

THE ARNCLIFFE PUZZLE,

BY
GORDON
HOLMES

Author of "A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE."

(Continued.)

"I would not mind, Mr. Aingier, if it were only that," murmured Edith, tearfully; "but what Simpson says is true. I was discussing a very private matter with Lord Arncliffe—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, secrecy often makes a mountain out of what is probably only a molehill. 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 his clients to withhold confidences. 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 enough 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 ordeal before her. But she would not let Mr. Aingier metaphorically touch her hair; he knew that such saucy boded ill for a witness.

"Simpson has reported our conversation correctly," Edith answered. "Lord Arncliffe and I had merely re-opened 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, lifting startled eyes to the coroner. The moment she was dreading had come at last. "Lord Arncliffe had lent—perhaps I should say given—me three hundred pounds some little time previously."

"For what purpose did he give you this money?"

"That, sir, is my business." The "marquise" spirit was beginning to assert itself.

Mr. Aingier rose to his feet with well-simulated indignation. "Surely, sir," he protested, "it is not extraordinary that Lord Arncliffe should give so paltry a sum as three hundred pounds to the lady he had chosen to inherit his vast wealth?"

"Not at all, Mr. Aingier," returned the coroner. "Nevertheless, you must remember that he took pains to prevent Miss Holt from anticipating any such conclusion. I presume, Miss Holt, Lord Arncliffe was in the habit of giving you such amounts of money?"

"No."

"Nor 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 entertain such guests as visited him, and it was his wish that I should dress suitably. The three hundred pounds were given at my earnest request."

"Very well. I have here a canceled check of Lord Arncliffe's for three hundred pounds, dated 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."

"And 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-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 sent the coroner another note. The official tones became ominously sad again.

"Pray do not misunderstand me, Miss Holt, I mentioned the matter because I understand 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 fetched 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?"

"I have not considered the possibility of the bank people presuming to comment upon any act of mine."

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

Steel was striking flint now, and the sparks were flying.

Aingier 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 so unfortunate an 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 by Mrs. Aingier. In a sense the ordeal was a tonic. The scornful indignation expressed by the coroner's marked history of innuendo was a far healthier emotion than the chilling fear 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 throwing the king's representative out of the window.

The remaining evidence was of little importance. After Mrs. Warren and Aingier had indorsed 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 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, if his mind was impaired by his long illness, we should be justified in assuming that he knew he was being poisoned for no 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 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, Harry Warren, Miss Holt."

Another note from Inspector Hobson found its way unostentatiously 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 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 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 rush to her assistance. But he realized that Edith's overwrought condition was due to something 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 this bright and charming young woman not only as Lord Arncliffe's heiress but as his murderer.

So he sat there, watching in agony of apprehension for the drooped head to rise again from its resting-place on Mrs. Aingier's ample shoulder. Only in the last resort would he draw the attention of the eager crowd, 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 deep breaths or two, scarcely conscious of her momentary lapse, but much awake to 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 reeking of contact with the lips of many lips, which the coroner's officer handed to him. Then he raised his hand aloft after the Scotch 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 disrespect 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 on the lookout for some information in that direction myself."

"Yes, yes!" cried the coroner, impatient. "But the object of this inquiry is to elicit 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. Aingier sprang up promptly. Hobson had prepared himself for this staggering statement, but he felt that a legal veto must be registered forthwith.

"I must be allowed to say, sir," 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 here," he pointed out.

"What are the deuce, 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 him ten days ago, saying that I was coming to Europe and would call on him. It appeared to me," added the witness, dryly, "that as I neither wanted nor asked for any favor, beyond a mere acquaintance, 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. I

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

"If he can't prove it, I can sir!" 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 himmidge."

"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 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 writes 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 P. du Chene, Halifax, Sydney, etc.
6.25 a. m.—Express for Boston, Fredericton, etc.
7.45 a. m.—Mixed for Moncton, etc.
8.25 a. m.—Suburban for Wolford, etc.
11.00 a. m.—Express for P. du Chene, Halifax, Quebec, Montreal. (Connections with Oceanic Lines.)
11.45 a. m.—Express for P. du Chene, Pictou and Halifax.
1.15 p. m.—Suburban for Wolford, etc.
1.35 p. m.—Suburban for Hampton, etc. (Connections Hampton and St. Martins, except Saturdays.)
5.15 p. m.—Suburban for Wolford, etc.
5.35 p. m.—Express for Sussex, etc. (Connections Hampton & St. Martins on Saturdays.)
6.40 p. m.—Express for Montreal and coast, Fredericton and St. Andrews.
6.55 p. m.—Express for Boston, etc.
6.10 p. m.—Express for Fredericton, etc.
6.25 p. m.—Suburban for Hampton, etc.
7.00 p. m.—Express for Quebec and Montreal, P. du Chene.
10.20 p. m.—Suburban for Wolford, etc.
11.25 p. m.—Express for Pictou, Halifax and Sydney.

TRAINS ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN.

