

THE EVENING TIMES, ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, JULY 24, 1906.

# THE ARNCLIFFE PUZZLE,

BY GORDON HOLMES

Author of "A MYSTERIOUS-DISAPPEARANCE."

(Continued.)

"I would not mind, Mr. Angier, if it were only that," murmured Edith, testily, "but what Simpson says is true. I was discussing a matter which I must keep secret at any sacrifice."

"Well, my dear young lady, you are not compelled to tell your private affairs to a coroner's jury, though, of course, see-very often makes a mountain out of what is probably only a mole-hill. But what is this wonderful matter? Don't you think you had better let me judge what is best?"

Edith shook her head. "I am sorry," she faltered, "don't think me ungrateful—you are so kind and good that I would tell you instantly if it only concerned myself. But the secret is not my own."

The solicitor was disappointed, even somewhat hurt. A man who has kept inviolable for years whole cupboards full of other people's family skeletons does not like this disquieting confidence. But he was mainly concerned because he foresaw that Edith's reticence would be productive of illimitable gossip.

However, he pursued the subject no further. Edith, under the combined influence of cheerful conversation and a glass of wine, which her friends insisted she should take, became more composed. When the court re-assembled she was calm enough, at least, outwardly.

The coroner, with a rather puzzled expression, was studying a slip of paper which had been handed him by the London detective. But he spoke encouragingly to Edith.

"I hope, Miss Holt, we shall not have to detain you long. The witness Simpson has deposed that on the day of Lord Arncliffe's death he heard his lordship addressing you in tones rather at variance with his usual manner. As anything bearing on the mental condition of the deceased is important, the jury would like to hear from you exactly what took place."

The question was skillfully put. Edith began to think she had absurdly exaggerated the credit before her. But she remembered that Lord Arncliffe's reticence was his habit; he knew that such civility did ill for a witness.

"Simpson has reported conversation correctly," Edith answered. "Lord Arncliffe and I had merely reopened the discussion of some private business upon which we had a difference of opinion. Lord Arncliffe was at all times rather impatient of opposition, and no doubt he spoke more sharply than was his wont."

"May I ask the nature of that business?"

"You are not, of course, compelled to answer the question if you do not wish to do so."

"The business was purely of a private nature."

"There was some reference to a sum of three hundred pounds. Was that an item of the business under discussion?"

"Yes," admitted Edith faintly, "it started eyes to the coroner. The moment he was speaking of three hundred pounds I had chosen to inherit his vast wealth."

"Not at all, Mr. Angier," returned the coroner. "Nevertheless, we must prevent Miss Holt from anticipating any such conclusion. I presume, Miss Holt, Lord Arncliffe was not in the habit of giving you such amounts of money?"

"No."

"No, anything approaching such an amount?"

"No. I had my salary, sixty pounds a year, and Lord Arncliffe occasionally gave me a check for ten or fifteen pounds. I had to ascertain such guests as visited him, and it was his wish that I should receive suitable. The three hundred pounds was given at my earnest request. I required the money urgently, and Lord Arncliffe was the only person to whom I could turn."

"Very well. I have here a cancelled check of Lord Arncliffe's for three hundred pounds, dated at six weeks before he died. Would this represent the payment to you?"

A more skilled hand than the coroner's revealed itself. Detective Inspector Hobson was beginning to move.

"Yes."

"You collected the amount personally from the Alnwick branch of the Great Northern Bank?"

"Yes."

"All in gold?"

"Yes; I required it in gold." She was all spirit now. Those myosotis blue eyes

had a glint of steel in them.

"A rather cumbersome method, I should imagine," commented the coroner. He had been friendly disposed hitherto, but he began to feel nettled by the haughty indifference which had taken the place of maiden timidity.

"If you are suggesting that I asked for gold so that the money could not be traced," she said disdainfully, "I can only say that each attendant at the bank is acquainted with me."

The weather-cock sympathies of the crowd instantly veered towards Edith.

The coroner, rather at a loss, pretended to busy himself with his papers, and a murmur of comment relieved the tension of the audience.

"She has soon acquired the forty-thousand-a-year manner!" was the common thought.

Yet each complacent critic asked: "Why did she, then a poor girl, want so much money?"

Edith's examination might have reached an abrupt conclusion, had not the watchful Hobson seen the coroner another note. The official tones became suddenly suave again.

"May I not misunderstand me, Miss Holt, I mentioned the matter because I understood that on another occasion you cashed a check of Lord Arncliffe's for two hundred and fifty pounds, which was also paid in gold?"

"Yes. It was distributed by Lord Arncliffe to relieve the winter distress in the district, and I forgot the money because Mr. Warren, the agent, was suffering from a riding accident."

"So the bank officials would not think this second application for a large sum of gold in any way strange?"

"No doubt. The signature of the check is presumably that of Lord Arncliffe; but the amount was filled in by yourself, is it not?"

Edith was stinking flint now, and the sparks were flying.

"Angier had thought it wise that Edith should avoid the least appearance of concealment; but he thought it high time to protest."

"If your object is to prove that the check for three hundred pounds was improperly obtained by Miss Holt," he said severely, "I shall strongly advise her not to answer any further questions. You must be perfectly aware, sir, that such a line of cross-examination as you have pursued should have been preceded by a caution."

