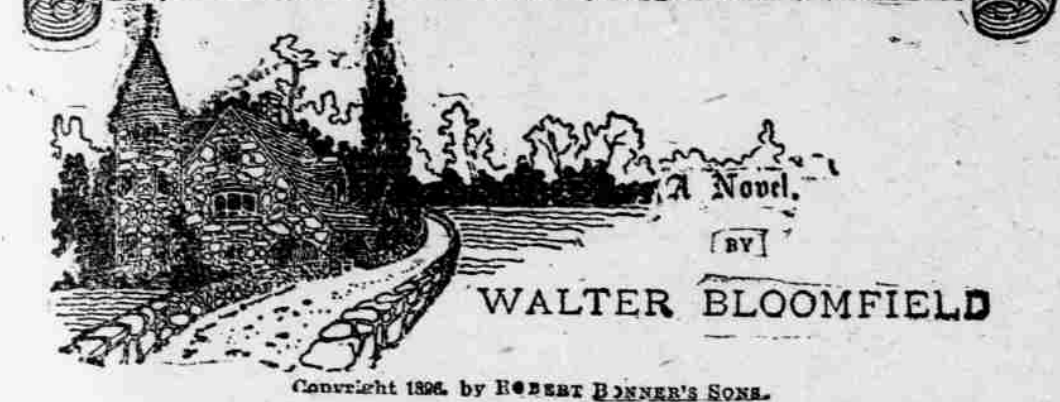


Holdenhurst Hall



WALTER BLOOMFIELD

CHAPTER XXVII.

Continued.

"That fellow Price," continued uncle Sam, "not noticing me, was specially trained to uphold and disseminate all virtuous principles as well by example as precept. In the way of precept, I should think he has performed his part, but I never had the misfortune to hear him in circumstances where I was not privileged to reply. As for his example—well, he is hypocritical, cowardly, mean and ungratefully personified."

I was no match for him in argument, and besides, if I had been, this was an inopportune moment in which to cross him. I chose rather to turn the conversation by asking my uncle if he had in any way notified Mr. Price of his displeasure.

"What do you think?" asked uncle Sam in a contemptuous tone, as if he regarded the question as absurdly unnecessary. "Had him promptly thrown out of the Investors' Guide office; am pressing him by the quickest methods for repayment of money advanced; moved Rosenberg to do ditto in respect of the value of a diamond he was fool enough to let him have on credit, and have the reverend gentleman under surveillance of two of Pinkerton's smartest detectives, so that should he attempt to leave the State before he has given full satisfaction for the claims upon him he will be instantly laid by the heels."

"Where is Mr. Price now?" I inquired.

"Starting at a boarding house somewhere up town. Pinkerton's people will inform me to-morrow whether he is likely to square accounts or not. I am sure I sincerely hope he may be unable to do so, for in that case I may perhaps succeed in fixing him here long enough to spoil him of that cure of souls your neighbor has offered him. By-the-by, how long can the old lady keep the job open for Price?"

"I confessed my complete ignorance of the subject."

"I did not join in the laugh with which uncle Sam greeted his own thoughts, but rose as if about to leave, though with no fixed intention. The unexpected aspect of affairs in New York had greatly disconcerted me, and seriously deranged my plans. Uncle Sam perceived my disquietude and irresolution, and (somewhat unnecessarily, I thought) inquired the cause of it.

"I shall be very anxious until I have seen Constance," was the only explanation I could offer.

"Until you die, you mean," corrected uncle Sam. "At present it seems to you that when you possess your dear Connie and her dollars there will be no desire in your nature left ungratified. My dear sir, don't abuse your intelligence by believing any such nonsense, and pray don't contradict me, for I know more about you than you know about yourself. The only way to escape anxiety is to avoid knowledge, for that is the poison of which it is made. Take a Suffolk agricultural laborer, who has never been ten miles from the hotel in which he was born; he is generally the father of ten children, and his weekly income is rarely more than ten shillings, and that he has to earn with his muscles. Is he anxious? Never a bit! He whistles and sings, or rather he makes strange noises which he believes to be such, which is quite as good; for, as we have just seen, faith is a very useful thing. Contentment is compatible only with illiteracy and isolation. Now look on the other side of the picture. I have a wife not much older than your young lady, quite as beautiful as she, and the possessor of precisely as many dollars, while as for myself, there are not more than seven men in this great country whose means exceed mine. But I can't escape anxiety. On the contrary I have had rather large doses of it the last few days."

"But you would have avoided your anxieties if—"

"If I had not done the things which have incurred them. Precisely. But there are matters of which no man ever estimates the consequence, and when those matters go smoothly he must always regret the gratifying result to his luck and never to his judgment."

