

THE ARNCLIFFE PUZZLE,

BY
GORDON
HOLMES

Author of "A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE."

(Continued.)

"So that is what my one-time friend think of me," cried Edith, bitterly. "I am beginning now to discover that an open enemy is less to be feared."

Mrs. Ainger was an honest, motherly soul at heart. Secretly she felt somewhat ashamed of herself.

"Oh, well," she answered, the more harshly because of an uneasy consciousness that her behavior was not altogether generous, "after all, you have only yourself to blame. People see nothing strange in Lord Arncliffe's giving three hundred pounds to his intended heiress; but, in view of your professed ignorance of the contents of his will, they do think it strange that you should ask for such a sum. I tell you frankly there are very strong hints that you did not obtain that money from Lord Arncliffe's bankers legitimately."

"So, Mrs. Ainger, I am already suspected of forgery: I presume I shall be charged with murder next."

"There are more unlikely things," snapped Mrs. Ainger. The mention of murder brought to mind the attack on her husband, and with it all her bitter suspicions. "I know well enough that you did not strike the actual blow at my husband; but it simply comes to this, Miss Holt, that since you have so easily won three hundred pounds for yourself, you must have wanted it for somebody else. And," she concluded grimly, "I have not been a solicitor's wife for nearly forty years without being aware that the 'somebody else' is always a man where a woman is concerned."

"Well," answered Edith, with a coolness which might have warned her adversary, "let us assume that it was a man."

"Then," came the retort, in a voice which with anger and rendered stident by what was deemed the invincible logic of the situation, "it was that man who nearly murdered my poor husband!"

Edith, one of the gentlest creatures breathing, could not brook the insult conveyed by that unjust taunt. She would cower and flinch like any timid girl in the minor straits of life, but in her veins flowed the bluest blood of France, and this blow from the hand of a friend was not to be endured.

Had Mrs. Ainger been gifted with greater acumen than that due to the semi-legal training she boasted, she could not have failed to see and wonder at the calm courage which sparkled in this girl's eyes and gave unwonted firmness to her lips.

"You have told me what I wanted to know. Now you may go!"

The young marquise pointed imperiously to the door. The woman of a lower order found naught else to say. Indeed, she was fit to choke with rage, and her passion was fanned by the knowledge that she had met her mistress. She went out, quivering with passion, yet abashed.

Edith did not weep nor wring her hands impotently. She walked slowly to the window and looked out across the smiling park, all radiant in sunshine. "What is this horror that has come into my life?" she asked herself. "Who did kill Lord Arncliffe, and who was the person to gain by the naming of my poor friend, that mistaken woman's husband?"

These two questions were occupying others in Arncliffe Hall, and the common belief was that to answer one would be the puzzle.

CHAPTER XI.

May Mannering's Love Idyll

May Mannering was standing a little back from the bend in the road leading from the village to the Hall. She was evidently waiting for some one, and the peevish tapping of her foot suggested that the some one was not punctual.

The girl was weary of these secret meetings at twilight. They were well enough in the days of preliminary courtship but now Harry Warren and she were definitely engaged, she naturally wished to exhibit him at her chariot wheels. It was true he had enjoined her to keep the engagement secret, to answer both. Was it so? That was giving more or less specious reasons for his wish. And May obeyed him, in so far that she imparted the news to her girl friends under a strict pledge of silence. It was, in fact, a secret which most of the village maids in turn had promised not to tell.

Possible objections from Lord Arncliffe had hitherto provided Warren with an excuse. But the death of the old peer

in no way altered matters. Indeed, in the few hurried interviews that had taken place between them, Warren had insisted on the necessity for concealment more strongly than ever. The girl was shrewd enough to realize that her lover, if his intentions were good, would only be too proud to proclaim her as his promised wife, but she allowed herself to be tricked—knowing she was tricked—by time and shuffling evasion, after the manner of woman yesterday, today, and to-morrow.

She looked at her watch, first with a brief glance at the face, and then, lingeringly, at the back, the all too sensitive gold case being blatant with turquoise forget-me-nots. It was a gift from Harry, and who belonged to a class to which charms and tokens are an essential part of true love; the breaking of a expensive and infallible method of ensuring constancy; which regard any ring as incomplete unless there be "Mizpah" upon it—May, then, looked on those forget-me-nots as among the beautiful things of the world.

Half an hour later! Twice he had failed her in the last week, and not another minute would she wait. And so, of course, she waited on, vowing to herself, as she had vowed before, that she would endure such treatment no longer.

