

The Holladay Case

A Mystery of Two Continents

By BURTON E. STVENSON

Copyright, 1903, by Henry Holt and Company

But the police, so I understand, arrested that and failed," he objected, "you could succeed?"

"Oh, I dare say I shouldn't succeed," laughed, his air striking me as a little more earnest than the occasion demanded. "I should probably fail, just as the police did."

"In France," he remarked, "it is in the least expected that men of law should—"

"For is it here?" I explained. "Only, of course, a lawyer can't help it some. Some cases demand more of detective work and are yet too delicate to be entrusted to the police."

"It is also the fault of our police that too fond of the newspapers, or of being before the public. It is a fault of human nature, is it not?"

"You speak English so well, Mr. copathetic," I said, "that I have wondered where you learned it."

"It was some years in England—the mess of wine—and devoted myself busily to the study of the language. I still find it sometimes very difficult to understand you Americans—speak so much more rapidly than I do. English and so much less distinct. You have a way of running your words together, of dropping whole syllables—"

"Yes," I smiled, "and that is the very we complain of in the French."—

"Oh, our elisions are governed by defined laws which each one understands, while here—"

"Every man is a law unto himself. I remember it is the land of the free—and the home of the license, is it not?" he added, unconscious of irony.

"I decided, I was very fortunate in gaining Martigny's acquaintance. I would have less time to devote to it, but nevertheless we should have pleasant evenings together, and I looked forward to them with considerable anticipation. He was interested in himself—entertaining, with that tolerance and good humor which I've already mentioned and which is one of the most striking characteristics of the man. And then—shall I tell it?—I was lonely, too, some, as I suppose every bachelor is, and I welcomed a companion."

It was Monday, the fourteenth day of April, and we had just opened the door. A knock hurried in with a message for Mr. Royce.

"Here's a man out here who wants to see you at once, sir," he said. "He has your name, Thompson, and that Miss Frances Holladay's butler." The man in a dark suit and a white shirt and tie, then he controlled himself and sank back into it again.

"How him in," he said, and sat with eyes on the door, haggard in appearance, pitiful in his eagerness. Not a moment had I noticed how past week had aged him and worn down. His work of course might not be for part of it, but not for all, seemed almost ill.

The door opened in a moment and a bald man of about sixty entered. He was fairly gasping for breath and plainly laboring under great emotion.

"Vell, Thompson," demanded Mr. Royce, "what's the trouble now?"

"Trouble enough, sir!" cried the other. "My mistress has been made away with, sir. She left town just days ago for Belair, where we all wait for her, and nobody set eyes on her since, sir."

CHAPTER X.

MR. ROYCE grasped the arms of his chair convulsively, and remained for a moment speechless under the shock.

"He swung around toward me. 'Come here, Lester,' he said hoarsely. 'I needed you once before, and I need you now. This touches me so deeply I can't think consecutively. Will you help, won't you?'"

There was an appeal in his face which showed his sudden weakness—appeal there was no resisting, even if I not myself been deeply interested in the case.

"Gladly," I answered from the bottom of my heart, seeing how overpowered he was. "I'll help to the very limit of my power, Mr. Royce."

He sank back into his chair again and breathed a long sigh.

"I knew you would," he said. "Get story from Thompson, will you?"

"I brought a chair and sat down by old butler."

"You have been in Mr. Holladay's study a great many years, haven't you, Mr. Thompson?" I asked to give an opportunity to compose himself.

"Yes, a great many years, sir—nearly forty, I should say."

"Before Miss Holladay's birth, then?"

"Oh, yes, sir; long before. Just before his marriage Mr. Holladay bought a Fifth avenue house he lived in ever since, and I was employed then, sir, as an underservant."

"Mr. Holladay and his wife were very happy together, weren't they?" I questioned.

"Very happy; yes, sir. They were at like lovers, sir, until her death seemed just made for each other, and the trite old saying gathered new dignity as he uttered it. I paused a moment to consider. This

at the dark eyes, the earnest mouth. Then he handed it back to me.