The coroner felt the injury inflicted by so public a rebuke. Much as he would have liked to assert the dignity of the court, policy dictated an attitude of conciliation. The lawyer was a mighty power in the county and could make things extremely unpleasant if he so listed.

"I fear I have expressed myself badly if I have given you an unfortunate impression," said the coroner. "However, I will not trouble Miss Holt further; and I trust she will pardon me if in the performance of a public duty I have caused her any pain."

Edith bowed, and returned to her seat. Mrs. Angier, in a sense that the ordeal was a tonic, said the coroner. "However, I will not trouble Miss Holt further; and I trust she will pardon me if in the performance of a public duty I have caused her any pain."

The coroner's masked battery of innuendos was a far healthier emotion than the chafing which had possessed her before. Her indignation was nothing; however, to that of Lester, who had more than once endeavored to estimate what would be the penalty of showing the king's representative out of the window.

The remaining evidence was of little importance. After Mrs. Warren and Angier had endorsed the statements of previous witnesses, the coroner proceeded to sum up.

"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 has been the victim of foul play; but, on the other hand, if his mind was impaired by his long 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 on the mental condition of persons who were sane; so it is evident the poisoner was no ordinary person. Here again, one cannot but recall Lord Arncliffe's intimate knowledge of poisons. However, I do not think there 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 their master, as, indeed, they had every reason to be. Mrs. Warren, Simpson, Henry 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 centered attention on the witness from New York. Only two people among the occupants of the crowded court knew that Edith had faintly where she sat. Those two were the detective and Lester. They watched the girl from widely different motives. Edith, in his own way, was conscious of a mutual distrust. Lester's first instinct—whether the instinct of a lover or of a medical man he did not seek to discover—was to study her assistance. But he realized that Edith's overwrought condition was due to something more than mere control she had undergone 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 court, already gorged with excitement to this fresh evidence 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 rested 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 or two, scarcely conscious of her momentary lapse, but much aware of the astounding incidents which were taking place.

For the stranger had repeated the quaint formula of the oath administered on such occasions. He would tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—"So help me, God!"

The witness glanced with some disfavor at the Book, its soiled cover rocking of contact with the lips of many, which the coroner's office handed to him. Then he raised his hand aloft after the Scottish fashion.

"Go ahead, judge," said he.

The coroner darted a frowning glance at the lean-faced, alert young man who addressed him thus curtly, but seeing nothing of studied studiousness in the cool 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 the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" cried the coroner, impatiently. "I am the lookout for some information, not to impart it. You bear the same 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 sprung up promptly. Hobson had provided him for this glaring statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.

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

The New Yorker shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I am here," he said, "because you are the fact, 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 Europe and would call on him. I supposed he would not mind my calling on him for any favor, beyond a mere acquaintance, and Lord Arncliffe might be reasonably glad to meet the son of his only brother."

The coroner bent his brows in a legal frown; the inquiry had 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."

understand he held only a life-tenure, and, in any case, I have no use for a title.

"If he can't prove it, I can sit!" broke in old Simpson. "The gentleman standing there might be his lordship's son; only that he is taller and more strongly built, he is the himself."

"Oh, do be quiet!" snapped the coroner. Inspector Hobson handed 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, at receiving my 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."

(To be continued.)

## Travellers Guide

TRAINS DEPART FROM ST. JOHN.

6.00 a.m.—Express for Pt. du Chene, Halifax, etc.

6.25 a.m.—Express for Boston, Fredericton, etc.

7.45 a.m.—Mixed for Moncton, etc.

8.15 a.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

11.00 a.m.—Express for Pt. du Chene, Halifax, etc.

11.45 a.m.—Express for Boston, Fredericton, etc.

1.15 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

1.45 p.m.—Express for Moncton and coast, Fredericton and St. Andrews, etc.

4.00 p.m.—Express for Boston, etc.

4.30 p.m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

4.45 p.m.—Express from Fredericton, etc.

5.15 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

5.30 p.m.—Express from Pt. du Chene and Moncton.

5.45 p.m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, and other points on the coast.

6.00 p.m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

6.15 p.m.—Express from Boston, etc.

6.30 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

6.45 p.m.—Express from Pt. du Chene and Moncton.

7.00 p.m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, and other points on the coast.

7.15 p.m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

7.30 p.m.—Express from Boston, etc.

7.45 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

8.00 p.m.—Express from Pt. du Chene and Moncton.

8.15 p.m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, and other points on the coast.

8.30 p.m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

8.45 p.m.—Express from Boston, etc.

9.00 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

9.15 p.m.—Express from Pt. du Chene and Moncton.

9.30 p.m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, and other points on the coast.

9.45 p.m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

10.00 p.m.—Express from Boston, etc.

10.15 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

10.30 p.m.—Express from Pt. du Chene and Moncton.

10.45 p.m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, and other points on the coast.

11.00 p.m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

11.15 p.m.—Express from Boston, etc.

11.30 p.m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

11.45 p.m.—Express from Pt. du Chene and Moncton.

12.00 p.m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, and other points on the coast.

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