From the direction of the Hall there came a faint thudding of horse's hoofs. He was coming at last! The expression of mortification and anger left her face, giving place to the pout of the offended maiden who is not unwilling to be coaxed and petted into good temper again. She went forward a little, snatching with her quizzically downcast eyes. The hoof-beats sounded nearer, until, with a jerk, the horse was pulled up almost at her feet.

"Why, Miss May," said the voice of Wilson the groom, "I almost ran over you!"

"Is that you, Wilson? I was just taking a stroll, and I suppose my wits were wool-gathering, for I never heard you coming. By the way, you did not come to tell me the news as you promised you would."

"I came twice, miss," protested Wilson, "but you were out both times. Anyway, there isn't much news. I suppose you heard all about the inquest, and Lord Arncliffe's nephew turning up from America?"

"Oh, yes, I did hear about that."

"And of course," continued Wilson, "you heard how old Mr. Ainger was nearly murdered?"

"Yes, that is the sort of thing everybody hears. But how are affairs going generally? I suppose that stuck-up Miss Holt is putting on airs now she has come into such heaps of money?"

"Well, miss," answered Wilson, "people are saying some very queer things about her, and that detestable chap from London watches her like a cat watches a mouse. Still, I must say the young lady is civil enough to all of us, though she doesn't seem quite so thick with Mr. Warren lately."

"Bless you, miss," said Wilson, dismounting, "any one with half an eye can see that the agent is sweet on her. It is my belief they were secretly engaged, for she used to be like honey to him, with her 'Please, Harry,' and 'Thank you, Harry.' I daresay, now she's got all this news, she thinks she can look a bit higher. It's an easy matter to become 'Miss Holt' or 'your grace' when you can put your hand on nigh a million."

Miss Mannering tossed her head. "Looking higher, indeed!" retorted she, scornfully, crying to keep the quiver of rage from her voice. "I don't think Mr. Warren would look at her, with her pale face and miming airs, for all her money."

"Don't you believe it, miss," said Wilson. "Any one at the Hall can tell you he has been hanging after her for a long time. I don't say it wasn't because he felt pretty sure she would get a bit of a legacy from the old man. Nobody," with a sentimental leer, "could prefer Miss Holt to you. But he's a bad egg, as Mr. Harry, and it has made my blood boil many a time to think of the way he has been deceiving you."

All May Mannering's doubts came back to her, intensified a hundred-fold as she listened to Wilson. Warren's desire for secrecy, his continual excuses, pointed unmeaningly to wild deceit. Nevertheless, she clung to the hope that he might be able to explain matters.

"I cannot allow you to speak of Mr. Warren in that way," she protested loftily. "You must know that he and I are engaged to be married, though it has not been made public."

"Yes, miss, I know it, and very sorry I am. Why, if you were to ask Mary Brown or Betsy Spence at this moment, they'd tell you they were engaged to him too. And I should not be surprised if Polly Rennie believed the same story. I

know his game—must keep it a secret," says he. And so the silly lassie took down on the honest chaps who would make them good husbands, because they think the agent, with his fine clothes and his mixing with the gentry, is going to make ladies of them—~~is it him?~~

May began to sob, not softly, as she had always read a young lady should do when faced with proofs of her lover's perfidy, but with the primeval vigor of the country maid. She was, indeed, a little higher in the social scale of the village than the rivals Wilson had suggested, having spent a few years with an aunt in one of the big cities, and so acquired some knowledge of the piano and a few similar affectations of the higher life. But she knew, in her heart that Harry Warren was immeasurably above her in station. And, if he were capable of playing fast and loose with other girls in the village, it might well be that he was only amusing himself with her.

"Don't cry, Miss May. Don't cry on account of a brute like that!" pleaded Wilson. "If you'd only let a poor fellow like me care for you, there should never a tear come into those pretty eyes again!"

May peeped through her fingers at him in blank amazement. Harry a groom, after she had flaunted her conquest of the agent in the faces of her girl friends! She had grown to regard herself as somebody quite superior, occupying a niche in the village Pantheon only just inferior to that of the daughters of the vicar, or the doctor. Yet, in sober reality, Wilson was not so much beneath her, and had there been no Harry Warren he might have proved acceptable enough, for he was stalwart, of limb, and not without good looks. May had all the innate coquetry of the village belle. She was not disposed to resent admiration so potently honest, even though the admirer might be inferior. Therefore, there was rather timidity than rebuke in the movement with which she drew away from him.