"No," he answered, "not if it really help. We must use every means we can. Only—"

"I won't use it unless I absolutely have to," I assured him. "And when I'm done with it I'll destroy it."

"Very well," he assented, and I put it in my pocket.

There was nothing more to be discovered there, and we went away, after warning the two men to say not a word to any one concerning their mistress' disappearance.

Plainly the first thing to be done was to find the coachman who had driven Miss Holladay and her maid away from the house, and with this end in view we visited all the stables in the neighborhood, but from none of them had a carriage been ordered by her. Had she ordered it herself from a stable in some distant portion of the city for the purpose of concealing her whereabouts, or had it been ordered for her by her maid, and was she really the victim of foul play? I put this question to Mr. Royce, but he seemed quite unable to reach a conclusion. As for myself, I was certain that she had gone away of her own accord and had deliberately planned her disappearance. Why? Well, I began to suspect that we had not yet really touched the bottom of the mystery.

We drove back to the office and found Mr. Graham there. I related to him the circumstances of our search and submitted to him and to our junior one question for immediate settlement.

"At the best, it's a delicate case," I pointed out. "Miss Holladay has plainly laid her plans very carefully to prevent us following her. It may be difficult to prove that she has not gone away entirely of her own accord. She certainly has a perfect right to go wherever she wishes without consulting us. Have we the right to follow her against her evident desire?"

"For a moment Mr. Graham did not answer, but sat tapping his desk with that deep line of perplexity between his eyebrows. Then he nodded emphatically.

"It's our duty to follow her and find her," he said. "It's perfectly evident to me that no girl in her right mind would act as she has done. She had no reason whatever for deceiving us—for running away. We wouldn't have interfered with her. Jenkinson's right—she's suffering with dementia. We must see that she receives proper medical treatment."

"It might not be dementia," I suggested, "so much as undue influence—on the part of the new maid, perhaps."

"Then it's our duty to rescue her from that influence," rejoined Mr. Graham, "and restore her to her normal mentality."

"Even if we offend her?"

"We can't stop to think of that. Besides, she won't be offended when she comes to herself. The question is how to find her most speedily."

"The police, probably, could do it most speedily," I said, "but since she can be in no immediate danger of any kind I rather doubt whether it would be wise to call in the police. Miss Holladay would very properly resent any more publicity."

"But," objected Mr. Graham, "if we don't call in the police, how are we to find her? I recognize, of course, how undesirable it is that she should be subjected to any further publicity, but is there any other way?"

I glanced at Mr. Royce and saw that he was seemingly sunk in apathy.

"If I could be excused from the office for a few days, sir," I began hesitatingly, "I might be able to find some trace of her. If I'm unsuccessful, we might then call in the authorities."

Mr. Royce brightened up for a moment.

"That's it," he said. "Let Lester look into it."

"Very well," assented Mr. Graham. "I agree to that. Of course any expense you may incur will be borne by the office."

"Thank you, sir," and I rose with fast beating heart, for the adventure appealed to me strongly. "I'll begin at once then. I should like assistance in one thing. Could you let me have three or four clerks to visit the various stables of the city? It would be best, I think, to use our own people."

"Certainly," assented our senior instantly. "I'll call them in and we can give them their instructions at once."

So four clerks were summoned, and each was given a district of the city. Their instructions were to find from which stable Miss Holladay had ordered a carriage on the morning of Thursday, April 3. They were to report at the office every day, noon and evening, until the search was finished. They started away at once, and I turned to follow them, when my eye was caught by the expression of our junior's face.

"Mr. Royce is ill, sir!" I cried. "Look at him!"

He was leaning forward heavily, his face drawn and livid, his eyes set, his hands plucking at the arms of his chair. We sprang to him and led him to a couch. I bathed his hands and face in cold water, while Mr. Graham hurriedly summoned a physician. The doctor soon arrived and diagnosed the case at a glance.

"Nervous breakdown," he said tersely. "You lawyers drive yourselves too hard. It's a wonder to me you don't all drop over. We'll have to look out for this will end in brain fever."

