

By
Gordon Holmes

THE LITTLE PIZZIE

Author of
A Mysterious Disappearance

CHAPTER VII.—Continued.

"You will have judged from the evidence, gentlemen," he said, "that this is either a very simple or a very mysterious case. The most extraordinary feature is undoubtedly Lord Arncliffe's assertion that he was being poisoned. No doubt you will give that point full consideration. If his mental condition was normal when he made that statement, then it is clear that he has been the victim of foul play; but, on the other hand, his mind was impaired by his illness, we should be justified in assuming that he knew he was being poisoned for the very good reason that the poison was self-administered. In this connection I should like to remind you that two of the highest authorities are unable to say what form of arsenic was used, so it is evidence of a poisoner of no ordinary person. Here again, one cannot but recall Lord Arncliffe's intimate knowledge of poisons. However, I do not think that is sufficient evidence to justify us in assuming the deceased to have been insane, and without that assumption we cannot entertain the idea of suicide."

"If we consider the possibility that murder has been committed, the question of motive naturally suggests itself. The members of the household seem to have been devoted to the deceased, and they have every reason to be. Mrs. Warren, Simpson, Mr. Harry Warren, Miss Holt—"

Another note from Inspector Hobson found its way unobtrusively to the Coroner's desk. He paused to read it. Then he looked up at the jury.

"There is a quite unexpected development, gentlemen," he said. "A fresh witness has just arrived from New York, and I am informed that his evidence is of the highest importance!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Nephew from America

The Coroner's announcement naturally attracted attention on the witness from New York. Only two people among the occupants of the crowded court knew that Edith had fainted where she sat. Those two were the detective and Lester. They watched the girl from widely different motives. Each, in his own way, was conscious of a natural distrust. Lester's first instinct—whether it was that of a lover or of a medical man he did not seek to discover—was to rush to her assistance. But he realized that Edith's overwrought condition was not a thing more than the mere ordeal she had undergone. And the suspicion came to him with a chilling shock that people were even now prone to regard that bright and charming young woman not only as Lord Arncliffe's heiress but also as his murderer.

So he sat there, watching in an agony of apprehension for the dropped head to rise again from its resting-place on Mrs. Angier's ample shoulder. Only in the last resort would he draw the attention of the eager crowd, and then, going with excitement to this fresh evidence of agitation on her part. In a moment, nature asserted itself, for Edith was normally as healthy a girl as ever breathed. The blue eyes opened slowly and gazed on the new witness with something of amazed inquiry. Then the color came back to the blanched cheeks with a rush, and Edith took a deep breath of air, and, scarcely conscious of her momentary lapse, but much awake to the astounding incidents which were taking place.

For a stranger than had been the quiet form of the girl administered on such occasions. "He would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," she help me, Gertie!"

The witness glanced with some disfavor at the Book, its solid cover reeking of contact with the lips of many lips, which the Coroner's officer handed to her. Then, with his hand aloft after the Scottish fashion.

"Go ahead, Judge," he said. The Coroner darted a frowning glance at the lean-faced, alert young man who addressed him thus curtly, but seeing nothing of studied distrust in the cold indifference which met his scrutiny, checked the impending rebuke.

"What is your name?"

"William Lincoln Bradshaw."

"I understand you are able to give certain material evidence regarding Lord Arncliffe's death?"

"I don't know anything about Lord Arncliffe's death, beyond what I have read in the newspapers," rejoined Bradshaw. "Indeed, I am on the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" said the Coroner, impatiently. "But the object of this inquiry is to elicit information, not to impart it. You bear the name family name as the late Lord Arncliffe. Am I to understand that you are a relative?"

"Yes, sir, Lord Arncliffe was my uncle."

Mr. Angier sprang up promptly. Hobson had prepared him for this staggering statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.

"I must be allowed to object," he exclaimed with impressive slowness. "That I enjoyed Lord Arncliffe's confidence for the last twenty-five years, and during that time he told me repeatedly that he had no relatives in existence, with the exception of the most distant cousins. Indeed, he has often deplored the fact."

The New Yorker shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I am," he pointed out. "What are the facts, Mr. Bradshaw?" demanded the Coroner. "Have you never made yourself known to Lord Arncliffe?"

