

# The Holladay Case

A Mystery Of Two Continents

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

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(CONTINUED.)

I leaned my head back against the wall with a little sigh of relief. What a fool I had been! Of course we should find it. Mr. Royce had spoken the words; the district attorney had pointed out the way. We had only to prove an alibi, and the next witness would do it. Her coachman had only to tell where he had driven her, at what place she had stopped, and the whole question would be settled. At the hour the crime was committed she had doubtless been miles away from Wall street, so the question would be settled—settled, too, without the necessity of Miss Holladay undergoing the unpleasant ordeal of cross examination.

"It is a most extraordinary affair," said a voice at my elbow, and I turned with a start to see that the chair just behind me had been taken by a man who was also reading an account of the crime. He laid the paper down and caught my eye. "A most extraordinary affair!" he repeated, appealing to me.

I nodded, merely glancing at him, too preoccupied to notice him closely. I got an impression of a florid face, of a stout, well dressed body, of an air unmistakably French.

"You will pardon me, sir," he added, leaning a little forward. "As a stranger in this country, I am much interested in your processes of law. This morning I was present at the trial. I perceived you there. It seemed to me that the young lady was in what you call a tight place."

He spoke English very well, with an accent of the slightest. I glanced at him again and saw that his eyes were very bright and that they were fixed upon me intently.

"It does seem so," I admitted, loath to talk, yet not wishing to be discourteous.

"The ver' thing I said to myself!" he continued eagerly. "The—what you call—co-evidence of the dress now."

I did not answer. I was in no humor to discuss the case.

"You will pardon me," he repeated persuasively, still leaning forward, "but concerning one point I should like much to know. If she is thought guilty what will occur?"

"She will be bound over to the grand jury," I explained.

"That is, she will be placed in prison?"

"Of course."

"But, as I understand your law, she may be released by bondsmen."

"Not in a capital case," I said; "not in a case of this kind, where the penalty may be death."

"Ah, I see," and he nodded slowly. "She would then not be again released until after she shall have been proved innocent. How great a time would that occupy?"

"I can't say—six months—a year, perhaps."

"Ah, I see," he said again, and drained a glass of absinth he had been toying with. "Thank you, ver' much, sir."

He arose and went slowly out, and I noted the strength of his figure, the short neck—

The waiter came with bread and butter, and I realized suddenly that it was long past the half hour. Indeed, a glance at my watch showed me that nearly an hour had gone. I waited fifteen minutes longer, ate what I could, and, taking a box lunch under my arm, hurried back to the coroner's office. As I entered it I saw a bowed figure sitting at the table, and my heart fell as I recognized our junior. His whole attitude expressed a despair absolute, past redemption.

"I've brought your lunch, Mr. Royce," I said, with what lightness I could muster. "The proceedings will commence in half an hour. You'd better eat something," and I opened the box.

He looked at it for a moment, and then began mechanically to eat.

"You look regularly done up," I ventured. "Wouldn't I better get you a glass of brandy? That'll tone you up."

"All right," he assented listlessly, and I hurried away on the errand.

The brandy brought a little color back to his cheeks, and he began to eat with more interest.

"Must I order lunch for Miss Holladay?" I questioned.

"No," he said. "She said she didn't wish any."

He relaxed again into silence. Plainly he had received some new blow during my absence.

"After all," I began, "you know we've only to prove an alibi to knock to pieces this whole house of cards."

"Yes, that's all," he agreed. "But suppose we can't do it, Lester?"

"Can't do it?" I faltered. "Do you

mean?"

"I mean that Miss Holladay positively refuses to say where she spent yesterday afternoon."

"Does she understand the—the necessity?" I asked.

"I pointed it out to her as clearly as I could. I'm all at sea, Lester."

Well, if even he were beginning to doubt, matters were indeed serious!

"It's incomprehensible!" I sighed, after a moment's confused thought.

"It's—"

"Yes—past believing."

"But the coachman—"

"The coachman's evidence, I fear, won't help us much—rather the reverse."

I actually gasped for breath. I felt like a drowning man from whose grasp the saving rope had suddenly, unaccountably, been snatched.

"In that case"—I began and stopped.

"Well, in that case?"

"We must find some other way out," I concluded lamely.

"Is there another way, Lester?" he demanded, wheeling round upon me fiercely. "Is there another way? If there is I wish you'd show it to me!"

"There must be!" I protested desperately, striving to convince myself.

"There must be. Only, I fear, it will take some little time to find."

"And meanwhile Miss Holladay will be remanded! Think what that will mean to her, Lester!"

I had thought. I was desperate as he, but to find the flaw, the weak spot in the chain, required, I felt, a better brain than mine. I was lost in a whirlwind of perplexities.

