

The Holladay Case

A Mystery Of Two Continents

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

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(CONTINUED.)

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, with 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



A map showed us that it was on the shore of the English channel.

self-assured; yet, in light of the result—well, at any rate, my chief showed no disposition to smile, but sat for some moments in deep thought.

"I don't doubt that you're right, Mr. Lester," he said at last. "At any rate I'm ready to trust your experience, since I have absolutely none in this kind of work. I don't need to say that I have every confidence in you. I'll have a letter of credit prepared at once, so that you may not want for money. Shall we say five thousand to start with?"

I stammered that I was certain that would be more than enough, but he silenced me with a gesture.

"You'll find foreign travel more expensive than you think," he said. "It may be, too, that you'll find that money will help you materially with your investigations. I want you to have all you may need—don't spare it. When you need more don't hesitate to draw on us."

I thanked him and was about to take my leave, for I had some packing to do and some private business to arrange when a message came from Dr. Jenkinson. Mr. Graham smiled as he read it.

"Royce is better," he said; "much better. He's asking for you, and Jenkinson seems to think you'd better go to him, especially if you can bring good news."

"Just the thing!" I cried. "I must go to bid him goodbye, in any event." And half an hour later I was admitted to 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 say?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Royce and I 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."

"Well, I'm going with you!" he cried. "Why," I stammered, startled by his vehemence, "are you strong enough? I'd be mighty glad to have you, but do you think you ought? How about it, doctor?"

Jenkinson was smiling with half shut eyes.

"It's not a bad idea," he said. "He needs rest and quiet more than anything else, and he's bound to get a week of that on the water, which is more than he'll do here. I can't keep that brain of his still, wherever he is. He'd worry here, and with you he'll be contented. Besides," he added, "he ought to be along, for I believe the expedition is going to be successful!"

I believed so, too, but I recognized in Jenkinson's words that fine optimism which had done so much to make him the great doctor he was. I shook our junior's hand again in the joy of having him with me. As for him, he seemed quite transformed, and Jenkinson gazed at him with a look of quiet pleasure.

"You'll have to pack," I said. "Will you need my help?"

"No; nurse can do it, with the doctor here to help us out," he laughed. "You have your own packing to do and odds and ends to look after. Besides, neither of us will need much luggage. Don't forget to reserve the other berth in that stateroom for me."

"No," I said and rose. "I'll come for you in the morning."

"All right; I'll be ready."

The doctor followed me out to give me a word of caution. Mr. Royce was just far from well; he must not over-exert himself; he must be kept cheerful and hopeful, if possible; above all, he was not to worry; quiet and sea air would do the rest.

I hurried back to the office to make my final report to Mr. Graham and to get the abstract which Rogers had promised to have ready and which was awaiting me on my desk. Our worthy senior was genuinely pleased when he learned that his junior was going with me, though our absence would mean a vast deal of extra work for himself. The canvass of the city stables had been completed without result, but I suspected now that Martigny himself had hired the carriage and had perhaps even acted as driver. Such an easy and obvious way to baffle our pursuit would hardly have escaped him.

I finished up some odds and ends of work which I had left undone and finally bade Mr. Graham goodbye and started for my rooms. My packing was soon finished, and I sat down for a final smoke and review of the situation.

There was one development of the day before which quite baffled me. I had proved that there were indeed two women, and I believed them to be mother and daughter, but I could not in the least understand why the younger one had so completely broken down after the departure of the elder with Miss Holladay. I looked at this point from every side, but could find no reasonable explanation of it. It might be, indeed, that the younger one was beginning already to repent her share in the conspiracy. There could be no question that it was she who had struck down Holladay in his office, that she had even refused to go farther in the plot, and that her companions had found it necessary to restrain her, but this seemed to me too exceedingly improbable to believe, and as I went over the ground again I found myself beginning more and more to doubt the truth of Godfrey's theory, though I could formulate none to take its place. I became lost in a maze of conjecture, and at last I gave it up and went to bed.

