

The Holladay Case

A Mystery Of Two Continents

By BURTON E. STEVENSON
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CHAPTER XII.

FIFTY-FOUR West Houston street, just three blocks south of Washington square, was a narrow four-story and basement building of gray brick with battered brown trimmings, at one time perhaps fashionable residence, but with its vestige of glory long since departed. In the basement was a squalid habitation, and the restaurant occupied the first floor. Dirty lace curtains hung at the windows, screening the interior from the street, but when I counted the step to the door and entered I found the place typical of its class. I sat down at one of the little round tables and ordered a bottle of beer. It was M. Jourdain himself who brought it—a little fat man, with trousers very tight and a waistcoat very yellow. The night trade had not yet begun in earnest, so he was for the moment at leisure, and he consented to take a glass of wine with me. I had never seen the "superieur."



"Do you always keep them barred?"

Myself had the looks put on, for he feared that his poor sister would throw herself down into the courtyard, which is paved with stone and where she would certainly have been killed. She was very bad some days, poor dear. I was most glad when they took her away, for the thought of her made me nervous. I will in the morning open the windows and air the room well for you."

"That will do nicely," I assented as carelessly as I could. I knew that I had chanced upon a new development, though I could not in the least guess its bearing. "What do you ask for the apartment?"

"Ten dollars the week, monsieur," she answered, eyeing me narrowly. I knew it was not worth so much and, remembering my character, repressed my first inclination to close the bargain.

"That is a good deal," I said hesitatingly. "Haven't you a cheaper room, M. Jourdain?"

"This is the only one we have now vacant, monsieur," she assured me.

I turned back toward the door with a little uneasiness.

"I feel I can't take it," I said.

"Monsieur does not understand," she protested. "That price includes breakfast."

"And dinner?"

"She hesitated, eyeing me again.

"For \$1 additional it shall include dinner."

"Done, madame!" I cried. "I pay you for a week in advance." And I suited the action to the word. "Only," I added, "be sure to air the room well tomorrow. It seems very close. Still, M. Jourdain was right to make sure that his sister could not harm herself."

"Yes," she nodded, placing the money carefully in an old purse, with the true miserly light in her eyes. "Yes; she broke down most sudden. It was the departure of her mother, you know, monsieur."

I nodded thoughtfully.

"When they first came, six weeks ago, she was quite well. Then her mother a position of some sort secured and went away. She never left her room after that, just sat there and cried or rattled at the doors and windows. Her brother was heartbroken about her. No one else would be permitted to attend her. But I hope that she is well now, poor child, for she is again with her mother."

"Her mother came after her?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; ten days ago, and together they drove away. By this time they are again in the good France."

I pretended to be inspecting a wardrobe, for I felt sure my face would betray me. At a flash I saw the whole story. There was nothing more M. Jourdain could tell me.

"Yes," I repeated, steadying my voice, "the good France."

"M. Bethune has himself been absent for a week," she added, "on affairs of business. He was not certain that he would return, but he paid us to the 15th."

I nodded. "Yes—tomorrow—I will take possession then."

"Very well, monsieur," she assented. "I will have it in readiness."

For an instant I hesitated. Should I use the photograph? Was it necessary? How explain my possession of it? Did I not already know all that M. Jourdain could tell me? I turned to the stair.

"Then I must be going," I said. "I have some business affairs to arrange, and we went down together."

The place was filling with a motley crowd of diners, but I paused only to exchange a nod with M. Jourdain and then hurried away. The fugitives had taken the French line, of course, and I hastened on to the foot of Morton street, where the French line pier is. A ship was being loaded for the voyage out, and the pier was still open. A clerk directed me to the sailing schedule, and a glance at it confirmed my guess. At 10 o'clock on the morning of

Thursday, April 3, La Savole had sailed for Havre.

"May I see La Savole's passenger list?" I asked.

"Certainly, sir," and he produced it. I did not, of course, expect to find Miss Holladay entered upon it; yet I felt that a study of it might be repaid, and I was not mistaken. A Mrs. G. R. Folsom and two daughters had occupied the cabine de luxe, 436, 438, 440. On the company's list which had been given me I saw bracketed after the name of the youngest daughter the single word "invalid."

"La Lorraine sails day after tomorrow, I believe?" I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"And is she full?"

"No, sir; it is a little early in the season yet." And he got down the list of staterooms, showing me which were vacant. I selected an outside double one and deposited half the fare in order to reserve it.

There was nothing more to be done that night, for a glance at my watch showed me the lateness of the hour. As I emerged from the pier I suddenly found myself very weary and very hungry, so I called a cab and was driven direct to my rooms. A bath and dinner set me up again, and finally I settled down with my pipe to arrange the events of the day.

