

THE ARNCLIFFE PUZZLE,

BY
GORDON
HOLMES

Author of "A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE."

(Continued.)

"I'll take my solemn day's a'most med me suspect my own beer. He talked about some stuff he called pick-row-some-thin-or-other."

"Ay, that's it. By gum! Give a man a taste o' that in a pint an' you'll see things. You doctors mun be rum fellers to quarrel wi' a' my thinkin'!"

Such obvious philosophy required a pull at the beer-handle to evoke its rigor. Lester escaped to his room, sat down at a writing-table, and set forth on paper, briefly but clearly, his reasons for thinking that Lord Arncliffe had died from arsenical poisoning. After the landlord's curiously appropriate story he had no other course left open. There might be an inquest, with far-reaching consequences. No matter what the inconvenience to himself, he could not shirk the outcome of his own definite pronouncement in the presence of four persons. So George Lester wrote a short record of the facts, sealed the paper in an envelope, and gave it to the landlord, with a request that the latter should place it in his safe.

"You will not forget the date and the hour," he said, noticing that Jones weighed the small package in his hand with a certain air of doubt.

"Why, no, sir," grunted the other.

"What is it? It mun be a bank-note, or summat o' t' sort."

"No, it is merely a statement. You see I was called in accidentally to visit Lord Arncliffe. In such cases it is always best to be accurate. I have jotted down my observations. That is all. The paper must not be wanted again, but you will oblige me by keeping it and producing it if called on by me."

"Certainly, sir. I'm a careful man myself. I never buy out that I don't enter 'day an' t' price in a note-book. Once I bowt a pig."

A maid reported that a fine trout and other delicacies awaited Lester in the coffee-room, so the pig-buying episode was interrupted. Lester dined alone. There happened to be no other anglers staying at the inn that day. Propping a London daily paper against the curtain-stead, the landlady read an article dealing with Anglo-American influences on affairs in the far east. In a word, he determined to tell his thoughts of all further speculation about the dead master of Arncliffe, and succeeded so well that, with coffee and a cigar, he wheeled his chair to secure a better light while he scanned the newspaper in comfort.

Hence, he was positively surprised when the maid brought a letter, correctly addressed to him, and bearing the Arncliffe name, a stark landmark proper on a field d'cor. But this surprise kindled into actual amazement when he read:

"Dear Sir—Simpson, the man who was present today when you met Dr. Shalley in Lord Arncliffe's bedroom, has told me what you said. I was so shocked and grieved by the death of one to whom I owe everything that I failed at first to give your words their true significance. Now, however, I feel in a sacred duty that I should acquaint you with certain matters within my knowledge. I do not think I can ask you to come to the Hall, and, in a small place like Arncliffe, it would cause needless comment were I to call and see you at the inn. Can you meet me at the East Lodge gate at nine o'clock? The terrible occurrence of this afternoon must be my excuse for such an unconventional request.

Yours faithfully,
"EDITH HOLT."

"P. S.—I have been Lord Arncliffe's secretary and amanuensis during the past three years. I should add that it was to my assistance you came today in the Fen Ghyll. E. H."

Although not a man of hesitating mood, Lester drew a deep breath of dubiety when he reached the end of this short but decisive note. There are, in a man's life, certain rare moments of divination. They are unsteady, occult, fleeting as the gleam of lightning in the depths of a sombre cloud. They carry an impalpable message of hidden fate, so distinct as to be undeniable, yet so vague that no sane intelligence can interpret them for good or evil. One of these glimpses behind the veil of futurity was vouchsafed to him now, and he wondered with uncustomed awe what the portent signified. He was sure that the trust fixed for the ensuing hour would have an uncontrollable influence on his career. Events were slowly but inexorably conspiring to enmesh him within a web of exceeding strength. Should he escape while yet the way was open?

A polite refusal to meet this lovely "marquise," on the plea that he was leaving Arncliffe at once, showed the path of expediency. His eyes, fixed in thought, fell again on the letter: "The death of one to whom I owe everything," she wrote. Once before that day he had gone to her in a moment of distress. Should he refuse her now in a greater need?

George Lester might be a clever and clear-sighted young man, nevertheless, he was a young man.

"Tell the messenger I will keep the appointment," he said to the waiting servant.