I called for Mr. Royce, as we had agreed, and together we drove down to Morton street. He, too, had limited his baggage to a single small trunk. We secured a deck hand to take them into our stateroom, and, after seeing them disposed of, went out on deck to watch the last preparations for departure. The pier was in that state of hurly burly which may be witnessed only at the sailing of a transatlantic liner. The last of the freight was being got aboard with frantic haste; the boat and pier were crowded with people who had come to bid their friends goodbye; two tugs were puffing noisily alongside, ready to pull us out into the stream. My companion appeared quite strong and seemed to enjoy the bustle and hubbub as much as I did. He flushed with pleasure as he caught sight of our senior pushing his way toward us.

"Why, this is kind of you, sir!" he cried, grasping his hand. "I know what the work of the office must be with both of us deserting you this way."

"Tut, tut!"—And Mr. Graham smiled at us. "You deserve a vacation, don't you? I couldn't let you go without telling you goodbye. Besides," he added, "I learned just this morning that two very dear friends of mine are taking this boat—Mrs. Kemball and her daughter—the widow of Jim Kemball,

you know."

Mr. Royce nodded. I, too, recalled the name. Jim Kemball had been one of the best men at the New York bar twenty years before and must inevitably have made a great name for himself but for his untimely death. I had heard a hundred stories of him.

"Well, I want you to meet them," continued Mr. Graham, looking about in all directions. "Ah, here they are!" And he dragged his partner away toward the bow of the boat. I saw him bowing before a gray haired little lady and a younger and taller one whose back was toward me. They laughed together for a moment, then the last bell rang and the ship's officers began to clear the boat. I turned back to the pier, but was brought round an instant later by Mr. Graham's voice.

"My dear Lester," he cried, "I thought we'd lost you. I want to introduce you to Mrs. Kemball and her daughter, who are to be your fellow voyagers. Mr. Lester's a very ingenious young man," he added. "Make him amuse you!" And he hastened away to catch the gang plank before it should be pulled in.

I bowed to Mrs. Kemball, thinking to myself that I had never seen a sweeter, pleasanter face. Then I found myself looking into a pair of blue eyes that fairly took my breath away.

"We'll not neglect Mr. Graham's advice," said a merry voice. "So prepare for your fate, Mr. Lester!"

There was a hoarse shouting at the gangway behind me, and the eyes looked past me, over my shoulder.

"See," she said, "there's one poor fellow who has just made it."

I turned and looked toward the gang plank. One end had been cast loose, but two deck hands were assisting another man to mount it. He seemed weak and helpless, and they supported him on either side. An involuntary cry rose to my lips as I looked at him, but I choked it back. For it was Martigny, risen from his bed to follow us!

CHAPTER XIV.

I WATCHED him with a kind of fascination until he disappeared through the door of the cabin. I could guess what it had cost him to drag himself from his bed, what agony of apprehension must have been upon him to make him take the risk. The Jourdain, puzzled at my not returning, unable to keep silence, suspecting, perhaps, some plot against themselves, had doubtless gone to the hospital and told him of my appearance—there had been no way for me to guard against that. He had easily guessed the rest. He had only to consult the passenger list to assure himself that Mr. Royce and I were aboard. And he was following us, hoping—what? What could a man in his condition hope to accomplish? What need was there for us to fear him? And yet there was something about him—something in the atmosphere of the man—that almost terrified me.

I came back to earth to find that Royce and Mrs. Kemball had drifted away together and that my companion was regarding me from under half closed lids with a little smile of amusement.

"So you're awake again, Mr. Lester?" she asked. "Do you often suffer attacks of that sort?"

"Pardon me," I stammered. "The fact is, I—"

"You looked quite dismayed," she continued relentlessly. "You seemed positively horror stricken. I saw nothing formidable about him."

"No, you don't know him!" I retort-



"I want to introduce you to Mrs. Kemball and her daughter."

ed and stopped, lest I should say too much.

"I think we'd better sit down," she said, smiling. "Your knees seem to be still somewhat shaky."

So we sought a seat near the stern, where we could watch the city sink gradually away in the distance as the great boat glided smoothly out into the bay.

I confess I was worried. I had not thought for a moment that Martigny would have the temerity to board the

same boat with us—yet it was not so wonderful after all, since he could not guess that I suspected him, that I knew him and Bethune to be the same person. That was my great advantage. In any event we were in no danger from him. He was probably following us only that he might warn his confederates, should we seem likely to discover them. Certainly they were in no present danger of discovery, and perhaps might never be. But his following us, his disregard of the grave danger to himself, gave me a new measure of his savage determination to baffle us. I found myself more and more beginning to fear him.