"I hope you have no objection to my calling upon my aunt and Miss Mars to-morrow?"

"Not the least in the world, and you can take to your aunt a special message from me. I have actually accomplished that which she insisted upon, and now, according to her own terms, she is willing to return to me. To-morrow, or next day at furthest, I shall be in a position to offer you the use of my own house. Meantime, you can't do better than remain here with me."

Supper was now announced, and my uncle accompanied me to the private room where it awaited us, but he would not eat anything, preferring to smoke another cigar and chat to me while I partook of some much-needed refreshment.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISTRESS AND WIFE.
It was past 10 o'clock when I awoke

next morning. The greater part of the night had been spent in a fruitless endeavor to compose myself to sleep, and when, after many weary hours, I at last lost consciousness of external objects I had not even then escaped the sense of oppression, so that when I awoke in haste, surprised at the lateness of the hour, it was with none of those delightful sensations of refreshed vitality which commonly attend the awakening of healthful youth. But the thought that I was this day to see Constance Marsh acted as a stimulus to my feeble will, and I dressed myself with much care, though hastily. Needless to relate my uncle was up before me and had already breakfasted. I found him standing by a window in the room where he had received me on the previous day, thoughtfully twirling a cheque around his fingers. An opened letter lay upon the table.

After the usual brief salutations my uncle bade me to breakfast without loss of time, a command I was not slow to obey, as he informed me that he was in receipt of an unsatisfactory communication, the nature of which he would explain on my return.

When I re-entered the room about fifteen minutes later, my uncle was standing in the place where I had left him, his hands clasped behind, and staring vacantly at the carriage as they swiftly passed up the avenue towards Central Park. I was much impressed by the evident change which had been wrought in this extraordinary man in but a few short weeks. Two days ago, and I could not have conceived any circumstances that would have induced Samuel Truman to remain quiet and pensive for so long as a quarter of an hour.

"Ah!" exclaimed uncle Sam, suddenly turning upon me in his old energetic way; "read that letter, Ernest, and tell me what you think of it."

I examined the contents of the envelope to which my uncle pointed, and found they consisted of a cheque on Drexel's Bank for four thousand two hundred dollars, drawn by Evan Price in favor of my uncle, accompanied by a few polite words from that gentleman, stating that he forwarded the said cheque in satisfaction of all claims, and awaited a receipt for the same.

"Well," I said, as I replaced the letter and cheque in their envelope, "I think you are to be congratulated. Mr. Price can't do you any further harm, and you have recovered your money."

"That's true," admitted uncle Sam; "but I'm balked of my revenge for the present. No matter; all things come to those who wait if they be furnished with watchful eyes. Meanwhile it is pleasant to contemplate the awful vacuity of that humbug's purse now that he has disgorged those few dollars."

"Perhaps he has borrowed the money to pay you," I suggested.

"I don't think anybody would lend him so much now he has no connection with the Investors' Guide; but I may ascertain that later on. I have sent him a receipt, and the cheque I will give to you. It is an open cheque, and when I have endorsed it you can cash it at Drexel's, in Wall Street, which is quite close to my office."

I was about to thank my uncle for his generous gift; but he would not listen to me, and went on to say that he was in momentary expectation of the arrival of Mrs. Truman; that she had promised to come to him at the Windsor Hotel and to return with him to their house in Thirty-fourth street.

"Connie," he added, as he consulted his watch, "is at Orange; and if you start for that place within an hour and bring her on at once to New York you will find on your return your aunt and me in our proper places, and all things fixed comfortably."

This was delightful information, infinitely more pleasing to me than the possession of the cheque which I had just placed in my wallet. Uncle Sam noticed my satisfaction and remarked upon it, bidding me never to needlessly complicate my affairs, for that way lies Perplexity, handmaid to Madness, but always to prefer simple courses, and then small things would never lose their power to please. Having expressed himself thus, he reclined upon a settee with his feet superposed on the back of a chair, and lit his first cigar for that day.

"I suppose I shall experience no difficulty in finding Belle Vue Cottage when I arrive at Orange."

"Not the least in the world," said uncle Sam; "everybody in Orange knows it."

"Then I will start at once."

"No, don't go till your aunt comes; she can't surely be many minutes," said uncle Sam, consulting his watch as he did so.

"Yes, it was my aunt who entered; but not my uncle's wife, the gentle lady Gertrude. No; it was my mother's only surviving sister, the companion of my childhood, the woman who had caused the unhappy family division of which I had so recently learned. It was Annie Wolsey."