"Or perhaps, I had better write a note."

"Please, sir, the boy said there was no answer. He has gone."

Then Lester laughed. He was spared all hesitancy. It was intolerable that Miss Edith Holt, the girl with the Greuze face and figure, should be allowed to wait in vain outside the East Lodge for one who came to her.

"No answer is the most conclusive of all answers," he said, and smiled.

The girl smiled, too, though she understood him not at all.

"He is such a nice gentleman!" she confided to the kitchen maid, who was dressed for going out. "But she looks at you sometimes as if he didn't see you."

"An' that won't suit you," commented the other tartly, the house-maid being the better looking of the pair.

"I'm not used to it like you are, Lizzy," was the flippant retort.

Lizzy glared, but curiously conquered pleasure when her fellow-servant went on:

"I've just given him a note from the Hall. It was in a lady's handwriting. I wonder who he knows there?"

"Who brought it?"

"Jackson's little boy." Jackson was a gardener employed on the Arncliffe estate.

"If I meet him I'll ask who sent it."

"It was to make an appointment of some sort."

"You don't say? I'll just hurry out, Mebbie I'll overtake him."

So Lizzy hurried and caught the Jackson urchin swapping marbles with another on the outskirts of the village. But she failed to extract any information from him. A largesse of experience having insured discretion.

Lizzy was baffled. She went to visit a friend, and it was one of the queer coincidences of fate that she should happen to catch sight of George Lester's tall figure as he strolled toward the park a few minutes before nine o'clock.

"Well, I must be off now," she cried, a sudden impulse moving her to follow him.

"Why, this is no time to go!" protested her gossip. "You needn't be home yet for another hour or more."

"I've got to meet me sweetheart," grinned Lizzy.

"You told me he was given a job in Newcastle as a porter."

"This is a friend of his who takes care of me on his account," was the jauntily reply, and Lizzy darted forth into the soft shadows of a fine June night.

Within the nearest gate of the park Lester saw Edith Holt. Though, of course, she was attired in different garments from the summer-like costume of their earlier meeting, he recognized her at the first glance. She walked with a free elegance, and carried herself with a distinction that really meant. He realized that the girl must have yielded to some powerful motive ere she wrote to him, and he felt, too, that it lay with him to redeem her from the natural embarrassment of their first exchange of words.

Hence, the surprise of that day of bewilderment were only increased when he found that Miss Holt, who passed through the gate before he could reach it, took the lead in their conversation.

"Is it very good of you to be so punctual," she said. "Shall we walk this way?"

She indicated the high road, leading away from the village.

"I am entirely at your service," said Lester.

"I need hardly apologize for my letter," she began again instantly. "Most fortunately, you are a doctor, and in grave trouble, one turns to a doctor for help as instinctively as to a lawyer or a clergyman."

"You have my sympathy already, and believe me you shall have my best counsel," said he.

Now, the truth was that Lester was taken aback by the girl's demeanor. He was in no way conceited, nor could his detractors, if such existed, describe him as a 'ladies' man.' But that this beautiful young woman should so calmly relegate him to the category of fatherly grey-heads gave him a twinge of annoyance that none of her sex had succeeded in inflicting before.

Utterly unconscious of her own attitude, Edith Holt passed a hand over her eyes as though to clear away a baffling mist.

"The Earl was my only friend," she continued in a strained, nervous manner which told how feverishly she was controlling her emotions. "I did not exaggerate when I said that I owed everything in the world to him. When my dear father died, nearly ten years ago, I was left alone, a little girl of nine, but Heaven inspired my father on his deathbed to write to his old school-fellow, Sir William Bradshaw, as he was then, and ask him to care for me."

"Sir William Bradshaw, the great cotton manufacturer! Did he become the Earl of Arncliffe?"

"Yes, only three years since. His gift to the nation, his endowment of two universities, brought him a peerage, which he accepted only as a joke. It will inter me decently," he used to say. 'People will forget that such an old fossil as Bradshaw is still living.' My dear old friend and benefactor! Who could have wished him harm?" She stopped to choke back a sob.

