

THE ARNCLIFFE PUZZLE, BY GORDON HOLMES

Author of "A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE."

"Oh, no," she protested. "You see he did not have much rest last night."

"Such a man as Lester does not look as if he had swallowed an egg because of a loss of beauty sleep," persisted Bradshaw with somber pessimism. "I have seen a lot of tribulation among my fellow-sinners, and when one of these iron men, like Lester, exhibits that sort of a look on his face, it generally means that he has got it in the neck good and hard."

"I do wish to goodness you would endeavor to speak English!" exclaimed Edith, petulantly. "I don't suppose there is anything the matter with Dr. Lester. However, we do know that you are an invalid, so you will oblige me by doing as you are told and return to bed at once."

"I don't want to go to bed," Bradshaw began to protest. "I won't have any inordinance. Go to bed! Your breakfast shall be sent up to you. And you are not to get up again until tomorrow morning."

"Are you going to nurse me?" asked Bradshaw, hopefully. "Certainly not—there are two trained nurses in attendance on Mr. Angier, and one of them can very well be spared to look after you. Now I must go and see about household affairs. Poor Mrs. Warren cannot be fit for much after her alarming experience. Don't you think she showed remarkable presence of mind?"

He looked at her reproachfully. Without another word, he walked away to his room with a pretense of offended dignity. Edith did not attempt to "see about household affairs." She had reached the conclusion that what woman call a "good cry" was absolutely essential. Directly she was free from the restraint of Bradshaw's presence, she rushed to her room and flung herself face downward on her pillow, began to sob bitterly.

The simple facts of the case were that the American, afraid lest the details of his escapade would eventually leak out, decided that an explanation coming from himself would place him in a far less ridiculous light than if some other person made the disclosure. He therefore made a clean breast of the whole affair to Edith, telling his story with so much naive humor that, although she strongly disapproved of his conduct in spying on Mrs. Warren and her son, Bradshaw escaped lightly on that score. Best of all, he succeeded in making Edith laugh with him, instead of at him.

So much for the bright looks to which Lester so unreasonably objected. As for the linked arms, the explanation was one which might satisfy the most jealous of lovers. Bradshaw, to excite sympathy, and to start well, had basely pretended to be weak, and Edith, in all innocence and womanly tenderness, insisted that he should lean upon her arm. Bradshaw would have been more than human had he resisted such an offer from the lovely young woman who had more than half won his heart. Still, trivial as the incident was, it was enough to put a barrier between Edith and George Lester. She was too proud to justify a perfectly innocent action, and he, too proudly, had the question of Edith's fortune brought vividly before him.

The feelings of Edith, when her fit of weeping had abated a little, underwent some change. At first, her emotion had been pure grief; but the perception of her lost heart on earth could misguide her so cruelly. But now anger assumed its sway. It was no longer "How could he?" but "How dared he?" He ought to have trusted her implicitly. One thing was certain: nothing would ever bring things back to the old level. Everything was at an end between them.

And what of Lester? He, too, regarded the one romance of his life as irrevocably ended. At an evening when most youths are falling in and out of love, he had been making medical history in the African swamps and jungles. Hence, when he did catch the disease, he developed it seriously. Its symptoms were simple enough. Presently, when the first smart had worn off, he would try to find some scientific explanation of it, probably coming to the

conclusion that the severity of his attack was due to the fact that he had not been "immunized" by previous inoculation from Capt. Bradshaw's shaft.

At first he decided to leave Arncliffe at once and seek distraction in travel and hard work. He even went so far as to pay his bill at the inn and send the bulk of his luggage to the station. Then he remembered that the mystery of Lord Arncliffe's death was still unsolved, and while that was the case Edith remained in peril. No, he must remain and see it out.

While he was coming to this decision Edith was alarming herself with the possibility that he might go away and never return. He had looked dreadfully ill, Edith, we should recall, Bradshaw's expressive opinion of Lester's state. She proceeded forthwith to kill her lover with typhoid fever, at the same time drawing up a picture of her self living alone and unwept, for his dear sake, that she began to weep again with unimpeded vigor.

There came a sharp tap at her door, and she sprang up, instinctively putting her hands to her hair, and rushing to the looking-glass. "What is it?" she called. "I am dressing."

"A young lady has arrived, miss, and she is waiting."

"No, she is not," broke in a clear, musical voice. "Here I am, Edith. Do let me in through a door!"

Edith ran eagerly to the door. The next instant she was clasped in the arms of a radiant young beauty, who greeted her with genuine affection. This was the friend to whom Edith had written in one of the letters purloined by Hobson. "You poor darling!" exclaimed the visitor, breathlessly. "I could not wait downstairs. I felt I had to come to you at once."

"How good of you to come, dear Phyllis," said Edith, returning her affectionate glance. "I have not been able to exchange two ideas with a woman for ages. Mrs. Angier, the wife of my trustee, has taken it into her head to regard me as a monster of iniquity; and although Mrs. Warren, the house-keeper, has shown me many thoughtful kindnesses, she is so emotional that one might as well make friends with a fish."

"I know," nodded Phyllis. "I saw her—a stately old party with a face like a graven image. She looked respectful disapproval when I rushed up here without even waiting to be properly announced. But tell me all about yourself—why, you had girl! I do believe you have been crying!"

There was a marked contrast between the two girls. While "beautiful" was a term invariably applied to Edith, no one ever thought of calling her companion anything but "pretty." And revealingly pretty she was—small, but exquisitely proportioned, and having that deadly combination of demure eyes and saucy mouth which works such havoc on imprudent men. She was fashioned by nature to be a breaker of hearts.

Edith's lips began to quiver again. Phyllis, leaning on the edge of the bed, drew her to her side with motherly tenderness. "There, now," she whispered soothingly. "Tell me all about it. Surely you are not allowing the little-tattle of a lot of spiteful and envious people to upset you?"

"No it is not that."

"But Edith," interrupted her friend severely, "you are not going to tell me you are crying on account of a mere man? You have a shrewd suspicion that your dear doctor is responsible for all this?"

Edith's pride came to the rescue. "I would not have it supposed that I was wearing the willow on Lester's account."

"Oh, dear no!" she said, with an air of inference that, perhaps, a little too markedly. "There is absolutely nothing between Dr. Lester and myself."

"That settles it," remarked Phyllis, nodding her head with an air of sage conviction. "My dear girl, I have been in love thousands and thousands of times, while I positively believe this precious doctor is the first man you have ever looked at twice. Your childlike efforts to deceive me, would try to find some scientific explanation of it, probably coming to the

conclusion that the severity of his attack was due to the fact that he had not been "immunized" by previous inoculation from Capt. Bradshaw's shaft.

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