"Why have you come here?" asked uncle Sam in a husky voice, suddenly springing to his feet.

Annie Wolsey closed the door as deliberately as she had opened it, and leaned her back against it—perhaps for the support it afforded, for she was ghastly pale, and seemed unable to close her colorless lips to give utterance to her thoughts.

"Why have you come here?" asked uncle Sam again. "You have received my letter?"

"Yes, I have received your letter," said the agitated woman, after a painful pause, "and I will not believe its contents in that form. With those lips with which you have so often expressed your interest in me must you tell me that you have no wish to see me again, or I can never believe it."

"Annie," said uncle Sam sternly, yet with a slight tremor in his voice, "what I have said to you in my letter is true, every word, and must be acted upon. It is entirely your own fault that it is so. Had you but followed my simple advice, this had never happened. How many times have I warned you of the probable outcome of your communications with your father! The result is only such as I feared and foresaw. Now you have regained your father, and your father has put it out of my power to be to you what once I was; but in whatever part of the world you may choose to live you shall always be provided with large means."

"O Sam, surely this is not to the end of our friendship? Oh, don't forsake me; defy the world's opinion in this as you have defied it in so many other ways. Consider your great wealth and the independence it confers; what censure you cannot afford to ignore, you can stife with your gold. Don't forsake me, Sam."

The speaker's face was flushed now; and having found her voice, she spoke rapidly, but in a plaintive, pleading tone that was painful to hear. In the tall, graceful woman standing before me I could with difficulty recognize the Suffolk village girl who but a few years before had been my almost constant companion, so changed was she. But her face and figure were none the less familiar to me, though for another and very different reason. When Annie Wolsey first entered the room I had started involuntarily, so great was her resemblance to the portrait of my mother which hung in the drawing-room at Holdenhurst Hall. I would at once have withdrawn, as having neither the right nor desire to be present at such a conference, but that Annie stood against the closed door, and my presence embarrassed the disputants so little that neither of them took the least notice of me.

Annie Wolsey's passionate appeal visibly disconcerted uncle Sam.

"Annie," said uncle Sam, advancing towards her and taking her hand in his, "I don't think my regret is less intense than yours, but what I have written I have written, and come what may I will adhere to it. Good-by, Annie."

Annie Wolsey took the hand which my uncle extended towards her, and muttered a brief farewell in a voice make out the words of which it was composed, turned to leave. As she did so, my aunt Gertrude entered the room; and the two stood, scarce a yard apart, regarding each other in silence.

Aunt Gertrude was the first to speak. Bowing slightly she addressed her in icy tones, but with admirable restraint: "I beg your pardon, Miss Wolsey, for so unceremoniously interrupting your conversation with my husband. Would you like me to retire until you have concluded your business with him?"

The calmness of the American lashed the despairing Englishwoman into an uncontrollable outburst of fury. "No!" she screamed; "I would not!" and with these words the enraged woman drew from her bosom a small packet of papers and cast it contemptuously upon the table. Then, drawing herself up to her full height, and darting one last indignant glance at my uncle, with flushed face and flashing eyes Annie Wolsey passed out of the open door and was gone.

Uncle Sam, who had been a silent spectator of this scene, made a motion as though he would follow her, which aunt Gertrude perceiving, threw her arms around his neck and prevented. My uncle endeavored to put his wifely aside, but could not. "Follow her, Ernest, follow her!" he cried; "don't leave her while she is in this mood. Quick, or she is lost!"

I hastened down the long staircase and reached the sidewalk in front of the hotel just as Miss Wolsey was stepping into a landau which awaited her.

"Annie," I exclaimed, "Annie, dear; wait a moment. I want to speak with you."

"I have nothing more to say to anyone who bears your name," said the companion of my childhood, regarding me with a stony, immovable expression as she fastened the door from the inside. "Drive on!"

And in obedience to her command the driver lashed his horses, and my girl-aunt was borne swiftly away. I watched the carriage on its course down town until it turned aside towards Union Square, and then slowly, and with a heavy heart, I re-entered the hotel and ascended the stairs.

When I reached my uncle's room I was met at the door by aunt Gertrude, looking very pale and agitated. "Ernest," she asked, "will you please go below and fetch some stimulant as quickly as you can? I don't want to ring for it."

To be continued.

Fame is often a bubble that comes from puffing and blowing.

THERE WAS A BABY BORN IN BETHLEHEM

THERE was a baby born in Bethlehem
I know they say
That this and that's in doubt, and, for the rest,
That learned men who surely should know best
Explain how myths crept in, and followers' tales
Confused the truth
I know but any way
There was a baby born in Bethlehem
Who lived and grew and loved and healed
and taught
And died but not to me
When Christmas comes I see him still arise,
The gentle, the compassionate, the wise,
Wiping Earth's rears away, stilling her strife,
Calling, "My path is peace my way is life!"

