

The Holladay Case

A Mystery
Of Two
Continents

By
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(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XVI.

MARTIGNY was lying back in his berth smoking a cigarette, and as I entered he motioned me to a seat on the locker.

"It was most kind of you to come," he said, with his old smile.

"It was only by accident I learned you were on board," I explained as I sat down. "You're getting better?"

"I believe so; though this physician is—what you call—an alarmist. Most of them are, indeed. The more desperate the illness the more renowned the cure! Is it not so? He has even forbidden me cigarettes, but I prefer to die than to do without them. Will you not have one?"

"Thank you," I said, selected one and lighted it. "Your cigarettes are not to be resisted. But if you are so ill why did you attempt the voyage?"

"A sudden call of business," he explained airily. "Unexpected, but—what you call—imperative."

"The doctor—it was he who mentioned your name to me. It was not on the sailing list?"

"No." He was looking at me sharply. "I came on board at the last mo-



He motioned me to a seat.

ment—the need was ver' sudden, as I have said. I had not time to engage a stateroom."

"That explains it. Well, the doctor told me that you were bed fast."

"Yes; since the voyage began I have not left it."

I watched him as he went through the familiar motion of lighting a second cigarette from the first one. In the half light of the cabin I had not at first perceived how ill he looked.

"But you, Mistr Lester," he was saying. "How does it occur that you also are going to France? I did not know you contemplated?"

"No," I answered calmly, for I had seen that the question was inevitable, and I even welcomed it, since it gave me opportunity to get my guns going.

"No; the last time I saw you I didn't contemplate it, but a good deal has happened since then. Would you care to hear?"

Oh, how I relished tantalizing him!

"I should like very exceedingly to hear," he assured me and shifted his position a little so that his face was in the shadow. "The beams of light through the shutter makes my eyes to hurt," he added.

So he mistrusted himself; so he was not finding the part an easy one either! The thought gave me new courage.

"You may remember," I began, "that I told you once that if I ever went to work on the Holladay case I'd try first to find the murderer. I succeeded in doing it the very first day."

"Ah!" he breathed. "And after the police had failed! That was, indeed, remarkable. How did you accomplish it?"

"By the merest chance; by great good fortune. I was making a search of the French quarter, house by house, when, on Houston street, I came to a restaurant, the Cafe Jourdain. A bottle of superieur set Jourdain's tongue to wagging. I pretended I wanted a room. He dropped a word, the merest hint, and in the end I got the whole story. It seems there was not only one woman—there were two."

"Yes," and a man whose name was Betuny, or Bethune, or something like that. But I didn't pay much attention to him. He doesn't figure in the case,

He didn't even go away with the women. The very day I set out on my search he was picked up on the streets somewhere suffering with apoplexy and taken to a hospital, so nearly dead that it was a question whether he would recover. So he's out of it. The Jourdain told me that the women had sailed for France."

"You will pardon me," said my hearer, "but in what way did you make sure that they were the women you desired?"

"By the younger one's resemblance to Miss Holladay," I answered, lying with a glibness which surprised myself.

"The Jourdain maintained that a photograph of Miss Holladay was really one of their lodger."

"Ah, yes," he said. "That was exceedingly clever. I should never have thought of that. That is worthy of M. Lecoq. And so you follow them to France; but surely you have some more definite address than that?"

"No," I said. "It seems rather a wild goose chase, doesn't it? But you could advise me, Mr. Martigny. Where would it be best for me to search for them?"

He did not answer for a moment, and I took advantage of the opportunity to select a second cigarette and light it. I dared not remain unoccupied.

"That," he began slowly at last, "seems to me a most—ah!—difficult affair, Mistr Lester—to search for three people through all France. There seems little hope of success. Yet I should think it most likely that they have gone to Paris."

I nodded. "That was my own theory," I agreed, "but to find them in Paris seems also impossible."

"Not if one uses the police," he said.

"But, my dear sir," I protested, "I can't use the police. Miss Holladay at least has committed no crime. She has simply chosen to go away without informing us."

"You will permit me to say then, Mistr Lester," he observed, with just a touch of irony, "that I fail to comprehend your anxiety concerning her."

I felt that I had made a misstep; that I had need to go carefully.

"It is not quite so simple as that," I explained. "The last time we saw Miss Holladay she told us that she was ill and intended to go to her country home for a rest. Instead of going there she sailed for France without informing any one—indeed, doing everything she could to escape detection. That conduct seems so eccentric that we feel in duty bound to investigate it; besides, two days before she left she received from us a hundred thousand dollars in cash."