"Why, yes—and that is what is puzzling me. I wrote Lord Arncliffe from New York nearly two months ago, introducing myself, but received no reply. I wrote again ten days ago, saying that I was coming to see him, and he never answered me. It appeared to me," added the witness, dryly, "that as I neither wanted nor asked for any favor, beyond a mere acquaintance with Lord Arncliffe, he reasonably glad to meet the son of his only brother."

The Coroner bent his brows in a legal frown under the slender and reached bounds he had never foreseen.

"I suppose, Mr. Bradshaw," he said, "you are prepared to substantiate your claim to be Lord Arncliffe's nephew?"

"Of course, I can do that, though I don't know that it would be any particular advantage under the circumstances. I understand that the only life insurance, and in any case, I have no use for a title."

"If he can't prove it, can't he, sir?" barked in old Simpson. "The man's standing there might be his lordship's son; only that he is taller and more strongly built, he is the himmage—"

"Oh, do be quiet!" snapped the Coroner.

Inspector Hobson hunched up yet another note, and, during a brief interlude,

it seemed that an exaggerated importance had been attached to the evidence of this new witness.

"You were naturally surprised, Mr. Bradshaw," receiving no reply to your letters to Lord Arncliffe?" resumed the court.

"Not so much at the time, because I thought he might possibly be abroad, but I am much surprised now that I learn he must have received my letters. I have only recently discovered the relationship, but he wrote so affectionately up to the date of my father's death, that it seems incredible he should have utterly ignored my communications."

"Those will do," said the present, Mr. Bradshaw. "Can Samuel Barnes?"

"An asthmatic old man hobbled forward."

"You act as village postman, I believe, Barnes?"

"Yes, sir, forty years come Christmas."

"Never mind that. Do you remember having delivered any letters at the Hall recently?" letters bearing American stamps?"

"Yes, sir, there was two of 'em. One a few days ago, and one coming back. I noticed them because we don't often have letters from America. Forty years come Christmas."

"You can hand down, Barnes," interrupted the Coroner. "Now can any one tell me whose duty it was to receive the letters as were delivered at the Hall?"

"Miss," answered Edith at once. The shock which caused her faintness had apparently passed away, but she was pale and her voice was hoarse. She went through all Lord Arncliffe's letters unless they were marked "private," but I am positive that I saw none from this bright and charming young man, bearing an American postmark."

"This closed the evidence, and the Coroner resumed his interrupted summing-up."

"It can hardly be said, gentlemen, that the statement of Mr. Bradshaw throws any light on the mystery of Lord Arncliffe's death. It merely indicates the presence of some unknown person pursuing an underground course. Considering the circumstances, the deliberate suppression of certain of Lord Arncliffe's letters, for, had Lord Arncliffe by any chance received them, he would have been in a position to advise his solicitors, and probably to the young lady he had chosen as heiress of his vast wealth. In conclusion, I may say that the young man who has been lost sight of in the police investigations, which must, of course, follow and, if I think by any means the lines of your verdict, I think you will be well justified at this stage by finding that Lord Arncliffe died from the effects of arsenic, but how, or by whom administered, there is no evidence to show."

"That's all very well, Mr. Coroner," objected the foreman; "but it seems to me that if we find the person who kept the letters hidden in his chest, he will be far off the mark."

The Coroner raised his hand in deprecation of such strong language.

"Of this," he said, "I have no doubt. This sort of act would naturally be regarded with suspicion. But, letters, passed through the hands of a man, and it is extremely difficult to fix responsibility. For instance, Miss Holt tells us she had charge of Lord Arncliffe's correspondence, and that she had the letters in her hand when she was last seen by the young man who reached her. It might be scrutinized by a footman or some of the maids. However, as I have told you, gentlemen, I am not a stranger to the unexpected on such occasions. "He would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," she help me, Gertie!"

The witness glanced with some disfavor at the Book, its solid cover reeking of contact with the lips of many lips, which the Coroner's officer handed to her. Then, with his hand aloft after the Scottish fashion.

