

The Holladay Case

A Mystery Of Two Continents

By
BURTON E. STEVENSON
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(CONTINUED.)

I had some work of my own to keep me busy that night, so devoted no thought to Frances Holladay and her affairs, but they were recalled to me with renewed force next morning.

"Did you get Miss Holladay's signature to that conveyance?" Mr. Graham chanced to ask his partner in the course of the morning.

"No, sir," answered Mr. Royce, with just a trace of embarrassment. "I called at the house last night, but she sent down word that she was too ill to see me or to transact any business."

"Nothing serious, I hope?" asked the other quickly.

"No, sir. I think not. Just a trace of nervousness, probably."

But when he called again at the house that evening he received a similar message, supplemented with the news imparted by the butler, a servant of many years' standing in the family, that Miss Holladay had suddenly decided to leave the city and open her country place on Long Island. It was only the end of March, and so a full two months and more ahead of the season. But she was feeling very ill, was not able to leave her room, indeed, and believed the fresh air and quiet of the country would do more than anything else to restore her shattered nerves. So the whole household, with the exception of her maid, a cook, house girl and underbutler, were to leave the city next day in order to get the country house ready at once.

"I don't wonder she needs a little toning up," remarked our chief sympathetically. "She has gone through a nerve trying ordeal, especially for a girl reared as she has been. Two or three months of quiet will do her good. When does she expect to leave?"

"In about a week, I think. The time hasn't been definitely set. It will depend upon how the arrangements go forward. It won't be necessary, will it, to bother her with any details of business? That conveyance, for instance—"

"Can wait till she gets back. No, we won't bother her at all."

But it seemed that she had either improved or changed her mind, for two days later a note, which her maid had written for her, came to Mr. Graham asking him to call upon her in the course of the next twenty-four hours, as she wished to talk over some matters of business with him. It struck me as singular that she should ask for Mr. Graham, but our senior called a cab and started off at once without comment. An hour later the door opened and he entered the office with a most peculiar expression of countenance.

"Well, that beats me!" he exclaimed as he dropped into his chair.

Our junior wheeled around toward him without speaking, but his anxiety was plain enough.

"To think that a girl as level headed as Frances Holladay has always been should suddenly develop such whimsicalities. Yet I couldn't but admire her grasp of things. Here have I been thinking she didn't know anything about her business and didn't care, but she seems to have kept her eyes open."

"Well?" asked Mr. Royce as the other paused.

"Well, she started out by reminding me that her property had been left to her absolutely, to do as she pleased with, a point which I, of course, conceded. She then went on to say that she knew of a number of bequests her father had intended to make before his death, and which he would have made if he had not been cut off so suddenly; that the bequests were of such a nature that he did not wish his name to appear in them, and that she was going to undertake to carry them out anonymously."

"Well?" asked our junior again.

"Well," said Mr. Graham slowly, "she asked me to dispose at once of such of her securities as I thought best in order that I might place in her hands by tomorrow night \$100,000 in cash—a cool hundred thousand!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"A HUNDRED thousand dollars!" ejaculated Mr. Royce, and sat staring at his chief.

"A hundred thousand dollars! That's a good deal for a girl to give away in a jump, but she can afford it. Of course we've nothing to do but carry out her instructions. I think both of us can guess what she intends doing with the money."

The other nodded. "I believed that I could guess too. The money, of course, was intended for the other woman. She was not to suffer for her crime aft-

er all. Miss Holladay seemed to me in no little danger of becoming an accessory after the fact.

"She seems really ill," continued our senior. "She looks thinner and quite careworn. I commended her resolution to seek rest and quiet and change of scene."

"When does she go, sir?" asked Mr. Royce in a subdued voice.

"The day after tomorrow, I think. She did not say definitely. In fact, she could talk very little. She's managed to catch cold—the grip, I suppose—and was very hoarse. It would have been cruelty to make her talk, and I didn't try."

He wheeled around to his desk and then suddenly back again.

"By the way," he said, "I saw the new maid. I can't say I wholly approve of her."

He paused a minute, weighing his words.

"She seems careful and devoted," he went on at last, "but I don't like her eyes. They're too intense. I caught her two or three times watching me strangely. I can't imagine where Miss Holladay picked her up, or why she should have picked her up at all. She's French, of course. She speaks with a decided accent. About the money, I suppose we'd better sell a block of U. P. bonds. They're the least productive of her securities."