Certainly I had progressed. I had undoubtedly got on the track of the fugitives; I had found out all that I could reasonably have hoped to find out. And yet my exultation was short-lived. Admitted that I was on their track, how much nearer success had I got? I knew that they had sailed for France, but for what part of France? They would disembark at Havre. How was I, reaching Havre two weeks later, to discover which direction they had taken? Suppose they had gone to Paris, as seemed most probable, how could I ever hope to find them there? Even if I did find them, would I be in time to checkmate Martigny?

For a time I paused, appalled at the magnitude of the task that lay before me—in all France to find three people! But, after all, it might not be so great. Most probably these women were from one of the towns Holladay and his wife had visited during their stay in France. Which towns they were I, of course, had no means of knowing, yet I felt certain that some means of discovering them would present itself. That must be my work for the morrow.

A half hour passed, and I sat lost in speculation, watching the blue smoke curling upward, striving vainly to penetrate the mystery. For I was as far as ever from a solution of it. Who were these people? What was their aim? How had they managed to win Miss Holladay over to their side, to persuade her to accompany them, to flee from her friends—above all, from our junior partner? How had they caused her change of attitude toward him? Or had they really abducted her? Was there really danger of foul play; danger that she would fall a victim as well as her father? Who was Martigny? And, above all, what was the plot? What did he hope to gain? What was he striving for? What was this great stake for which he risked so much?

To these questions I could find no reasonable answer. I was still groping aimlessly in the dark, and at last in sheer confusion I put down my pipe, turned out the light and went to bed.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. GRAHAM'S congratulations next morning quite overwhelmed me.

"I never expected such complete and speedy success, Mr. Lester," he said warmly. "You've done splendid work."

I pointed out to him that, after all, my success was purely the result of accident. Had I been really clever I should have instantly suspected what that sudden seizure on the station platform meant. I should have hurried back to the scene and followed Martigny—as I still called him in my thoughts—to the hospital on the chance of securing his first address. Instead of which, if chance had not befriended me, I should have been as far as ever from a solution of the mystery. I trembled to think upon what a slender thread my victory had hung.

But my chief would not listen. He declared that a man must be judged by his achievements and that he judged me by mine.

"Let us find out how our friend is," I said at last, so the hospital was called up. We were informed that the patient was stronger, but would not be able to leave his bed for two or three days.

"The Jourdain may tell him of my call," I said. "They'll suspect something when I don't return today, yet they may wait for me a day or two longer—they have my money—and one day is all I want. It's just possible that they may keep silent altogether. They have nothing to gain by speaking—it's plain that they're not in the conspiracy. Anyway, tomorrow I'll be out of reach."

Mr. Graham nodded.

"Yes—that's plainly the next step. You must follow them to France—but where in France will you look for them? I didn't think of that before. Why, the search is just beginning! I thought it impossible to accomplish what you have accomplished, but that seems easy now beside this new problem."

"Yes," I assented. "Still it may not be so hard as it looks. We must try to find out where the women have gone, and I believe Rogers can help us. My theory is that they're from one of the towns which the Holladays visited when they were abroad, and Mr. Holladay must have kept in touch with his office, more or less, during that time."

My chief sprang up and seized his hat.

"The very thing!" he cried. "There's no luck about that bit of reasoning, Mr. Lester. Come, I'll go with you."

"Only," I added as we went down together, "I very much fear that the search will lead to Paris, for Martigny is undoubtedly a Parisian."

"And to find a person in Paris"—I did not answer. I only shut my teeth together and told myself for the hundredth time that I must not fail.

Rogers had been carrying on the routine work of the business since his employer's death and was supervising the settlement of accounts and the thousand and one details which must be attended to before the business could be closed up. We found him in the private office and stated our errand without delay.

"Yes," he said, "Mr. Holladay kept in touch with the office, of course. Let me see—What was the date?"

"Let us look for the first six months of 1876," I suggested.

He got down the file covering that period and ran through the letters.

"Yes, here they are," he said after a moment. "In January, he writes from Nice, where they seem to have remained during February and March. About the middle of April they started north—here's a letter dated Paris, April 19—and from Paris they went to a place called Etretat. They remained there through May, June and July. That is all the time covered by this file. Shall I get another?"

"No," I answered, "but I wish you'd make an abstract of Mr. Holladay's whereabouts during the whole time he was abroad and send it to our office not later than this afternoon."

"Very well, sir," he said, and we left the room.

"But why didn't you let him go farther?" asked Mr. Graham as we left the building.

"Because I think I've found the place, sir," I answered. "Did you notice—the time they stayed at Etretat covers the period of Miss Holladay's birth, which, I'm convinced, these people were in some way concerned. We must look up Etretat."