Should I inform Mr. Royce of this new development? I asked myself. Then I remembered the doctor's words. He must have rest and quiet during the coming week.

"I trust that I'm not in the way, Mr. Lester?" inquired a low, provoking voice at my side, and I awoke to the fact that I had again been guilty of forgetting my companion.

"Miss Kemball," I began desperately, "let me confess that I'm in an exceedingly vexatious situation. The fact that I can't ask advice makes it worse."

"You can't ask even Mr. Royce?" she queried, with raised brows.

"He least of all. You see, he's just recovering from a severe nervous breakdown."

"I see," she nodded.

I glanced at her again—at the open, candid eyes, the forceful mouth and chin—and I took a sudden resolution.

"Miss Kemball," I said, "I'm going to ask your help—that is, if I may."

"Of course you may."

"Well, then, that man who came on board last is the inveterate enemy of both Mr. Royce and myself. We're trying to unearth a particularly atrocious piece of villainy in which he's concerned. I have reason to believe him capable of anything and a very fiend of cleverness. I don't know what he may plot against us, but I'm certain he'll plot something. Mr. Royce doesn't even know him by sight and shouldn't be worried, but unless he's forewarned he may walk right into danger. I want you to help me keep an eye on him—to help me keep him out of danger. Will you help me?"

"Why, certainly!" she cried. "So we're to have a mystery—just we two?"

"Just we two," I assented.

She looked at me doubtfully.

(To be Continued.)

NOTICE OF SPECIAL LECTURE.

Electric Light Bond Proposition.

Notice is hereby given to the electors of the city of Red Cloud, in Webster county, Nebraska, pursuant to a resolution adopted by the Mayor and Council of said city, at an adjourned regular meeting thereof, December 7, 1905, and based upon the petition of more than ten resident freeholders from each ward of said city, that an election is called and will be held in said city, at the usual voting places therein, to wit: in the first ward, at the F. & M. Bank Building and in the second ward at the Firemen's hall, on the 9th day of January, 1906, between the hours of 8 o'clock A. M., and 7 o'clock P. M., of said day, at which the following proposition is submitted to be voted upon:

Shall the Mayor and City Council of the city of Red Cloud, Nebraska, be authorized to issue the coupon bond nominated electric light bonds of said City of Red Cloud, in the amount of Ten Thousand Dollars, in the denomination of five hundred dollars each, payable to bearer and to become due twenty years after the date thereof, but payable any time after the expiration of five years, at the option of said city, and bearing not to exceed five per cent annual interest, and to be dated the day of its issuance. Interest and principal of said bonds to be payable at the fiscal agency of the state of Nebraska, in New York City. Said bonds to be sold for not less than par value, with accrued interest, and the proceeds thereof to be used by said city for the construction and establishing of a system of electric lights in and for said city, and shall the mayor and council of said city annually levy the necessary tax upon all the taxable property within said city, in addition to all other taxes to pay the interest on said bonds as the same becomes due and to furnish a sinking fund for the payment of the principal of said bonds, and an annual tax of not to exceed two mills on the dollar of the assessed valuation of said city, for the purpose of maintaining, operating and extending said system of electric lights.

The form of the ballot to be used at said election shall be as follows:

(Vote for One)

FOR electric light bonds and taxes

AGAINST electric light bonds and taxes

And to be voted and marked by making a cross in the space provided in the usual manner as provided by law.

Should a majority of the ballots cast at such election be in favor of said proposition, then the Mayor and Council of said city will be authorized to issue and negotiate said bonds according to the conditions and for the purpose specified in the foregoing proposition, and all as contemplated by the provisions of sections 8504 to 8508, inclusive, of Cobby's Annotated Statutes of 1903, and it shall be the duty of the Mayor and Clerk of said City when so authorized, and by order of the City Council, to sign and attest said bonds, and affix thereto the seal of said city. The proceeds of the sale of said bonds shall be paid to the treasurer of said city of Red Cloud and kept by him in a separate fund, apart from other moneys, to be known as the lighting fund, and paid out only upon the order of the Council and warrant drawn against the same, for the said purpose specified and no other.

Dated this December 13th, 1905.

Attest: By the Mayor,
L. H. FORT, C. T. DICKINSON,
(Seal) City Clerk. Jans