"Yes, I suppose so," agreed Mr. Royce, and the chief called up a broker and gave the necessary orders. Then he turned to other work, and the day passed without any further reference to Miss Holladay or her affairs.

The proceeds of the sale were brought to the office early the next afternoon, a small packet neatly sealed and docketed—100 thousand dollar bills. Mr. Graham turned it over in his hand thoughtfully.

"You'll take it to the house, of course, John," he said to his partner. "Lester'd better go with you."

So Mr. Royce placed the package in his pocket, a cab was summoned, and we were off. The trip was made without incident, and at the end of half an hour we drew up before the Holladay mansion.

It was one of the old style brown stone fronts which lined both sides of the avenue twenty years ago. It was no longer in the ultra fashionable quarter, which had moved up toward Central park, and shops of various kinds were beginning to encroach upon the neighborhood, but it had been Hiram Holladay's home for forty years, and he had never been willing to part with it. At this moment all the blinds were down and the house had a deserted look. We mounted the steps to the door, which was opened at once to our ring by a woman whom I knew instinctively to be the new maid, though she looked much less like a maid than like an elderly working woman of the middle class.

"We've brought the money Miss Holladay asked Mr. Graham for yesterday," said Mr. Royce. "I'm John Royce, his partner." And without answering the woman motioned us in. "Of course we must have a receipt for it," he added. "I have it ready here, and she need only attach her signature."

"Miss Holladay is too ill to see you, sir," said the maid, with careful enunciation. "I will myself the paper take to her and get her signature."

Mr. Royce hesitated a moment in perplexity. As for me, I was ransacking my memory. Where had I heard that voice before? Somewhere, I was certain—a voice low, vibrant, repressed, full of color. Then, with a start, I remembered. It was Miss Holladay's voice as she had risen to welcome our junior that morning at the coroner's court. I shook myself together, for that was nonsense.

"I fear that won't do," said Mr. Royce at last. "The sum is a considerable one and must be given to Miss Holladay by me personally in the presence of this witness."

It was the maid's turn to hesitate. I saw her lips tighten ominously.

"Very well, sir," she said. "But I warn you she is most nervous, and it has been forbidden her to talk."

"She will not be called upon to talk," retorted Mr. Royce curtly, and without answering the woman turned and led the way up the stair and to her mistress's room.

Miss Holladay was lying back in a great chair with a bandage about her head, and even in the half light I could see how changed she was. She seemed much thinner and older and coughed occasionally in a way that frightened me. Not grief alone, I told myself, could have caused this breakdown; it was the secret weighing upon her. My

companion noted the change, too, of course—a greater change perhaps than my eyes could perceive—and I saw how moved and shocked he was.

"My dear Miss Holladay," he began, but she stopped him abruptly with a little imperative motion of the hand.

"Pray do not," she whispered hoarsely. "Pray do not."

He stopped and pulled himself together. When he spoke again it was in quite a different tone.

"I have brought the money you asked for," and he handed her the package.

"Thank you," she murmured.

"Will you verify the amount?"

"Oh, no; that is not necessary."

"I have a receipt here," and he produced it and his fountain pen. "Please sign it."

She took the pen with trembling fingers, laid the receipt upon her chair arm without reading and signed her name with a somewhat painful slowness. Then she leaned back with a sigh of relief and buried her face in her hands. Mr. Royce placed the receipt in his pocketbook and stopped, hesitating. But the maid had opened the door and was awaiting us. Her mistress made no sign; there was no excuse to linger. We turned and followed the maid.

"Miss Holladay seems very ill," said Mr. Royce in a voice somewhat tremu-



"I have brought the money you ask for."

lous as she paused before us in the lower hall.

"Yes, sir; ver' ill!"

Again the voice! I took advantage of the chance to look at her intently. Her hair was turning gray, certainly; her face was seamed with lines which only care and poverty could have graven there, and yet, beneath it all, I fancied I could detect a faded but living likeness to Hiram Holladay's daughter. I looked again—it was faint, uncertain—perhaps my nerves were overworked and were deceiving me. For how could such a likeness possibly exist?

"She has a physician, of course?" asked my companion.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"He has advised rest and quiet?"

"Yes, sir."

"When do you leave for the country?"

"Tomorrow or the next day after that, I think, sir."