He poured out a stimulant, which the sick man swallowed without protest. He seemed stronger in a few moments and began talking incoherently to himself. We got him down to the doctor's carriage and drove rapidly to his lodgings, where we put him to bed without delay.

"I think he'll pull through," observed the doctor after watching him for

awhile. "I'll get a couple of nurses, and we'll give him every chance. Has he any relatives here in New York?"

"No; his relatives are all in Ohio. Had they better be notified?"

"Oh, I think not—unless he gets worse. He seems to be naturally strong. I suppose he's been worrying about something?"

"Yes," I said. "He has been greatly worried by one of his cases."

"Of course," he nodded. "If the human race had sense enough to stop worrying there'd be mighty little work for us doctors."

"I'd like to call Dr. Jenkinson into the case," I said. "He knows Mr. Royce and may be of help."

"Certainly. I'll be glad to consult with Dr. Jenkinson."

So Jenkinson was called and confirmed the diagnosis. He understood, of course, the cause of Mr. Royce's breakdown and turned to me when the consultation was ended and his colleague had taken his departure.

"Mr. Lester," he said, "I advise you to go home and get some rest. Put this case out of your mind or you'll be right where Mr. Royce is. He had some more bad news, I suppose?"

I told him of Miss Holladay's disappearance. He pondered over it a moment with grave face.

"This strengthens my belief that she is suffering with dementia," he said.



We sprang to him and led him to a couch.

"Sudden aversion to relatives and friends is one of its most common symptoms. Of course she must be found."

"I'm going to find her," I assured him, with perhaps a little more confidence than I really felt.

"Well, remember to call on me if I can help you. But, first of all, go home and sleep for ten hours—twelve, if you can. Mind, no work before that—no building of theories. You'll be so much the fresher tomorrow."

I recognized the wisdom of his advice, but I had one thing to do first. I took a cab and drove to the nearest telegraph office. There I sent an imperative message to Brooks, the Holladay coachman, telling him to return to New York by the first train and report to me at the office. That done, I gave the driver my address and settled back in the seat.

No building of theories, Jenkinson had said; yet it was difficult to keep the brain idle. Where was Frances Holladay? Why had she fled? Was she really mentally deranged? Had the weight of the secret proved too great for her? Or had she merely fallen under the influence of the woman who was guilty? Supposing she was insane, what should we do with her when we found her? How could we control her? And, supposing she were not insane, what legal right had we to interfere with her? These and a hundred other questions crowded upon me till thought failed and I lay back confused, indifferent.

"Here we are, sir," said the driver, jumping down from his seat and jerking open the door.

I paid him and went stumbling up the steps. I have no doubt he was grinning behind me. As I fumbled with my key some one opened the door from the inside.

"Why, Mistr Lester!" exclaimed Martigny's voice. "What is it? You have no illness, I hope?"

"No," I murmured, "I'm just dead tired, and I started blindly for the stairs."

"Let me assist you," and he took my arm and helped me up, then went on ahead, opened my door and lighted the gas.

"Thanks," I said as I dropped into a chair.

He sat quietly down opposite me, and, weary as I was, I was conscious of his keen eyes upon me.

"We heard from Miss Holladay this morning," I remarked, unconsciously answering their question.

He did not reply for a moment, but I had closed my eyes again, and I was too tired to open them and look at him.

"Ah," he said in a voice a little hoarse. "And she is well?"

"No. She's disappeared."

"You mean—"

"I mean she's run away," I said winking up a little.

"And she has informed you?"

"Oh, no. We've just found it out. She's been gone ten days."

"And you are going to search for her?" he questioned carelessly, after another pause.

"Yes. I'll begin in the morning."

Again there was a moment's silence.

"Ah," he said, with a curious intensity. "Ah!"

Then he arose and left me to tumble incoherently into bed.

THE WEDDING AT ST. ANN'S

(Continued from page 3)

There was a pause at the end of the story, and Malley was the one to break the silence as the carriage stopped in front of the church door with a muttered, "Well, that is a corker," and then he whirled while Holden was opening the door; "But we must forget this thing now. Remember there is to be nothing but smiles here tonight."

