

The Arncliffe Puzzle

By GORDON HOLMES, Author "A Mysterious Disappearance."

"That is really the point upon which I wished to have your advice," interrupted the lawyer. "You made an examination of Lord Arncliffe's body, did you not?"

"I was certainly present soon after he died," replied Lester, "but I refused almost immediately to interfere with his regular medical attendant—who, I may say, treated me with rather scant courtesy."

"Dr. Smalley is an old woman?" "I should heartily agree with you, were it not contrary to professional etiquette."

"However, you made a grave suggestion as to the cause of Lord Arncliffe's death?"

"My dear sir," rejoined Lester, "you must be aware that neither I nor any other can decide in such a case without a thorough investigation. It merely happened that the very cursory examination I made revealed certain indications which led me to suspect poisoning. It is not impossible that I was mistaken, though I do not think so. Nevertheless, it was my duty to mention my suspicions."

"Then your view is—"

"My view is that my responsibility in the matter is at an end. Dr. Smalley is, I presume, a reputable practitioner. If Lord Arncliffe's relatives are satisfied there is no more to be said. From what I hear, however, it appears to be a case for inquiry. Personally, I have not the least doubt that there will be an inquiry."

"There are no relatives. The matter rests with the estate of Lord Arncliffe. My principal object in coming to see you was to ask you to say nothing about it for the present. You may feel assured that there will be a full investigation. In fact, Sir Henry Matheson, the home office analyst, arrives tomorrow for that purpose."

"Ah!" murmured the young doctor, thoughtfully. "I should rather like to be present."

"Then I will let you know. If, as I hope, Lord Arncliffe's death turns out to have been due to natural causes, there need not, of course, be any publicity."

"Well," said Lester, dryly, "as it is current in the village that Lord Arncliffe was poisoned, shot, stabbed, strangled and blown up with dynamite."

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LONDON ADVERTISER.

PATTERN DEPARTMENT,

a deep wrath, awaited Lester's reappearance. Here was one fallen from the clouds, a possible and most dangerous rival. He meant to declare instant war.

Lester, contrary to his wonted habit, was so oblivious to his surroundings that it was only when he came right upon the other that he awoke from his day dreams. He had no desire to bandy words with Warren, whose face was a sufficient index of the fact that nothing would please him better than a quarrel. It is all well enough in the abstract to think of punching heads, but a gentleman does not act in that strenuous way unless he is absolutely forced to it. For Miss Holt's sake alone, if for no other reason, a stupid scuffle was to be avoided. Lester, therefore, nodded politely, and would have passed on, but the other seemed bent on provoking him.

"By this time you ought to be aware that these grounds are private," he said insolently.

"I am quite aware of the fact," rejoined Lester, quietly; "but I presume that both Mr. Ainslie and Miss Holt have the privilege of admitting their acquaintances."

"And failing them, you come here to spy on your own account?" asked Warren, with a sneer.

"I am rather at a loss to understand you."

"Perhaps you will understand me when I say that I am engaged in a little investigation into what does not concern you again it will be the worse for you."

Lester looked at him curiously. The flushed cheek and slightly thick speech seemed to point to something more potent than mere temper.

"My friend," he said calmly, "let me tell you that to a man of your build alcohol is absolutely poison."

Warren took a step forward. "Cynical fool! what do you mean?" he snarled.

"I mean that your neck is like your head—abnormally thick. One of these days you will die of apoplexy if you are not careful."

Lester never showed anger, but his mood was none the more benevolent on that account. And he had not forgotten that there were tears in Edith's eyes.

Warren clenched his fists, and his muscles tensed. Yet he did not strike. He had a fair enough share of brute courage, but there was something he did not understand in the cool, unruffled look of his opponent. He was like a wild beast held in check by the power of the human eye; and with the wild beast's fear of an unknown force, he tried to lash himself into sufficient fury for attack.

Lester half turned away. His action was eloquent of unspoken contempt.