He turned to the door and then paused, hesitating. He opened his lips to say something more—his anxiety was clamoring for utterance—then he changed his mind and stepped outside as she held the door open.

"Good day," he said, with stern repression. "I wish her a pleasant journey."

The door closed after us, and we went down the steps.

"Jenkinson's family doctor," he said. "Let's drive around there and find out how ill Miss Holladay really is. I'm worried about her, Lester."

"That's a good idea," I agreed and gave the driver the address. Jenkinson was in his office and received us at once.

"Dr. Jenkinson," began our junior without preamble, "I am John Royce, of Graham & Royce. You know, I suppose, that we are the legal advisers of Miss Frances Holladay."

"Yes," answered Jenkinson. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Royce."

"In consequence we're naturally interested in her welfare and all that concerns her, and I called to ask you for some definite details of her condition."

"Her condition? I don't quite understand"

advice." And he recounted rapidly the facts of Miss Holladay's illness, in so far as he knew them, ending with an account of our recent visit and the statement of the maid that her mistress was under a doctor's care. Jenkinson heard him to the end without interrupting, but he was plainly puzzled and annoyed.

"And you say she looked very ill?" he asked.

"Oh, very ill, sir; alarmingly ill, to my unpracticed eyes. She seemed thin and worn. She could scarcely talk, she had such a cough. I hardly knew her."

Again the doctor paused to consider. He was a very famous doctor, with many very famous patients, and I could see that this case piqued him—that another physician should have been preferred!

"Of course, Mr. Royce," he said finally. "Miss Holladay was perfectly free to choose another physician if she thought best."

"But would you have thought it probable?" queried our junior.

"Ten minutes ago I should have thought it extremely improbable," answered the doctor emphatically. "Still, women are sometimes erratic, as we doctors know to our sorrow."

Mr. Royce hesitated and then took the bull by the horns.

"Dr. Jenkinson," he began earnestly, "don't you think it would be wise to see Miss Holladay—you know how her father trusted you and relied on you—and assure yourself that she's in good hands? I confess I don't know what to think, but I fear some danger is hanging over her. Perhaps she may even have fallen into the hands of the faith curists."

Jenkinson smiled.

"The advice to seek rest and quiet seems sane enough," he said, "and utterly unlike any that a faith curist would give."

"But still, if you could see for yourself," persisted Mr. Royce.

The doctor hesitated, drumming with his fingers upon the arm of his chair.

"Such a course would be somewhat unprofessional," he said at last. "Still I might call in a merely social way. My interest in the family would, I think, excuse me."

Mr. Royce's face brightened, and he caught the doctor's hand.

"Thank you, sir," he said warmly. "It will lift a great anxiety from the firm, and, I may add, from me personally."

The doctor laughed good naturedly. "I knew that, of course," he said. "We doctors hear all the gossip going. I might add that I was glad to hear this bit. If you'll wait for me here, I'll go at once."

We instantly assented, and he called his carriage and was driven away. I felt that at last we were to see behind one corner of the curtain—perhaps one glimpse would be enough to penetrate the mystery. But in half an hour he was back again, and a glance at his face told me that we were again destined to disappointment.

"I sent up my card," he reported briefly, "and Miss Holladay sent down word that she must beg to be excused."

"And that was all?" he asked.

"That was all. Of course there was nothing for me to do but come away. I couldn't insist on seeing her."

"No," assented the other; "no. How do you explain it, doctor?"

Jenkinson sat down and for a moment studied the pattern of the carpet.

"Frankly, Mr. Royce," he said at last, "I don't know how to explain it. The most probable explanation is that Miss Holladay is suffering from some form of dementia, perhaps only acute primary dementia, which is usually merely temporary, but which may easily grow serious and even become permanent."

The theory had occurred to me, and I saw from the expression of Mr. Royce's face that he also had thought of it.

"Is there no way that we can make sure?" he asked. "She may need to be saved from herself."

"She may need it very badly," agreed the doctor, nodding. "Yet she is of legal age and absolute mistress of her actions. There are no relatives to interfere, no intimate friends even that I know of. I see no way unless you, as her legal adviser, apply to the authorities for an Inquest of Lunacy."

But Mr. Royce made an instant gesture of repugnance.

"Oh, that's absurd!" he cried. "We have no possible reason to take such action. It would offend her mortally."