The three young men hurried up through the awning in the blaze of light from the open church door. As they reached the vestibule Hopkins put a hand on the shoulder of each of his companions and drew them a step aside into the shadow and said in a low voice:

"This fellow Goodlee has not been seen in this part of the country since, but I met him here on the street today. He was worn to a shadow almost, ragged and drunk. Do you suppose his being here has anything to do with this business tonight?" And then, without waiting for an answer, he passed rapidly into the church, followed by his wondering companions.

People came to this wedding with the crush that is characteristic of weddings, and in the busy moments which followed the bridegroom's friends forgot for the time being in their duties as members the story told in the carriage. The big congregation had soon filled the church and sat waiting for the climax. The sea of faces and richly colored cloths and silks and furs, here and there gleaming with silver and gold and jewels, moved incessantly in the brilliant yellow light from the vaulted roof, and the murmur from it grew more and more distinct.

Everywhere the faces were eager and happy in the coming happiness of the heroine and hero of the night, save where a mother thought of a daughter already given or to be given in marriage and the pangs of the following separation, or a husband mused on his own shortcomings since he stood up there at the altar plighting his troth. The masses of green foliage and white blossoms in the chancel waved gently in the draft from an open window and seemed to beckon the bridal party. Then from the vestry room came the bishop in the flowing robes of his high office, followed by the rector, and for a moment stillness reigned, and as they took their places before the altar the organ burst forth into solemn melody.

The bridegroom, leaning on the arm of his best friend, entered, and down the aisle marched the daintily gowned bridesmaids to meet the bride. Then slowly the procession turned as Miss Fielding entered the church upon her father's arm; and, preceded by the choristers, their youthful faces uplifted in the notes of the beautiful wedding hymn, the group of sweet young womanhood moved back toward the altar.

Just as the party halted in their places before the chancel all the doors of the church were pushed open to admit the last guest. To judge of him by the slinking manner of his walk and the evident desire to be unseen as he made his way into the nearest pew, he was an uninvited guest. But all eyes were to the front now, and no one said him nay. He produced a singular spot of unattractiveness in the throng of well dressed, well looking men and women about him. It was not to be wondered at that the young woman beside whom he seated himself drew her gown a little closer about her for fear of the effect upon her from touching this uncouth creature. He was tall, but physical and mental dissonance had worn away the flesh. If it had ever been there, which was necessary to give the massive frame its proper proportions. His clothes, like his garment of flesh, were too small. His boots had long been without the attentions of a shoemaker or blacking and brush. They were laced in places with bits of once white string. His trousers, barely reaching to the tops of his miserable boots, were baggy and threadbare and variously patched. His coat, which had once been black, was gray with dirt and shiny from long wear and buttoned so closely about him as to give the familiar and pitiful appearance of having nothing underneath. A grimy, ragged collar about his neck was the only bit of linen in his costume. His hair was long and unkempt. In his hand he held a dusty, greasy, old felt hat, which he fingered nervously. And his face crowned right well this picture of fallen manhood and misery. Some mishap had terribly disfigured his face. Great livid scars ran down his cheek and neck until lost from sight under his rags. One of his eyes was fixed and white and sightless, and in the other, bloodshot and wild, and the bloated flesh about it were the unerring signs of the disipated manner of his life, only emphasized by his harsh little cough and breath redolent with the sickening odor of liquor.

And yet there was something, had any one taken the trouble to notice it, in the delicate structure of his hands, the queer proud little shake of the head and the timid courtesy with which he found his sitting, which might have made the close observer wonder whether these things were only phenomena in their companionship with dirt and meanness or the flickering rays of a bright light just going out. But nobody did take notice, unless it was to casually comment mentally that one of the city's great army of half frozen vagabonds was taking advantage of a few moments' grace in the warmth of the church.

The service was about to begin. The charming, sacred notes of the "Narcissus" came softly from the organ. The deep and musical voice of the bishop arose from the altar side, reaching distinctly to the most distant member of the huddled congregation. Slowly

ly the bishop uttered the opening words of the wedding service, concluding still more slowly and impressively with the sentence, "If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak or else hereafter forever hold his peace." As the last words died away the bishop, rector, bridal party and congregation instinctively bowed their heads waiting. Not a move or sound broke the stillness for a moment; even the flowers seemed to stop their waving and to wait and listen.

