it would make farm life better worth living. In fact it would be a great permanent benefit."

If any other class of our population had such an opportunity to enjoy the fostering care and aid of the Government, how they would work for it. They would give their work for it. Representatives as a class move more deliberately. They take time to look into the ways and wherefores, and to consider all objections. So far as I am able to learn, the farmers are taking up this question seriously and in time will make their influence most powerfully felt. I think Congress will be ready to enact a national law whenever there is a general demand for it from the farmers of all sections.