"Yes, miss, me; but don't call me 'Wilson.' Call me 'Bob,' won't you?"

"Well, then, 'Bob,'" murmured Miss Mannering, with a bewildering if tearful smile. Her fury at Harry Warren's perfidy did not prevent her from being willing to do a little heart-breaking on her own account.

"Yes, me!" repeated Wilson, earnestly. "I know I am only a groom, and no match for you, but I've got a bit of money laid by, and it mightn't be long before I could give you as many silks and satins as Mr. Harry Warren. Old Bill Higgs, the bookmaker at Alnwick, could tell a tale or two if he chose, and Master Harry may find himself in 'Queer Street' before long."

Wilson had drawn nearer to the girl, and now he held her right hand clasped tightly in his own. May did not resent this. She pretended to herself that she was sorry for the poor fellow, when, as a matter of fact, she felt no emotion save gratified vanity. And so she let him pour forth his impassioned words, standing with shyly averted head the while.

It was at this interesting stage of affairs that a scornful laugh caused them to fly apart guiltily.

Harry Warren, walking on the grass-grown path, had come upon them unheeded; and it was he who had given that contemptuous guffaw as he passed them, without pausing in his stride.

"Sorry to have interrupted such a pretty little scene," he flung back over his shoulder.

May pushed Wilson from her with an angry gesture. "Go!" she cried impatiently, "go away, or I shall never speak to you again—yes, yes, I will see you to-morrow, but go now!" And without giving him time to reply she began to run after Harry's rapidly disappearing figure.

"Harry," she cried, "oh, Harry! Do stop! Harry!"

Warren laughed again. But he did not moderate his pace. May was fully aware that according to all the canons which govern these matters she ought to sink fainting by the roadside, and recover consciousness to find Harry bending over her in a frenzy of alarm, frantically beseeching her to forgive him; but she had doubts as to the efficacy of this method in real life, and preferred, therefore, to depend on her running powers.

"Oh, Harry!" she said, catching him at last, and clasping his arm between her two hands. "How can you be so unkind?"

"Unkind?" retorted Harry, sneeringly. "I think it was kindness itself not to interrupt you. When a gentleman comes to meet a girl, and finds her willing away the time by expounding with a groom, he naturally concludes his presence is not required."

"Spooning!" repeated May, reproachfully. "How can you say such a thing to me, Harry?"

There was a quiver in her voice that foreshadowed tears, but Warren seemed hardly amenable to that form of persuasion.

"If you think you can fool me by turning on the waterworks," he said with brutal frankness, "you are very much mistaken. I am not blind. Why, the fellow had hold of your hand!"

"I know," said May, with hurt dignity, "but it was only just the moment you came up, and the man's manner seemed so strange that I was frightened. I really do believe he had been drinking."

"Wilson is a teetotaler," said Warren, curtly. May's comment was a somewhat unfortunate allusion to his standpoint.

"Well, then, the poor fellow must be wrong in his head. Why, with a little laugh, as if at the irresistible humor of recollection, 'he asked me to marry him!'"

"Well," shortly, "why don't you?"

"If you are joking," she said stiffly, "I think it very bad taste. A groom! Besides, he knows very well that I am engaged to you."

"Were," he corrected. The girl's healthy red cheeks whitened and she stopped. "Harry," she said tremulously, and now there was no art in the quiver of her voice, "what does all this mean? You insisted upon our engagement being kept a secret, and you have made the most paltry excuses. Now you talk of our engagement being at an end. But I will not allow you to make the impertinence of that man Wilson the excuse. Why don't you tell the truth, and say you are hankering after Miss Holt?"

Warren was not entirely sorry that May herself had broached the subject. He imagined it would serve to smooth the way for him.

"Look here, May," he said, with a sudden access of sentiment not wholly assumed, "there is no girl in all the world I think fit to wipe your shoes. And as long as I live, I shall never love any other woman. But I am in the very deuce of a hole, and there is nothing excepting a marriage with Edith Holt that will get me out of it. Of course, dear, it need not make any real difference to us."

May Mannering started as though a snake had bitten her.

"Thank you, Mr. Warren, for your good opinion of me," she almost screamed, "I am not the sort of person to run after other people's husbands, and when after other people's husbands, you won't be troubled by me. But, before that time comes, there are some letters for Miss Holt to see which I think will interest her. I won't be thrown aside like an old glove for nothing."