"Go ahead, Judge," he said. The Coroner darted a frowning glance at the lean-faced, alert young man who addressed him thus curtly, but seeing nothing of studied distrust in the cold indifference which met his scrutiny, checked the impending rebuke.

"What is your name?"

"William Lincoln Bradshaw."

"I understand you are able to give certain material evidence regarding Lord Arncliffe's death?"

"I don't know anything about Lord Arncliffe's death, beyond what I have read in the newspapers," rejoined Bradshaw. "Indeed, I am on the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" said the Coroner, impatiently. "But the object of this inquiry is to elicit information, not to impart it. You bear the name family name as the late Lord Arncliffe. Am I to understand that you are a relative?"

"Yes, sir, Lord Arncliffe was my uncle."

Mr. Angier sprang up promptly. Hobson had prepared him for this staggering statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.

"I must be allowed to object," he exclaimed with impressive slowness. "That I enjoyed Lord Arncliffe's confidence for the last twenty-five years, and during that time he told me repeatedly that he had no relatives in existence, with the exception of the most distant cousins. Indeed, he has often deplored the fact."

The New Yorker shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I am," he pointed out. "What are the facts, Mr. Bradshaw?" demanded the Coroner. "Have you never made yourself known to Lord Arncliffe?"

"Why, yes—and that is what is puzzling me. I wrote Lord Arncliffe from New York nearly two months ago, introducing myself, but received no reply. I wrote again ten days ago, saying that I was coming to see him, and he never answered me. It appeared to me," added the witness, dryly, "that as I neither wanted nor asked for any favor, beyond a mere acquaintance with Lord Arncliffe, he reasonably glad to meet the son of his only brother."

The Coroner bent his brows in a legal frown under the slender and reached bounds he had never foreseen.

"I suppose, Mr. Bradshaw," he said, "you are prepared to substantiate your claim to be Lord Arncliffe's nephew?"

"Of course, I can do that, though I don't know that it would be any particular advantage under the circumstances. I understand that the only life insurance, and in any case, I have no use for a title."

"If he can't prove it, can't he, sir?" barked in old Simpson. "The man's standing there might be his lordship's son; only that he is taller and more strongly built, he is the himmage—"

"Oh, do be quiet!" snapped the Coroner.

Inspector Hobson hunched up yet another note, and, during a brief interlude,

it seemed that an exaggerated importance had been attached to the evidence of this new witness.

"You were naturally surprised, Mr. Bradshaw," receiving no reply to your letters to Lord Arncliffe?" resumed the court.

"Not so much at the time, because I thought he might possibly be abroad, but I am much surprised now that I learn he must have received my letters. I have only recently discovered the relationship, but he wrote so affectionately up to the date of my father's death, that it seems incredible he should have utterly ignored my communications."

"Those will do," said the present, Mr. Bradshaw. "Can Samuel Barnes?"

"An asthmatic old man hobbled forward."

"You act as village postman, I believe, Barnes?"

"Yes, sir, forty years come Christmas."

"Never mind that. Do you remember having delivered any letters at the Hall recently?" letters bearing American stamps?"

"Yes, sir, there was two of 'em. One a few days ago, and one coming back. I noticed them because we don't often have letters from America. Forty years come Christmas."

"You can hand down, Barnes," interrupted the Coroner. "Now can any one tell me whose duty it was to receive the letters as were delivered at the Hall?"

"Miss," answered Edith at once. The shock which caused her faintness had apparently passed away, but she was pale and her voice was hoarse. She went through all Lord Arncliffe's letters unless they were marked "private," but I am positive that I saw none from this bright and charming young man, bearing an American postmark."

"This closed the evidence, and the Coroner resumed his interrupted summing-up."

"It can hardly be said, gentlemen, that the statement of Mr. Bradshaw throws any light on the mystery of Lord Arncliffe's death. It merely indicates the presence of some unknown person pursuing an underground course. Considering the circumstances, the deliberate suppression of certain of Lord Arncliffe's letters, for, had Lord Arncliffe by any chance received them, he would have been in a position to advise his solicitors, and probably to the young lady he had chosen as heiress of his vast wealth. In conclusion, I may say that the young man who has been lost sight of in the police investigations, which must, of course, follow and, if I think by any means the lines of your verdict, I think you will be well justified at this stage by finding that Lord Arncliffe died from the effects of arsenic, but how, or by whom administered, there is no evidence to show."