Then there came a slight, shuffling sound from the rear pew, and the unbidden guest stood in the aisle, erect in his garments of rags and dirt. His one hand clasped convulsively the old hat and his other was raised high above his head, trembling, as was his whole frame, with excessive emotion. His face was uplifted and ashy pale, save where the scars drew livid lines across it; the muscles around his mouth were strained and set, his lips were open slightly and his tongue moved, but his voice seemed gone. Then two men, attendants at the entrance, moved quickly to the figure in the aisle and, grasping him by the arms, forced him through the doors.

It was all over in a moment. Few, save those nearest to the scene, had time to turn about before the doors swung together behind the men and their prisoner. A faint sound of the disturbance reached the party in the chancel, and Miss Fielding turned quickly toward the entrance only to find Hopkins close behind her, ready to reassure her with a few hurried words, "Only a fainting woman." But he knew it was false, and tomorrow he would add to the falsehood by telling those who gossip about it that an insane patient had somehow escaped from Blockley and got into the church.

The wedding was over, and the bride stood with her husband under the awning while they were opening the door of the carriage, when above the hum of voices and the din of rolling wheels they heard a sharp cry and in the stillness that followed a few muttered words of protest, and something beside the misery in the tones startled the woman, and she looked hastily and anxiously across the street to where two policemen were forcing an apparently drunken beggar into a patrol wagon, and there was a curious mixture of pity and relief in her face as she turned from the ugly scene, and she pressed close to her husband as they drove away.

Arsenic Eaters.

Arsenic, as is well known, is a deadly poison, two grains only being, as a rule, a fatal dose. Yet, strange to say, it has been well authenticated that the human body can become arsenic proof. Over a large area of southern Austria this is quite common. Peasant girls eat it to increase their attractions, as it is known to improve the complexion. Laboring men take it regularly and yet attain a healthy old age. The drug has a beneficial effect on their digestive organs and so strengthens the respiratory organs that these bearers of heavy burdens find it easier to climb steep mountain roads. Often taken at first in secret, one small dose a week is enough, but the craving increases till in some cases six grains a day is eaten, enough to poison three men. A penalty, however, awaits the user, for once begun it is impossible to give it up and live.

Going to Bed in India.

Going to bed in India is a very different process from going to bed at home. To begin with, it is a far less formal process. There is in the hot season no shutting of the door, no cutting yourself off from the outer world, no going upstairs, and, finally, no getting into bed. You merely lie down on your bed, which, with its bedding, is so simple as to be worth describing. The bed is a wooden frame with a webbing laced across it, and each bed has a thin cotton mattress. Over this one sheet is spread, and two pillows go to each bed, bolsters not being used. That's all. Some people do not even have the mattress, preferring the coolness of a piece of fine matting.

Crimes Against Animals.

"The cooks of today," wrote Yuan Mei, a Chinese author of the nineteenth century, "think nothing of mixing in one soup the meat of chicken, duck, pig and goose. But these chickens, ducks, pigs and geese have doubtless souls, and these souls will most certainly file complaints in the next world of the way they have been treated in this. A good cook will use plenty of different dishes. Each article of food will be made to exhibit its own characteristics, while each made dish will be characterized by one dominant flavor. Then the palate of the gourmand will respond without freak and the flowers of the soul blossom forth."

Point Not Well Taken.

Mrs. Jenner Lee Ondego—"I don't see why they call it 'grand opera' when it's in English. It isn't grand opera when you can understand what the singers are saying. Mrs. Sellman Holme—Why, bless you, you can't understand them any better when they sing in English than when they sing in Italian!"—Chicago Tribune.

Such Is Life.

"It's a hard struggle to conduct one's business without plenty of capital," observed the man with the frowning chin.

"You're right," agreed the man with the mane nose. "If a fellow hasn't got plenty of backing he has to do a lot of sidestepping."—St. Louis Republic.