"Well, we must do our best," he went on more calmly after a moment. "I haven't lost hope yet—chance often directs these things. Besides, at worst I think Miss Holladay will change her mind. Whatever her secret, it were better to reveal it than to spend a single hour in the Tombs. She simply must change her mind! And thanks, Lester, for your thoughtfulness. You have put new life into me."

I cleared away the debris of the lunch, and a few moments later the



He arose and went slowly out.

room began to fill again. At last the coroner and district attorney came in together, and the former rapped for order.

"The inquest will continue," he said, "with the examination of John Brooks, Miss Holladay's coachman."

I can give his evidence in few words. His mistress had driven directly down the avenue to Washington square. There she had left the carriage, bidding him wait for her, and had continued southward into the squalid French quarter. He had lost sight of her in a moment and had driven slowly about for more than two hours before she reappeared. She had ordered him to drive home as rapidly as he could, and he had not stopped until he reached the house. Her gown? Yes, he had noticed that it was a dark red. He had not seen her face, for it was veiled. No, he had never before driven her to that locality.

Quaking at heart, I realized that only one person could extricate Frances Holladay from the coil woven about her. If she persisted in silence, there was no hope for her. But that she should still refuse to speak was inconceivable unless—

"That is all" said the coroner. "Will you cross examine the witness, Mr. Royce?"

My chief shook his head silently, and Brooks left the stand.

Again the coroner and Singleton whispered together.

"We will recall Miss Holladay's maid," said the former at last.

She was on the stand again in a moment, calmer than she had been, but deadly pale.

"Are your mistress' handkerchiefs marked in any way?" Goldberg asked as she turned to him.

"Some of them are, yes, sir, with her initials, in the form of a monogram. Most of them are plain."

"Do you recognize this one?" and he handed her the ghastly piece of evidence.

I held my breath while the woman looked it over, turning it with trembling fingers.

"No, sir!" she replied emphatically as she returned it to him.

"Does your mistress possess any handkerchiefs that resemble this one?"

"Oh, yes, sir. It's an ordinary cambric handkerchief of good quality, such as most ladies use."

I breathed a long sigh of relief. Here at least fortune favored us.

"That is all. Have you any questions, Mr. Royce?"

Again our junior shook his head.

"That concludes our case," added the coroner. "Have you any witnesses to summon, sir?"

What witnesses could we have? Only one and I fancied that the jurymen were looking at us expectantly. If our client were indeed innocent, why should we hesitate to put her on the stand, to give her opportunity to defend herself, to enable her to shatter, in a few words, this chain of circumstance so firmly forged about her? If she were innocent, would she not naturally wish to speak in her own behalf? Did not her very unwillingness to speak argue—

"Ask for a recess," I whispered. "Go to Miss Holladay and tell her that unless she speaks"—

But before Mr. Royce could answer a policeman pushed his way forward from the rear of the room and handed a note to the coroner.

"A messenger brought this a moment ago, sir," he explained.

The coroner glanced at the superscription and handed it to my chief.

"It's for you, Mr. Royce," he said. I saw that the address read:

For Mr. Royce,  
Attorney for the Defense.

He tore it open and ran his eyes rapidly over the inclosure. He read it through a second time, then held out the paper to me with an expression of the blankest amazement. The note read:

The man Rogers is lying. The woman who was with Holladay wore a gown of dark green.

CHAPTER IV.

I STARED at the lines in dumb bewilderment. "The man Rogers is lying." But what conceivable motive could he have for lying?

Besides, as I looked at him on the stand, I would have sworn that he was telling the truth, and very much against his will. I had always prided myself upon my judgment of human nature. Had I erred so egregiously in this instance? "The woman who was with Holladay wore a gown of dark green." Who was the writer of the note? How did he know the color of her gown? There was only one possible way he could know—he knew the woman. Plainly, too, he must have been present at the morning hearing. But, if he knew so much, why did he not himself come forward? To this, too, there was but one answer—he must be an accomplice. But then, again, if he were an accomplice, why should he imperil himself by writing this note, for it could very probably be traced? I found myself deeper in the mire, farther from the light, at every step.

"Do you wish to summon any witnesses, Mr. Royce?" asked the coroner again. "I shall be glad to adjourn the hearing until tomorrow if you do."

Mr. Royce roused himself with an effort.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I may ask you to do that later on. Just at present I wish to recall Mr. Rogers."

"Very well," said the coroner. And Rogers was summoned from the witness room.

I looked at him attentively, trying to fathom his thoughts, to read behind his eyes; but, look as I might, I could see nothing in his face save concern and grief. He had grown gray in Holladay's office, he had proved himself a hundred times a man to be relied on, he had every reason to feel affection and gratitude toward his employer, and I was certain that he felt both. He received a liberal salary, I knew, and was comfortably well to do.

That he himself could have committed the crime or been concerned in it in any way was absolutely unthinkable. Yet why should he lie? Above all, why should he seek to implicate his employer's daughter? Even if he wished to implicate her, how could he have known the color of her gown? What dark, intricate problem was this that confronted us?