"That's all very well, Mr. Coroner," objected the foreman; "but it seems to me that if we find the person who kept the letters hidden in his chest, he will be far off the mark."

The Coroner raised his hand in deprecation of such strong language.

"Of this," he said, "I have no doubt. This sort of act would naturally be regarded with suspicion. But, letters, passed through the hands of a man, and it is extremely difficult to fix responsibility. For instance, Miss Holt tells us she had charge of Lord Arncliffe's correspondence, and that she had the letters in her hand when she was last seen by the young man who reached her. It might be scrutinized by a footman or some of the maids. However, as I have told you, gentlemen, I am not a stranger to the unexpected on such occasions. "He would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," she help me, Gertie!"

The witness glanced with some disfavor at the Book, its solid cover reeking of contact with the lips of many lips, which the Coroner's officer handed to her. Then, with his hand aloft after the Scottish fashion.

"Go ahead, Judge," he said. The Coroner darted a frowning glance at the lean-faced, alert young man who addressed him thus curtly, but seeing nothing of studied distrust in the cold indifference which met his scrutiny, checked the impending rebuke.

"What is your name?"

"William Lincoln Bradshaw."

"I understand you are able to give certain material evidence regarding Lord Arncliffe's death?"

"I don't know anything about Lord Arncliffe's death, beyond what I have read in the newspapers," rejoined Bradshaw. "Indeed, I am on the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" said the Coroner, impatiently. "But the object of this inquiry is to elicit information, not to impart it. You bear the name family name as the late Lord Arncliffe. Am I to understand that you are a relative?"

"Yes, sir, Lord Arncliffe was my uncle."

Mr. Angier sprang up promptly. Hobson had prepared him for this staggering statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.

"I must be allowed to object," he exclaimed with impressive slowness. "That I enjoyed Lord Arncliffe's confidence for the last twenty-five years, and during that time he told me repeatedly that he had no relatives in existence, with the exception of the most distant cousins. Indeed, he has often deplored the fact."

The New Yorker shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I am," he pointed out. "What are the facts, Mr. Bradshaw?" demanded the Coroner. "Have you never made yourself known to Lord Arncliffe?"

"Why, yes—and that is what is puzzling me. I wrote Lord Arncliffe from New York nearly two months ago, introducing myself, but received no reply. I wrote again ten days ago, saying that I was coming to see him, and he never answered me. It appeared to me," added the witness, dryly, "that as I neither wanted nor asked for any favor, beyond a mere acquaintance with Lord Arncliffe, he reasonably glad to meet the son of his only brother."

The Coroner bent his brows in a legal frown under the slender and reached bounds he had never foreseen.

"I suppose, Mr. Bradshaw," he said, "you are prepared to substantiate your claim to be Lord Arncliffe's nephew?"

"Of course, I can do that, though I don't know that it would be any particular advantage under the circumstances. I understand that the only life insurance, and in any case, I have no use for a title."

"If he can't prove it, can't he, sir?" barked in old Simpson. "The man's standing there might be his lordship's son; only that he is taller and more strongly built, he is the himmage—"

"Oh, do be quiet!" snapped the Coroner.

Inspector Hobson hunched up yet another note, and, during a brief interlude,

it seemed that an exaggerated importance had been attached to the evidence of this new witness.

"You were naturally surprised, Mr. Bradshaw," receiving no reply to your letters to Lord Arncliffe?" resumed the court.

"Not so much at the time, because I thought he might possibly be abroad, but I am much surprised now that I learn he must have received my letters. I have only recently discovered the relationship, but he wrote so affectionately up to the date of my father's death, that it seems incredible he should have utterly ignored my communications."

"Those will do," said the present, Mr. Bradshaw. "Can Samuel Barnes?"

"An asthmatic old man hobbled forward."

"You act as village postman, I believe, Barnes?"

"Yes, sir, forty years come Christmas."

"Never mind that. Do you remember having delivered any letters at the Hall recently?" letters bearing American stamps?"