I saw him move uneasily on his bed. After all this advantage of mine was so small one.

"Ah," he said softly, and again, "ah! Yes, that seems peculiar, yet perhaps if you had waited for a letter?"

"Suppose we had waited and there had been no letter—suppose, in consequence of waiting, we should be too late?"

"Too late? Too late for what, Mistr Lester? What is it you fear for her?"

"I don't know," I answered, "but something—something. At least, we could not assume the responsibility of delay."

"No," he agreed, "perhaps not. You are doubtless quite right to investigate. I wish you success. I wish that I myself might aid you, there is so much of interest in the case to me, but I fear that to be impossible."

And he breathed a sigh, which was doubtless genuine enough.

"Will you go to Paris?" I asked.

"Oh, no; not at once. At Havre I shall meet my agent and transact my affairs with him. Then I shall seek some place of quiet along the coast."

"Yes," I said to myself, with leaping heart, "Etretat!" But I dared not speak the word.

"I shall write to you," he added, "when I have settled. Where do you stay at Paris?"

"We haven't decided yet," I said.

"We?" he repeated.

"Didn't I tell you? Mr. Royce, our junior partner, is with me."

"It is no matter where you stay," he said. "I shall write to you at the poste restante. I should like both you and your friend to be my guests before you return to America."

There was a courtesy, a cordiality in his tone which almost disarmed me. Such a finished scoundrel!

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"I am firing you," I said, starting up.

"No," he protested, "no." But his voice was almost inaudible.

"I will go," I said. "You must pardon me. I hope you will soon be better," and I closed the door behind me with his murmured thanks in my ears.

It was not till after dinner that I found opportunity to relate to Miss Kemball the details of my talk with Martigny.

"Why did you change your mind?" she asked.

"The adventure tempted me. Those are your own words. I thought perhaps I might be able to throw Martigny off the track."

"And do you think you succeeded?"

"I don't know," I answered doubtfully. "He may have seen clear through me."

"Oh, I don't believe him superhuman! I believe you succeeded."

"We shall know tomorrow."

"Yes, and you must keep up the deception till the last moment. Remember, he will be watching you."

"I'll do my best," I said.

"And don't make mountains out of molehills. You see, you've been distrusting yourself needlessly. One mustn't be too timid."

"Do you think I'm too timid?" I demanded.

But she saw the light in my eyes, I suppose, for she drew away, almost imperceptibly.

"Only in some things," she retorted. The evening passed and the last day came. We sighted land soon after breakfast, the high white cliffs of Cape La Hague.

I was standing at the rail beside Miss Kemball.

"I thought I'd wait till we landed," I said, "then I can help him off the



We found our way blocked by a uniformed official.

boat and see him well away from the station. He's too ill to be very lively on his feet."

"Yes, and be careful. He mustn't suspect Etretat. And now we must say goodby."

"Indeed not!" I protested. "See, there go your mother and Royce. They're evidently expecting us to follow. We'll have to help you with your baggage."

"Our baggage goes through to Paris."

"At least, I must take you to the train."

"You are risking everything!" she cried. "We can say goodby here as

well as on the platform."

"I don't think so," I said.

"I have already said goodby to all my other friends."

"But I refuse to be treated just like all the others," and I started with her down the gang plank.

She looked at me from the corner of her eyes.

"Do you know," she said deliberately, "I am beginning to fear that you are obstinate."

"I'm not at all obstinate," I objected. "I'm simply contending for my rights."

"Your rights?"

"My right to be with you as long as I can, for one."

"Are there others?"

"Many others. Shall I enumerate them?"

"No," she said, "we haven't time. Here is mother."

They were to take the company's special train to Paris, which was waiting on the wharf 200 feet away, and we slowly pushed our way toward it. In the clamor and hurry and confusion wholly Latin there was no chance for intelligent converse. Suddenly we found our way blocked by a uniformed official, who demanded to see our tickets.

"You can't come any farther, I'm afraid," said Mrs. Kemball, turning to us. "We'll have to say goodby." And she held out her hand. "But we'll soon see you both again in Paris. You have the address?"

"Oh, yes!" I assured her.

"Very well, then, we shall look for you." And she shook hands with both of us.

For an instant I felt another little hand in mine, a pair of blue eyes smiled up at me in a way—

"Goodby, Mr. Lester," said a voice. "I shall be all impatience till we meet again."

(To be Continued)