Lester, wishing to soothe her said quickly: "Do not be too ready to adopt my hasty conclusion, Miss Holt. Lord Arncliffe, whose career is, of course, well known to me, was an old man. It is amazing to me now to realize that I, too, owe him a certain measure of success in my profession. It was Sir William Bradshaw who provided funds for the Tropical Fever Commission which came to West Africa."

"And are you the Dr. George Lester who discovered the Micrococcus Africanus?" she interrupted.

They halted and gazed at one another with renewed interest. As for Lester, he was astounded. Not many young ladies of nineteen could speak thus glibly of the tiny organism he had detected in the fever-laden blood of a Congo nomad only a few months earlier. But the transient gleam fled from the girl's brilliant eyes.

"Lord Arncliffe followed your researches carefully," she explained. "I compiled a small record of them. How delighted he would have been to talk to you! And now he is dead, and you have come too late to save him! For you could have saved him, Dr. Lester. I believe now he was poisoned. I am sure of it."

"It is a difficult matter of which to speak so confidently. I may have been mistaken, and I gather that the suspicion in your mind was created only by my words."

"It is hard to make things clear; but the Earl believed that he was being poisoned. He often hinted at it, especially at late. I fancied he was giving way to the vagaries of old age, though, indeed, his fine intellect might have shown me the folly of such a doubt. I assure you, Dr. Lester, the strongly suspected, I may almost say he knew, that some one was killing him. Oh! why did I not listen to him? Even I might have helped a little bit to thwart a murderous design."

There was no denying the girl's implicit faith. Her sorrowful eyes looked up into the starlit sky. Her grief was such that tears could not be checked.

"That is a very serious statement to make, Miss Holt. Can you help my judgment by any specific fact? In a word, do you yourself suspect anybody?"

Lester felt that she would be calmer if recalled to the direct issue of the tragedy. Nor was he unprepared for her answer.

"Suspect? I? You saw me today in the park, reading some stupid book in the very hour when Lord Arncliffe was dying. Would I have been there if I were suspicious of a poisoner? I am in a maze, Dr. Lester, a maze of terror. I am only certain of one dreadful thing: some loathsome creature has killed my friend!"

They were walking slowly along a road bordered on one hand by the dense belt of fir-trees which guarded the park, and on the other, by a steep bank covered with brambles and hazel-bushes. Lester was not aware that a foot-path traversed its higher ground—it was indeed the ancient track of moss-trooping days superseded by a graded highway. But a man who has led expeditions through the forests and swamps of the Congo, should possess hearing trained to a marvelous degree where lurking foe or prowling beast is concerned. A slight rustle of grass on the elevated path conveyed a warning, the first time—there was no doubt the second.

"Pardon me one moment," said he to his companion. Then he sprang lightly up the bank, and peered through a clump of nut-trees. Edith Holt heard a slight cry of dismay as Lester confronted the blinking form of the enterprising Lizzy.

"Why are you trying to overhear our conversation?" he demanded sternly.

"Please sir, I wasn't," she stammered, alternately blushing and paling.

"If you are not a spy, you should not behave like one. Which way are you going?"

"Back to the village, sir."

The words had scarcely left her lips before Lizzy realized her error. She had practically admitted her eavesdropping tactics. Her face turned as she turned and hurried away. But she was exceedingly angry, and, with a queer, feline spite, she longed to revenge her humiliation on the fair woman who had not even seen her.

"Who is she, I'd like to know?" snorted the kitchen-maid. "With all her fine airs an' her long words, she's only a servant like me."

(To be continued.)

L. R. Ross, I. C. R. terminal agent, returned from Fredericton last night. He had been up river with the yachtsmen.

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Travellers Guide

TRAINS DEPART FROM ST. JOHN.

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

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

7.45 a. m.—Mixed for Moncton, etc.

8.00 a. m.—Suburban for Westford, etc.

11.00 a. m.—Express for Pt. du Chene, Halifax, Quebec, Montreal, (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

11.45 a. m.—Express for Pt. du Chene, Picton and Halifax.

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

1.15 p. m.—Suburban for Hampton, etc. (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

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

8.15 p. m.—Express for Sussex, etc. (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

8.40 p. m.—Express for Montreal and Ottawa, Fredericton and St. Andrews.

8.55 p. m.—Express for Boston, etc.

9.10 p. m.—Express for Fredericton, etc.