"No doubt," assented the other. "So I fear that at present nothing can be done. Things will just have to take their course till something more decided happens."

"There's no tendency to mental disease in the family?" inquired Mr. Royce after a moment.

"Not the slightest," said the doctor emphatically. "Her father and mother were both sound and well balanced. I know the history of the family through three generations, and there's no hint of any taint. Twenty-five years ago Holladay, who was then just working, to the top in Wall street, drove himself too hard—it was when the market went all to pieces over that Central Pacific deal—and had a touch of apoplexy. It was just a touch, but I made him take a long vacation, which he spent abroad with his wife. It was then, by the

way, that his daughter was born. Since then he has been careful, and has never been bothered with a recurrence of the trouble—in fact, that's the only illness in the least serious I ever knew him to have."

"There was nothing more to be said, and we turned to go."

"If there are any further developments," added the doctor as he opened the door, "will you let me know? You may count upon me if I can be of any assistance."

"Certainly," answered our junior. "You're very kind, sir," and we went back to our cab.

The week that followed was a perplexing one for me and a miserable one for Royce. As I know now, he had written her half a dozen times and had received not a single word of answer. For myself, I had discovered one more development of the mystery. On the day following the delivery of the money I had glanced, as usual, through the financial column of my paper as I rode home on the car, and one item had attracted my attention. The brokerage firm of Swift & Currer had that day presented at the subtreasury the sum of \$100,000 in currency for conversion into gold. An inquiry at their office next morning elicited the fact that the exchange had been effected for the account of Miss Frances Holladay. It was done, of course, that the recipient of the money might remain beyond trace of the police.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR regular work at the office just at that time happened to be unusually heavy and trying.

The Brown injunction suit, while not greatly attracting public attention, involved points of such nicety and affected interests so widespread that the whole bar of New York was watching it. The Hurd substitution case was more spectacular and appealed to the press with peculiar force, since one of the principal victims had been the eldest son of Preston McLandberg, the veteran managing editor of the Record, and the bringing of the suit impugned the honor of his family. But it is still too fresh in the public mind to need recapitulation here, even were it connected with this story. The incessant strain told upon both our partners and even upon me, so that I returned to my rooms after dinner one evening determined to go early to bed. But I had scarcely donned my house coat, settled in my chair and got my pipe to going when there came a tap at the door.

"Come in," I called, thinking it was Mrs. Fitch, my landlady, and too weary to get up.

But it was not Mrs. Fitch's pale countenance, with its crown of gray hair, which appeared in the doorway; it was a rotund and exceedingly florid visage.

"You will pardon me, sir," began a resonant voice, which I instantly remembered, even before the short, square figure stepped over the threshold into the full light, "but I have just discovered that I have no match with which to ignite my gas. If I might from you borrow one—"

"Help yourself," I said, and held out to him my case, which was lying on the table at my elbow.

"You are very good," he said, and then, as he stepped forward and saw me more distinctly, he uttered a little exclamation of surprise. "Ah, it is Mistair—"

"Lester," I added, seeing that he hesitated.

"It is a great pleasure," he was saying as he took the matches; a "great good fortune which brought me to this

house. So lonely one grows at times—and then, I greatly desire some advice. If you would have the leisure—"

"Certainly," and I waved toward a chair. "Sit down."

"In one moment," he said. "You will pardon me," and he disappeared through the doorway.

He was back almost at once with a handful of cigarettes, which he placed on the table. Then he drew up a chair. With a little deprecatory gesture he used one of my matches to light a cigarette.

"It was truly for the gas," he said, catching my smile, "and the gas for the cigarette!"

There was something fascinating about the man—an air of good humor, of comradeship, of strength of purpose. My eyes were caught by his stodgy, nervous hands as he held the match to his cigarette. Then they wandered to his face, to the black hair flecked here and there with gray, to the bright, deep set eyes, ambushed under heavy brows; to the full lips, which the carefully arranged mustache did not at all conceal; to the projecting chin, with its little plume of an imperial—a strong face and a not unhandsome one, with a certain look of mastery about it.

"It is true that I need advice," he was saying as he slowly exhaled a great puff of smoke which he had drawn deep into his lungs. "My name is Martigny—Jasper Martigny—I nodded by way of salutation—and I am from France, as you have doubtless long since suspected. It is my desire to become a citizen of Amer-ric."

"How long have you been living in America?" I asked.

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(To be Continued)