A map at the office showed us that it was a little fishing hamlet and seaside resort on the shore of the English channel not far north of Havre.

"My theory is," I said, "that when the time of her confinement approached Mr. Holladay brought his wife to Paris to secure the services of an experienced physician perhaps, or perhaps a nurse or linen, or all of them. That done, they proceeded to Etretat, which they may have visited before and knew for a quiet place with a bracing atmosphere and good climate—just such a place as they would naturally desire. Here the daughter was born, and here, I am convinced, we shall find the key to the mystery, though I'm very far from guessing what that key is. But I have a premonition—you may smile if you wish—that I'll find the clew I'm seeking at Etretat. The name has somehow struck an answering chord in me."

The words, as I recall them now, seem more than a little foolish and

our junior's room. He was lying back in a big chair and seemed pale and weak, but he flushed up when he saw me and held out his hand eagerly.

"I couldn't wait any longer, Lester," he began. "It seems an age since I've seen you. I'd have sent for you before this, but I knew that you were working."

"Yes," I smiled; "I was working."

"Sit down and tell me about it," he commanded. "All about it—every detail."

The door opened as he spoke, and Dr. Jenkinson came in.

"Doctor," I queried, "how far is it safe to indulge this sick man? He wants me to tell him a story."

"Is it a good story?" asked the doctor.

"Why, yes; fairly good."

"Then tell it. May I stay?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Royce and together, and the doctor drew up a chair.

So I recounted, as briefly as I could, the events of the past two days and the happy accident which had given me the address I sought. Mr. Royce's face was beaming when I ended.

"And you start for France tomorrow?" he asked.

"Tomorrow morning. The boat sails at 10 o'clock."

Continued

Where Marriage Pays.

"Married people have the best of it in ocean traveling," said a sea captain, "for they have a stateroom to themselves. People traveling alone, unless they are willing to pay a good deal extra, have to sleep in the same room with strangers, an unpleasant thing. Some of these lone travelers, to secure privacy, pay extra fare. Others—many, many others—try to secure privacy by giving us lies instead of money."

"One man will tell the chief steward that he has an intolerable snore. Another will say he is subject to epileptic attacks, wherein in the small hours he becomes a shrieking and dangerous maniac. Another will say that in the throes of acute seasickness from the beginning of the voyage to the end he fills the cabin day and night with dismal noises."

"No matter. They all have to share their staterooms with strangers. The only way out of it is to plunk down the coin."—New York Press.

The Spider's Web.

If we compare the dimensions of the spider with those of its web we are forced to admit that the little creature is a true engineer, able to construct a cable network of relatively enormous size. Thread after thread is put in position in the desired and necessary order, and sometimes prolonged observation on the part of the investigator is required in order to understand the reasons which direct the spider in its complicated operations and which make it always follow the same order and the same laws. Some of these reasons are explained by geometry, others by the strength of materials, and he who succeeds in discovering the "why" of all the interesting details of the method employed is compelled to admit to himself that he could not have achieved so good a result with the same materials.

Poor Richard.

"In December of the year 1732," says Blizow's "Life of Franklin," "Franklin commenced the publication of what he styled 'Poor Richard's Almanac,' price fivepence. It attained an astonishing popularity, and at once. Three editions were sold within the month of its appearance. The average sale for twenty-five years was 10,000 a year. He was sometimes obliged to put it to press in October to get a supply of copies to the remote colonies by the beginning of the year. It has been translated into nearly if not quite every written language, and several different translations of it have been made into the French and the German. It contains some of the best fun as well as the wisest counsel that ever emanated from his pen."

China's Flag.

The flag of China is one of the gayest among ensigns. The body of the flag is pale yellow. In the upper left hand corner is a small red sun. Looking intently at the sun is a fierce Chinese dragon. The dragon's belly is a brilliant red and white. His green back is covered with stiff knobs. He is standing on his two hind paws and the left fore foot. His feet are five toed and slightly hooked. His long, five forked tail stretches away in the rear. The dragon's neck is arched back. His mouth is wide open, and he looks as if he were about to try to swallow the red sun.

Then and Now.

"When old Fladger came to this town twenty-five years ago," said the man in the mackintosh, "everything he had in the world was on his back."

"And now?" queried the man who had his feet on the table.

"Well, his wife and six daughters have relieved him of the burden. They carry it all on their backs now."—Chicago Tribune.

Postprandial.

"Judge Goodliven just went down the street. I thought you said he was attending a big banquet to him this evening."

"Not at all. I saw him coming out of Del's, and I merely remarked there was a big dinner in his honor this evening."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Procrastination.