"Yes, sir, there was two of 'em. One a few days ago, and one coming back. I noticed them because we don't often have letters from America. Forty years come Christmas."

"You can hand down, Barnes," interrupted the Coroner. "Now can any one tell me whose duty it was to receive the letters as were delivered at the Hall?"

"Miss," answered Edith at once. The shock which caused her faintness had apparently passed away, but she was pale and her voice was hoarse. She went through all Lord Arncliffe's letters unless they were marked "private," but I am positive that I saw none from this bright and charming young man, bearing an American postmark."

"This closed the evidence, and the Coroner resumed his interrupted summing-up."

"It can hardly be said, gentlemen, that the statement of Mr. Bradshaw throws any light on the mystery of Lord Arncliffe's death. It merely indicates the presence of some unknown person pursuing an underground course. Considering the circumstances, the deliberate suppression of certain of Lord Arncliffe's letters, for, had Lord Arncliffe by any chance received them, he would have been in a position to advise his solicitors, and probably to the young lady he had chosen as heiress of his vast wealth. In conclusion, I may say that the young man who has been lost sight of in the police investigations, which must, of course, follow and, if I think by any means the lines of your verdict, I think you will be well justified at this stage by finding that Lord Arncliffe died from the effects of arsenic, but how, or by whom administered, there is no evidence to show."

"That's all very well, Mr. Coroner," objected the foreman; "but it seems to me that if we find the person who kept the letters hidden in his chest, he will be far off the mark."

The Coroner raised his hand in deprecation of such strong language.

"Of this," he said, "I have no doubt. This sort of act would naturally be regarded with suspicion. But, letters, passed through the hands of a man, and it is extremely difficult to fix responsibility. For instance, Miss Holt tells us she had charge of Lord Arncliffe's correspondence, and that she had the letters in her hand when she was last seen by the young man who reached her. It might be scrutinized by a footman or some of the maids. However, as I have told you, gentlemen, I am not a stranger to the unexpected on such occasions. "He would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," she help me, Gertie!"

The witness glanced with some disfavor at the Book, its solid cover reeking of contact with the lips of many lips, which the Coroner's officer handed to her. Then, with his hand aloft after the Scottish fashion.

"Go ahead, Judge," he said. The Coroner darted a frowning glance at the lean-faced, alert young man who addressed him thus curtly, but seeing nothing of studied distrust in the cold indifference which met his scrutiny, checked the impending rebuke.

"What is your name?"

"William Lincoln Bradshaw."

"I understand you are able to give certain material evidence regarding Lord Arncliffe's death?"

"I don't know anything about Lord Arncliffe's death, beyond what I have read in the newspapers," rejoined Bradshaw. "Indeed, I am on the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" said the Coroner, impatiently. "But the object of this inquiry is to elicit information, not to impart it. You bear the name family name as the late Lord Arncliffe. Am I to understand that you are a relative?"

"Yes, sir, Lord Arncliffe was my uncle."

Mr. Angier sprang up promptly. Hobson had prepared him for this staggering statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.

"I must be allowed to object," he exclaimed with impressive slowness. "That I enjoyed Lord Arncliffe's confidence for the last twenty-five years, and during that time he told me repeatedly that he had no relatives in existence, with the exception of the most distant cousins. Indeed, he has often deplored the fact."

The New Yorker shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I am," he pointed out. "What are the facts, Mr. Bradshaw?" demanded the Coroner. "Have you never made yourself known to Lord Arncliffe?"

"Why, yes—and that is what is puzzling me. I wrote Lord Arncliffe from New York nearly two months ago, introducing myself, but received no reply. I wrote again ten days ago, saying that I was coming to see him, and he never answered me. It appeared to me," added the witness, dryly, "that as I neither wanted nor asked for any favor, beyond a mere acquaintance with Lord Arncliffe, he reasonably glad to meet the son of his only brother."

The Coroner bent his brows in a legal frown under the slender and reached bounds he had never foreseen.

"I suppose, Mr. Bradshaw," he said, "you are prepared to substantiate your claim to be Lord Arncliffe's nephew?"