CHILDREN'S PARTIES

BY ANNA WENTWORTH SEARS.

O! yes! It was easy then to promise Martha anything. Who, indeed, can refuse to grant Martha what she chooses to ask when she lifts her eyes in that beseeching way? I am utterly incapable of using any judgment or foresight, for I am so entirely overcome with rapture at the thought of possessing her when she is in a beguiling mood—when her curls make particularly adorable little ringlets on her forehead, and her dimples, her eyes, everything about her is so generally overcoming—that I lose reason and yield, ignominiously, completely.

There was Bobby, too, bringing up a rear guard of persuasion, so that there was no hope for me from the first. My son and daughter held the field, and we will have all the cousins on both sides," Martha dictated.

"And all our friends, of course," was Bobby's finality.

"Please leave me some room in the house for a few fathers and mothers," I pleaded, beginning to realize what I had undertaken when I had said yes to their demand for a holiday house party of children. But who is a mother to a Bobby and Martha who would not take all the trouble that the mistress of ceremonies has to take in plan and execution for such an entertainment? What is better worth while than their gratitude and appreciation?

We began our preparations early in December, just after we had received the acceptances of the children who were to be with us for the holidays, including Christmas and New Year's days. Luckily our house is roomy and we have all outdoors for a playground. A house party presupposes a country home, and the more country the more fun, especially for children.

"We must have a place for our very own, where we can make all the muss and noise we want," my tyrants exacted, so we turned one of the big verandas into a play room, inclosing it with glass at small expense. The sun poured in all day, but some stoves were there for additional heat. We put matting rugs on the floor, hung hammocks and swinging seats in the corners, and had all the means possible for indoor fun—a ping-pong table, parlor croquet, darts, a bookcase of selected volumes, hobby horses, blocks, and all that we could find to make probably stormy days endurable. In this room every morning at 11 o'clock milk and biscuits were served all around, and every afternoon weak cocoa and cookies. The "between meals" were voted better than the regular functions, and they made a break in the day's routine.

But, in passing, let me say, lest any one condemn me at the start as a

—the steady horses and the route over unfrequented roads and around abrupt corners. He understood just when to slow up and when to quicken the pace. Attached to the sleigh was first a big sled, after that one smaller, and so on the long tail of sleds holding three and four occupants, some two girls and boys, every one taking turns at being on the coveted last sled of all, so likely to upset at the corners and spill the occupants into a snow drift.

It was most exciting to have to hold on for dear life and be whirled over the land, and, when you fell off, having to get on again and never knowing just where you were going; no wonder it was thought a splendid afternoon's amusement!

Next in popularity was the paper hunt. The modus operandi was for a person with a good instinct for the requirements of the situation to go ahead, scattering in his wake bits of paper. The "pack" of children followed, running this way and that in search for the trail, more often off than on the right path, but called back to it before getting too far away by horn and voice. The one who arrived first at the goal at this particular race received as reward a veritable "brush," silver-handled and useful for removing dust.

At the goal we had improvised a "lean-to," and in front of it burned a huge bonfire. Balsam boughs had been imported from the mountains to make a fragrant resting place, and while we roasted apples, popped corn, and were served to a gala spread from tea baskets and hampers brought from home, we told stories and had a delightful "winter picnic."

But perhaps the best of all the outdoor festivities was the outdoor Christmas tree, because of its novelty. Thanks to the kindly sun, which shone gayly on Christmas day, we were able to carry out this, our cherished surprise. If any one missed the traditional features of an ordinary Christmas tree, he or she did not reveal it, and no regrets were expressed. Against a big growing fir a ladder was firmly braced. The ladder and tree were gaily attired in appropriate dress of holly and red trimmings; the rung of the ladder and the sides being wound with wreaths of green, and to every rung were fastened bundles big and little, while the tree was laden with boxes of candy, strings of popcorn, tinsel, and packages. On to the low rungs of the ladder mounted the smaller ones to find their presents, the older children climbed higher to get their rightful belongings, and after the ladder was all denuded of its spoils the trees were stripped.—Harper's Bazar.

Christmas Morning



dom to adopt the suggestion. With a gathering of a dozen or more persons under fifteen years of age formality holds no place, and quiet corners and facilities for uninterrupted converse are not to be thought of. Active business only makes the hours fly happily with no dragging minutes.

"But how can we do things together with so many ages?" was Martha's first inking that there might be a rift in her lute of joyful anticipation.