9.15 p. m.—Suburban for Hampton, etc.

9.30 p. m.—Express for Quebec and Moncton, etc.

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

11.25 p. m.—Express for Picton, Halifax and Sydney.

TRAINS ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN.

6.25 a. m.—Express from Sydney and Halifax, etc.

7.45 a. m.—Express from Hampton, etc.

7.50 a. m.—Suburban from Westford, etc.

8.55 a. m.—Express from Fredericton, etc.

9.00 a. m.—Express from Sussex, etc. (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

10.40 a. m.—Express from Boston, etc. (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

11.20 a. m.—Express from Montreal, Fredericton, etc.

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

12.50 p. m.—Express from Montreal, Quebec, Pt. du Chene, etc. (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

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

3.30 p. m.—Suburban from Hampton, etc.

4.30 p. m.—Mixed from Moncton, etc.

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

8.15 p. m.—Express from Halifax, Picton, Campbellton, (Connecticut & Ocean Limited, from Montreal).

9.30 p. m.—Express from Moncton, etc.

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

11.00 p. m.—Express from Boston, etc. (Connecticut & Ocean Limited).

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 Majestic, for Fredericton and intermediate landings, daily, Sunday excepted.

9.00 a. m.—Hampton, for Hampton, Chatham, 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—Chaplain, for the Belleisle.

2.00 p. m.—Hampton, for Hampton, Moncton and Sydney.

5.00 p. m.—Elaine, for Queensdown and intermediate landings, Saturday 5.00 p. m. for Gagetown.

5.30 p. m.—Majestic for Hampton and intermediate landings, on Saturdays.

ARRIVALS.

8.00 a. m.—Majestic, from Hampstead every Monday.

9.00 a. m.—Hampton, from Hampton.

10.00 a. m.—Elaine, from Wickham daily.

1.20 p. m.—Crystal Stream, from the Washademoak, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

12.30 p. m.—Chaplain, from Belleisle, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

3.30 p. m.—Victoria or Majestic, 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 Princess street, east side, to Robins mart 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 11.10 p. m. On Saturday evenings only, boat leaves west side at 11.45 and St. John at 12.

The E. Rose, from Indiantown to Milford and back trips on Saturdays (Sunday excepted), from 6.15 a. m. till 10 p. m. and Saturdays till 10.40 p. m. On Sunday from 8 a. m. till 9 p. m.

The Maggie Miller between Millville, Summersville, 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 Summersville at 6.20, 7.45, and 10.45 a. m. and 3.00 and 5.30 p. m.

Leaves Millville at 6.45 and 9.30 a. m. and 2.00, 4.00 and 6.0 p. m.

Boat will leave Millville every Monday morning at 6.00 o'clock.

SATURDAY.

Leaves Baywater at 5.30, 7.00 and 10.30 a. m., and 2.45, 4.45, and 7.45 p. m.

Leaves Summersville at 5.50, 7.20, and 10.45 a. m., and 4.00, 6.00 and 8.00 p. m.

Leaves Millville at 6.15 and 9.45 and 9.30 a. m. and 2.00, 5.00 and 7.00 p. m.

SUNDAY.

Leaves Millville 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 Summersville 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 Lube, Eastport, Portland and Boston. For Boston direct on Tuesdays and Saturdays at 6.30 p. m.

Returning from Boston via Portland, Eastport and Lube, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 1 p. m. From Boston direct Mondays and Thursdays at 12 noon.

Steamer Prince Rupert for Digby leaves here weekly at 7.45 a. m. connections for Halifax and Yarmouth; returning arrives about 4.30 p. m.

Steamer Seniac sails Thursday evenings at 6 o'clock from Reid's Point wharf, for Yarmouth, Barrington, Sheburne, Rockport, Laverpool, 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 I. C. R. pier.

Steamer Brunswick, for Spencer's Island, Canning, Wolfville, etc., leaves Tuesday 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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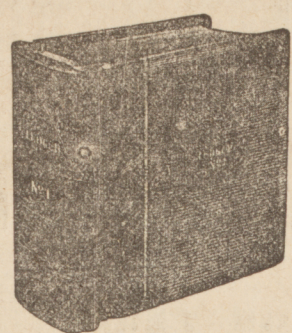
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