Warren grew livid with fury. "By gad, if you do—," he began hoarsely.

"Well, and what if I do, Mr. Warren?" mocked the girl. She was on the verge of hysterics and ready to defy him utterly. Warren saw he had made a mistake. He changed his tactics. "Forgive me," he said, dropping his voice to what he meant to sound like a tender whisper.

"I'm so worried that I don't know half I am saying. But there, little girl, don't think I could ever give you up under any circumstances. If I cannot marry you, I can at least put a bullet through my head and end it all."

(To be continued.)

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WEDDINGS

Wetmore-Wetmore.

A large number of relatives and friends assembled on Thursday afternoon in the chapel of All-Saints, Clifton, which was tastefully adorned for the festive occasion, to witness the nuptials of Boyd A. Wetmore, of Upper New Horton, and Elsie A. Wetmore, one of Clifton's most popular and charming young ladies. The ceremony was performed by Rev. H. S. Wainwright, rector.

The happy pair, after luncheon at the house of the bride's mother, left for their new home amid the most earnest wishes of their numerous friends for their future happiness and welfare.

Lomax-Cogswell.

Miss Susie Cogswell, of Lepreau, was married Thursday evening at the residence of Thomas Clark, Carleton, to Archibald Lomax by Rev. F. S. Bamford. The bride, who wore white crepe de chine, with hat to match, was attended by Miss Jennie Lomax, sister of the groom. She also wore white. Walter R. McPherson supported the groom. After the ceremony, supper was served to the guests, and dancing was enjoyed. Mr. and Mrs. Lomax will reside in Lepreau.

The annual inspection of the 62nd Fusiliers will commence at 2.30 o'clock today on the Barrack green, the inspection to be made by Lord Aylmer. This evening, at the Union Club, his lordship will be entertained by Lieut.-Colonel M. B. Edwards and regimental officers. Tomorrow the regiment will attend divine service in Trinity church, and at some point along the route Lord Aylmer will be saluted by the battalion.

Mr. Myles Takes Charge

Wednesday, Aug. 1

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Men's 12c. Black Cotton Hose, 3 pairs for	25c
Men's 25c. Balbriggan Shirts and Drawers	19c
Men's \$1 Penman Unshrinkable Shirts and Drawers,	59c
Men's 75c. Soft Bosom Shirts, Fancy Stripes,	38c
Men's \$1 Pleated Front Shirts,	58c
Men's Black Bib Overalls,	48c
Men's 35c. Cashmere Hose,	19c
Men's \$1 Nightshirts, White Duck,	48c
Men's 35c. Neckties,	19c
Men's 65c. Working Duck Shirts, Light or Dark Stripe,	38c
Men's \$1.25 Canadian Tweed Pants	98c
Men's \$3 English Hair Line Pants,	\$1.98
Men's \$3 Fancy Striped Oxfords,	1.98
Men's \$13 Hewson Suits,	9.98
Men's \$12 English Black Clay Worsted Suits	9.98
Men's \$10 Canadian Tweed Suits,	7.48
Men's \$12 Long Shower-proof Overcoats. Fancy Stripe,	8.48
Men's \$8 Long Shower-proof Overcoats, Dark Grey,	6.48
Men's \$10 Short Overcoats,	7.48

Boys' \$3 Two-piece Suits,	1.98
Boys' \$5 Three-piece Suits,	3.48

Ladies' \$20 Costumes,	12.00
Ladies' \$17 Costumes, Mixed Tweed	10.00
Ladies' \$12 and \$15 Costumes,	7.98
Ladies' \$4.50 White Duck Suits	2.98
Ladies' \$3 White Duck Skirts,	1.58
Ladies' \$9.50 Short, Loose Box Coats, Covert Cloth,	5.98
Ladies' \$9.50 Short, Tight Fitting Coats, Covert Cloth,	5.98
Ladies' Cloth Skirts,	\$1.98 to 6.00
Ladies' \$3.75 Skirts, Black, Blue, Brown and Green Lustre,	2.98
Ladies' \$2.75 All Wool Golf Vests,	1.98
Ladies' Sateen Underskirts, from	78c. to 2.50
Ladies' 35c. Wash Collars,	25c
Small Assortment Ladies' Last Season's Costumes, worth \$12 to \$18.	4.48

Up-to-date Hats in Millinery Department worth \$1.50 to \$3, Now 48c. and 98c

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