6.25 a. m.—Express from Sydney and Halifax, etc.
7.45 a. m.—Suburban from Hampton, etc.
7.50 a. m.—Suburban from Wolford, etc.
8.55 a. m.—Express from Fredericton, etc.
9.00 a. m.—Express from Sussex, etc. (Connections Hampton & St. Martins on Mondays.)
10.40 a. m.—Express from Boston, etc.
11.20 a. m.—Express from Montreal, Fredericton, etc.
12.10 p. m.—Suburban from Wolford, etc.
12.50 p. m.—Express from Montreal, Quebec, P. du Chene, etc. (Connections Hampton and St. Martins, daily except Mondays.)
3.20 p. m.—Suburban from Wolford, etc.
3.30 p. m.—Suburban from Hampton, etc.
4.30 p. m.—Mixed from Moncton, etc.
6.00 p. m.—Express from P. du Chene and Moncton.
5.15 p. m.—Express from Halifax, Pictou, Campbellton. (Connections Oceanic Lines, from Montreal.)
9.30 p. m.—Express from Moncton, etc.
10.40 p. m.—Suburban from Wolford, etc.
11.30 p. m.—Express from Boston, etc.
1.40 a. m.—(Sunday only) Express Sydney and Halifax, etc.
Trains on the New Brunswick Southern Railway leave west side daily for St. Stephen at 8.10 a. m., arriving at west side on return at 7.10 p. m.

RIVER STEAMERS.

DEPARTURES.

8.00 a. m.—May Queen leaves Indiantown for Chipman, Gagetown and Grand Lake points Wednesdays and Saturdays.
8.30 a. m.—Victoria or Malcoite, for Fredericton and intermediate landings, daily, Sunday excepted.
9.00 a. m.—Hampton, for Hampton, Clifton, Kingston and Kennebecasis landings, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
10.00 a. m.—Crystal Stream, for Cole's Island, the Narrows and landings on the Washademoak Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.
12 noon—Champlain, for the Belisle.
3.00 p. m.—Hampton, for Hampton, Mondays and Saturdays.
6.00 p. m.—Elaine, for Queensboro and intermediate landings, Saturday 5.00 p. m. for Gagetown.
5.30 p. m.—Victoria, for Hamstead and intermediate landings, on Saturdays.
8.00 a. m.—Majestic, from Hamstead every Monday.
9.00 a. m.—Hampton, from Hampton.
10.00 a. m.—Elaine, from Wicksan daily.
1.30 p. m.—Crystal Stream, from the Washademoak, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
12.30 p. m.—Champlain, from Belisle, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
3.30 p. m.—Victoria or Malcoite, from Fredericton daily.
4.00 p. m.—May Queen, from Chipman and Grand Lake points, Mondays and Thursdays.

FERRY STEAMERS.

Ferry steamers cross the harbor from the foot of Princeps street, east side, to Rodney wharf, west side, every 20 minutes, commencing at 6 a. m., the last boat leaving the east side at 11.30 p. m. On Sundays the first trip is from the west side at 8 a. m., and the last trip from the east side at 11.30 p. m. On Saturday evenings only, boat leaves west side at 11.45 and St. John at 12.

The E. Ross, from Indiantown to Millford makes three trips an hour, daily (Sunday excepted), leaving Indiantown at 8.10 p. m. and Saturdays till 10.40 p. m. On Sunday from 8 a. m. till 9 p. m.

The Maggie Miller between Millidgeville, Summerville, Kennebecasis Island and Baywater—Leaves Baywater at 6.00, 7.30 and 10.30 a. m., and 2.45 and 5.15 p. m.
Leaves Summerville at 6.50, 7.45, and 10.45 a. m., and 3.00 and 5.30 p. m.
Leaves Millidgeville at 6.45 and 9.30 a. m., and 2.30, 4.00 and 6.00 p. m.
Boat will leave Millidgeville every Monday morning at 6.00 o'clock.

SATURDAY.

Leaves Baywater at 5.30, 7.00 and 10.30 a. m., and 3.45, 5.45, and 7.45 p. m.
Leaves Summerville at 5.50, 7.30, and 10.45 a. m., and 4.00, 6.00 and 8.00 p. m.
Leaves Millidgeville at 6.15 and 9.30 a. m., and 3.00, 5.00 and 7.00 p. m.

SUNDAY.

Leaves Millidgeville at 9.00 and 10.30 a. m., and 2.30 and 6.15 p. m.
Leaves Baywater at 9.45 and 11.15 a. m., and 5.00 and 7.00 p. m.
Leaves Summerville at 10.00 and 11.30 a. m., and 5.30 and 7.30 p. m.

Commencing July 1, steamers leave St. John at 8 a. m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for Lunenburg, Eastport, Portland and Boston. For Boston direct on Tuesdays and Saturdays at 6.30 m.

Returning from Boston via Portland, Eastport and Lunenburg, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 9 a. m. From Boston direct Mondays and Thursdays at 12 noon.

Steamer Prince Rupert for Digby leaves St. John daily at 7.45 a. m., connections for Halifax and Yarmouth; returning arrives about 4.30 p. m.

Steamer Seneca sails Thursday evenings at 6 o'clock from Reid's Point wharf, for Yarmouth, Barrington, Shubenubie, Rockport, Liverpool, Lunenburg and Halifax. She arrives in St. John Wednesday evenings at 6 o'clock.

Steamer Westport III. leaves Knox's wharf every Friday at 12 noon for Westport, Yarmouth, Yarmouth, etc. She arrives in St. John Thursdays.

Steamer Aurora, for Grand Manan, Campbellton, Eastport, etc., leaves Tuesdays at 10 a. m. and arrives Mondays at 2.30 p. m. at Merritt's wharf.

Steamer Granville, for Lower Granville, Annapolis, etc., leaves Tuesdays at 12 noon and arrives Mondays at 1 p. m. at St. John.

Steamer Brunswick, for Spencer's Island, Cansing, Wolfville, etc., leaves Tuesdays evenings and arrives Mondays at Thorne's wharf.

Steamer Beaver, for Harvey, Albert, Hillsboro, etc., leaves Thursdays and arrives Wednesdays at Thorne's wharf.

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