"Of course, I can do that, though I don't know that it would be any particular advantage under the circumstances. I understand that the only life insurance, and in any case, I have no use for a title."

"If he can't prove it, can't he, sir?" barked in old Simpson. "The man's standing there might be his lordship's son; only that he is taller and more strongly built, he is the himmage—"

"Oh, do be quiet!" snapped the Coroner.

Inspector Hobson hunched up yet another note, and, during a brief interlude,

it seemed that an exaggerated importance had been attached to the evidence of this new witness.

"You were naturally surprised, Mr. Bradshaw," receiving no reply to your letters to Lord Arncliffe?" resumed the court.

"Not so much at the time, because I thought he might possibly be abroad, but I am much surprised now that I learn he must have received my letters. I have only recently discovered the relationship, but he wrote so affectionately up to the date of my father's death, that it seems incredible he should have utterly ignored my communications."

"Those will do," said the present, Mr. Bradshaw. "Can Samuel Barnes?"

"An asthmatic old man hobbled forward."

"You act as village postman, I believe, Barnes?"

"Yes, sir, forty years come Christmas."

"Never mind that. Do you remember having delivered any letters at the Hall recently?" letters bearing American stamps?"

"Yes, sir, there was two of 'em. One a few days ago, and one coming back. I noticed them because we don't often have letters from America. Forty years come Christmas."

"You can hand down, Barnes," interrupted the Coroner. "Now can any one tell me whose duty it was to receive the letters as were delivered at the Hall?"

"Miss," answered Edith at once. The shock which caused her faintness had apparently passed away, but she was pale and her voice was hoarse. She went through all Lord Arncliffe's letters unless they were marked "private," but I am positive that I saw none from this bright and charming young man, bearing an American postmark."

"This closed the evidence, and the Coroner resumed his interrupted summing-up."

"It can hardly be said, gentlemen, that the statement of Mr. Bradshaw throws any light on the mystery of Lord Arncliffe's death. It merely indicates the presence of some unknown person pursuing an underground course. Considering the circumstances, the deliberate suppression of certain of Lord Arncliffe's letters, for, had Lord Arncliffe by any chance received them, he would have been in a position to advise his solicitors, and probably to the young lady he had chosen as heiress of his vast wealth. In conclusion, I may say that the young man who has been lost sight of in the police investigations, which must, of course, follow and, if I think by any means the lines of your verdict, I think you will be well justified at this stage by finding that Lord Arncliffe died from the effects of arsenic, but how, or by whom administered, there is no evidence to show."

"That's all very well, Mr. Coroner," objected the foreman; "but it seems to me that if we find the person who kept the letters hidden in his chest, he will be far off the mark."

The Coroner raised his hand in deprecation of such strong language.

"Of this," he said, "I have no doubt. This sort of act would naturally be regarded with suspicion. But, letters, passed through the hands of a man, and it is extremely difficult to fix responsibility. For instance, Miss Holt tells us she had charge of Lord Arncliffe's correspondence, and that she had the letters in her hand when she was last seen by the young man who reached her. It might be scrutinized by a footman or some of the maids. However, as I have told you, gentlemen, I am not a stranger to the unexpected on such occasions. "He would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," she help me, Gertie!"

The witness glanced with some disfavor at the Book, its solid cover reeking of contact with the lips of many lips, which the Coroner's officer handed to her. Then, with his hand aloft after the Scottish fashion.

"Go ahead, Judge," he said. The Coroner darted a frowning glance at the lean-faced, alert young man who addressed him thus curtly, but seeing nothing of studied distrust in the cold indifference which met his scrutiny, checked the impending rebuke.

"What is your name?"

"William Lincoln Bradshaw."

"I understand you are able to give certain material evidence regarding Lord Arncliffe's death?"

"I don't know anything about Lord Arncliffe's death, beyond what I have read in the newspapers," rejoined Bradshaw. "Indeed, I am on the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" said the Coroner, impatiently. "But the object of this inquiry is to elicit information, not to impart it. You bear the name family name as the late Lord Arncliffe. Am I to understand that you are a relative?"

"Yes, sir, Lord Arncliffe was my uncle."

Mr. Angier sprang up promptly. Hobson had prepared him for this staggering statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.