It was enough. The spell of those steady eyes was broken, and with a hoarse cry Warren sprang forward. Lester, seeing what was coming, stepped back lightly. The vicious blow just missed him. He countered, with a sharp blow of many a bout with the gloves.

It seemed, for an instant, that this unexpected reply was only a ward to gain distance, for Warren did not even stagger. But it was only for an instant. The blow had been too much for him. He collapsed quietly into a limp heap.

Lester smiled grimly, stooped over his adversary, and proceeded to light a cigar. Master Warren would come to his senses in a minute or two, a trifle dazed, but not much the worse. And so it proved. The fallen hero rose to his knees presently. He was not absolutely certain what had happened, but evidently the good-looking man with the cigar was in some way responsible for his discomfiture.

"You are going to have a very bad headache soon," remarked Lester, cheerfully. "And I rather think you will be sick. If you take my advice you will go home and get to bed. You may apologize for your conduct next time I see you. Can you walk?"

Warren struggled to his feet. He was very shaken and pale.

"As I said, you may apologize later on," went on Lester. "As you do not seem to be in need of my professional assistance, I will bid you good-day."

He walked slowly away, followed by certain assurances as to Warren's future intentions which it is not necessary to repeat. Lester smiled again pleasantly. Reflection, with its unkind candor, has not yet overtaken him.

"Useful blow, that, on the point of the jaw," he murmured. "It doesn't leave any mark; and I should not have liked Edith to have seen him with a black eye. But I am glad I punched his head. It seems to have adjusted matters."

Clearly, George Lester was in an unusual frame of mind. Else why did he think of a girl whom he had seen twice in his life, as "Edith?"

(To Be Continued.)

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LOOKING BRIGHT FOR FINE CROP

Weather Conditions in West So Far Ideal for a Bumper Harvest.

Winnipeg, July 4.—So far the season has marched with extraordinary precision along the highroad to a phenomenal harvest, early and favorable seeding being followed by a wet June and the opening week of July having given evidence of a hot dry month necessary to bring grain to rapid and successful maturity.

Precipitation in June was sufficient to ensure a crop even should no rain fall this month, but that it was not too great is proved by scattered complaints of not enough, which about balance reports of too much wet in a few low-lying districts.

Altogether, the beginning of July sees the grain crop advanced to an extraordinarily favorable stage with the absolute minimum of damage from any cause. Just about a week ago two or three isolated windstorms occurred in widely-scattered parts of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and on the strength of these an altogether exaggerated and erroneous report found its way east, telling of a tornado in Saskatchewan, which was vividly portrayed as "Sweeping Around Fillmore and Warman."

As these two points are some 200 miles apart, and as a couple of hundred dollars would amply cover the total damage, according to correct reports received by the Western Associated Press, such a libel is clearly ridiculous.

Hail has, of course, touched certain districts, but visitations so far have been considerably less than the average and particularly than last season, while the area of cultivation is now so greatly extended that hail losses have relatively little effect on the total average yield. Reports gathered from principal points throughout the prairie provinces show that spring wheat is heading out on light land and will be generally headed out by the middle of the month.

Farmers are busy with the hay crop, which promises to be the heaviest in years, as rains have not overflooded the sloughs. Work on this will have to be rushed in view of the early date of the start of grain-cutting, and demand for labor is now insistent. In fact, the whole labor question presents considerable difficulties, as it is estimated quite 20,000 men will be required this season.

Wheat, however, has not so far run to too much straw and promises to be economically harvested.

Reports from Southern Alberta indicate fall wheat is beginning to ripen and the harvest will be quite a fortnight ahead of last year. Altogether nothing has impaired the prospect, rapidly becoming a certainty, of the heaviest crop harvested in the history of the prairie west. But some critical weeks yet intervene.

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An international exposition is contemplated, to be held in Brussels, which, while it will be of a very general nature, will be largely devoted to electrical matters.

New York men have justly earned the reputation of being less polite in their treatment of women in public conveyances than are the men of other cities. Figures obtained from other cities show an average of 13 per cent of men seated while women are standing, and New York City shows about 70 per cent.

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