How mankind defers from day to day the best it can do and the most beautiful things it can enjoy without thinking that every day may be the last one and that lost time is lost eternally!—Max Muller.

AN EDITORIAL HIGHWAYMAN

[Copyright, 1903, by McClure, Phillips & Co.] In traveling through the state of Kansas in pioneer days on horseback I was held up one afternoon by a man with a gun, who not only went through me in first class shape, but insisted that I follow him into the woods where he had his retreat. He seemed of forcible disposition at first, and I believed he intended to murder me, but in a little time he thawed out, and I began to see that he was not such a bad fellow after all.

When supper had been prepared and disposed of he dug among the leaves and brought out an old satchel. The contents consisted of a dozen copies of the paper which had busted him, a liberal supply of print paper for writing on and half a dozen lead pencils. He took some of the blank paper and a pencil and scribbled away for a few minutes and then said:

"Although I am out of the sanctum the old habit still clings. I want you to see my style and criticize it. Listen to this: 'Mr. Joseph Gillam, our esteemed fellow townsman, called at this office yesterday to report that while he was on the highway between Joplin and Neosho last Tuesday he was suddenly confronted by a highwayman armed with a shotgun, who ordered him into the woods to be despoiled and probably murdered. Mr. Gillam, who was taken completely by surprise, appeared to cheerfully acquiesce, but just as he entered the woods he quickly drew his pistol and turned in his saddle and fired point blank at the daring burglar. As soon as he pulled the trigger he put spurs to his horse and in the confusion of the moment made good his escape. The robber fired two charges of buckshot at him?'"

"What do you think of that?" asked the editor as he finished reading.

"It's very fair."

"But not up and up. It's too heavy—too Shakespearean. Our eminent fellow townsman, Mr. Gillam, would buy five extra copies of the paper to send away to his relatives, but the article would not produce widespread interest. That was my failing—nothing widespread about my writings. I'd like to see your style. Just dash off something based on the same facts."

I wrote a "side header" about half the length of his, and when he had read it he said:

"That knocks all my plans in the head. I was going to offer you a partnership in this business, thinking you, too, were also too Shakespearean in style for this section, but I find I'm mistaken. It's an elegant little article—not a word too little or too much."

The man had such a queer streak about him that I couldn't make up my mind whether he was a robber, as he claimed, or had gone daft over his troubles and was wandering about as crazy people often do. There was no cause to fear him, however, and we sat and smoked till a late hour and had a good visit. When morning came and we had disposed of breakfast, he urged me to accept \$100 as a present, and when I firmly refused he wanted me to take a gold watch. In those days a tramp printer with \$4 ahead of the game was a millionaire. My refusal seemed to hurt his feelings, but he shook hands heartily on parting and wished me all sorts of good luck. In due time I reached Neosho, went from there to Fayetteville, Ozark and Clarksville and about the middle of December brought up at Van Buren. One day I was sent over to Fort Smith to interview a man who was to be hanged ten days later. When admitted to the presence of the condemned I was almost paralyzed to discover in him the whilom editor of the Echo. His surprise was likewise great, but as soon as he had rallied a little his face fairly beamed with smiles as he said:

"What a godsend! Why, my dear boy, I'd rather see you than any other man on earth. It wasn't an hour ago that I was saying I'd give a day off the few left me to see you. You have come to interview me?"

"And what has happened?" I asked.

"Gun accidentally went off and killed a man. Pure accident, but I couldn't make 'em believe it. I am to be hung on the 29th. Too bad, of course, but it's too late for lamentation. You've been sent over today to get a preliminary—how the condemned looks and feels—no hope of reprieve—going to the gallows like a brave man, and so forth and so on?"

"That's it."

"All right. You can do yourself proud on that. Make about a column and put on three scare heads, all full-face caps. And now about the other—the actual event. There won't be much to it. Don't try a pad in it. You can't make over half a column of leaded minion without padding. The salient features will be: Reading the death warrant, coolness of the condemned, march to the scaffold, ringing down the curtain. See? Don't attempt anything Shakespearean. Make it all meat."

"I'll do my best."

"I'm sure you will. And one thing more. You are the only living man who knows I used to fill an editorial chair or tried to. I think you had better be silent on that point. You could point a moral by saying unsuccessful editors make good highwaymen, but it would sort of smirch the profesh. No use to hurt the feelings of our esteemed, you know. I shall look for you on the 29th. Goodby."

Owing to an accident I did not reach the fort on the 29th until all was over. He had left me a line when they told him I was not present. It read:

"Don't exceed half a column and use only one top head. I leave you all my earthly possessions—twelve copies of the busted Echo and a revolver."

M. QUAY.