In the moment that followed I saw that Mr. Royce was studying him, too; was straining to find a ray of light for guidance. If we failed now—

I read the note through again—"a gown of dark green." And suddenly, by a kind of clairvoyance, the solution of the mystery leaped forth from it. I

leaned over to my chief, trembling with eagerness.

"Mr. Royce," I whispered hoarsely, "I believe I've solved the puzzle. Hold Rogers on the stand a few moments until I get back."

He looked up at me astonished, then nodded as I seized my hat and pushed my way through the crowd. Once outside the building, I ran to the nearest dry goods house—three blocks away it was, and what fearfully long blocks they seemed!—then back again to the courtroom. Rogers was still on the stand, but a glance at Mr. Royce told me that he had elicited nothing new.

"You take him, Lester," he said as I sat down beside him. "I'm worn out."

Quivering with apprehension, I arose. It was the first time I had been given the center of the stage in so important a case. Here was my opportunity! Suppose my theory should break down, after all!

"Mr. Rogers," I began, "you've been having some trouble with your eyes, haven't you?"

He looked at me in surprise.

"Why, yes, a little," he said. "Nothing to amount to anything. How did you know?"

My confidence had come back again. I was on the right track then!

"I did not know," I said, smiling for the first time since I had entered the room, "but I suspected. I have here a number of pieces of cloth of different colors. I should like you to pick out the one that most nearly approximates the color of the gown your visitor wore yesterday afternoon."

I handed him the bundle of samples, and as I did so I saw the district attorney lean forward over his desk with attentive face. The witness looked through the samples slowly, while I watched him with feverish eagerness. Mr. Royce had caught an inkling of my meaning and was watching him too.

"There's nothing here," said Rogers at last, "which seems quite the shade, but this is very near it."

He held up one of the pieces. With leaping heart, I heard the gasp of astonishment which ran around the room. The jurymen were leaning forward in their chairs.

"And what is the color of that piece?" I asked.

"Why, dark red. I've stated that already."

I glanced triumphantly at the coroner.

"Your honor," I said as calmly as I could, "I think we've found the flaw in the chain. Mr. Rogers is evidently color blind. As you see, the piece he has selected is a dark green."

The whole audience seemed to draw a deep breath and a little clatter of applause ran around the room. I could hear the scratch, scratch of the reporters' pencils. Here was a situation after their hearts' desire! Mr. Royce had me by the hand and was whispering brokenly in my ear.

"My dear fellow, you're the best of us all. I'll never forget it!"

But Rogers was staring in amazement from me to the cloth in his hand and back again.

"Green!" he stammered. "Color blind! Why, that's nonsense! I've never suspected it!"

"That's probable enough," I assented. "The falling is no doubt a recent one. Most color blind persons don't know it until their sight is tested. Of course we shall have an oculist examine you, but I think this evidence is pretty conclusive."

Coroner Goldberg nodded, and the district attorney settled back in his chair.

"We've no further questions to ask this witness at present," I continued. "Only I'd like you to preserve this piece of cloth, sir," and I handed it to Goldberg. He placed it with the other exhibits on his desk, and I sat down again beside my chief. He had regained all his old time energy and keenness. He seemed another man.

"I should like to recall Miss Holladay's maid, if you please," he said, and the girl was summoned, while Rogers stumbled dazedly off to the witness room.

"You're quite sure your mistress wore a dark red gown yesterday afternoon?" he asked when the girl was on the stand again.

"Oh, yes, sir; quite sure."

"It was not dark green? Think carefully now."

"I don't have to think!" she retorted sharply, with a toss of her head. "Miss Holladay hasn't any dark green gown, nor light one either. She never wears green. She doesn't like it. It doesn't suit her."

"That will do," said Mr. Royce, and the girl went back to the witness room without understanding in the least the meaning of the questions. "Now, let us have the office boy again," he said, and that young worthy was called out.

"You say you didn't see the face of that woman who left your office yesterday afternoon?"

"No, sir."

"But you saw her gown?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"And what color was it?"

"Dark green, sir."

"That will do," said our junior, and sank back in his chair with a sigh of relief. "The solution had been under our hands in the morning, and we had missed it. Well, we had found it now."

"Gentlemen," he added, his voice a-ring, his face alight, as he sprang to his feet and faced the jury. "I'm ready for your verdict. I wish only to point out that with this one point the whole case against my client falls to the ground! It was preposterous from the very first!"

He sat down again and glanced at the coroner.

"Gentlemen of the jury," began Goldberg. "I have merely to remind you that your verdict, whatever it may be, will not finally affect this case. The police authorities will continue their investigation in order that the guilty person may not escape. I conceive that it is not within our province to probe this case further—that may be left to abler and more experienced hands—nor do I think we should inculpate any one so long as there is a reasonable doubt of his guilt. We await your verdict."

(To Be Continued)

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