Bobby was not comforting. "And there must be just as many boy things to do as girl things," he insisted, vigorously. I surprised a "scram" in prospect, and hastened to give vent to some of the schemes that I had brooded over in the small hours of the night. If the ideas put in practice were not all entirely original, they were so successful that I must urge them upon prospective givers of children's house parties, even at the risk of being considered uninventive. With small folk it is better not to attempt novelties that have not been upon or less put to the test.

The outdoor games come first in importance. I think that the one voted the most fun was the hitching party. Into a big sleigh made warm and comfortable with buffalo warm and hot water bags and hot bricks we tucked the "twenty-wenties" with trusty John to drive and engineer everything

Yuletide Fun

IN BOSTON.
Mamma—"And that is the story of Santa Claus."
Emerson—"It seems to me, mamma, intrinsically improbable. How can he raise the vast sums necessary to defray his annual expenses?"

HARD LUCK.
Mrs. Grabberly—"My poor, dear, good little darling Freddie has been most outrageously defrauded."
Mrs. Lamberlie—"Why, how did it happen?"
Mrs. Grabberly—"For three whole months he exerted himself like a little major to attend four Sunday-schools, and he has just found out that only one of them is to have a Christmas tree."

GOOD THINGS, TOO!
The Christmas Tree—"It is strange that children are so green as to believe in the existence of a Santa Claus."
The Christmas Candle (spittingly)—"But they are not evergreen."

UNKIND.
Miss Komin—"What did your brother George give you for Christmas, Lizzie?"
Little Lizzie—"Mamma says she is afraid he gave me the mumps."

QUAINT CHRISTMAS DECORATION.

Here is a quaint idea in Christmas decoration, suggested by one of the English newspapers—the words of "The Mistletoe Bough," and two bars of the refrain, the words carried out in the mistletoe itself, while the notes of music are holly berries, fastened upon lengths of pale green ribbon, placed along each side of the table. At each end of the table is an arch of holly and mistletoe, lightened by the intro-



duction of white narcissus blooms. From arch to arch is festooned a garland of mistletoe, from which are suspended five bells, varying in size, and made entirely of blossoms of lily of the valley, so arranged that each bell appears semi-transparent and forms an ideal shade for the little electric globes contained within them. In the centre of the table is a cluster of narcissi and a few sprigs of holly, while here and there about the table is placed a sheet of crackers.



THE ARRIVAL OF THE CHRISTMAS DINNER.

A sacred Festival.
Yuletide has been held as a sacred festival by numberless nations. Christians hold December 25 as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus. China, on the same day, celebrates the birth of Buddha, son of Maya. (See Bunson.) The Druids held during the winter solstice the festival of Nolahg. (Higgins.) Egypt held that Horus, son of Isis, was born toward the close of December. Greece celebrated during the winter solstice the birth of Ceres, Bacchus and Hercules. Numerous Indian tribes keep Yuletide as a religious festival. (Monier Williams.) Mexico holds in the winter solstice the festival of Capacame. (History of the Indies, Volume II., page 354.) Persia at the same period honors the birth of Mithra. (Gross.) Rome celebrated on December 25 the festival of "Natalis Solis Invicta." Scandinavia held at Yuletide the festival called Jul, in honor of Freya, son of Odin (Brewer, page 321), etc.

King's Baron of Beef, which always appears cold on King Edward's sideboard Christmas Day, at Osborne, is invariably cut from one of the bullocks bought at the King's annual sale of fat stock, early in December. This year there will be 450 sheep, 100 swine and thirty bullocks to be sold.—Chicago Chronicle.

The Diplomat.
I kissed my bonny love on Christmas night.
"Nothing unusual," you say?
The mistletoe helps many a bashful night.
And "He who will not when he may?"
Ah, but this kiss the Christmas-tide imparts—
The memory my very being jars;
For 'neath the mistletoe I kissed the other girls,
While her I kissed outside beneath the stars.
—Madeline Orvis.

HOLIDAY COOKERY.

Two cups of raised bread dough, one teaspoonful each of cinnamon, nutmeg and salt, one-half cup of butter, one cup of sugar, one cup of milk.

CHRISTMAS CAKE.
one cup of raisins, three eggs, six cups of flour. Let raise; pour into one large and one small tin. When done, arrange as illustrated. Roughly ice. Circle with holly.—Dellenaar.

A sunny Christmas.
To give some one a little gift,
All wrapped around with Christmas love,
This frosty Christmas season,
Tied with a string of smiles above,
With lots of wishes, good and gay,
In every corner tucked away,
Will bring you just the sunniest day—
I wonder what's the reason!—Selected.