The Holladay Case

A Mystery Of Two Continents

By BURTON E. STEVENSON

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CHAPTER X.

MR. ROYCE grasped the arms of his chair convulsively, and remained for a moment speechless under the shock. Then he swung around toward me.

"Come here, Lester," he said hoarsely. "I needed you once before, and I need you now. This touches me so closely I can't think consecutively. You will help, won't you?"

There was an appeal in his face which showed his sudden weakness—an appeal there was no resisting, even had I not myself been deeply interested in the case.

"Gladly," I answered from the depths of my heart, seeing how overwrought he was. "I'll help to the very limit of my power, Mr. Royce."

He sank back into his chair again and breathed a long sigh.

"I knew you would," he said. "Get the story from Thompson, will you?"

I brought a chair and sat down by the old butler.

"You have been in Mr. Holladay's family a great many years, haven't you, Mr. Thompson?" I asked to give him opportunity to compose himself.

"Yes, a great many years, sir—nearly forty, I should say."

"Before Miss Holladay's birth, then?"

"Oh, yes, sir; long before. Just before his marriage Mr. Holladay bought the Fifth avenue house he lived in ever since, and I was employed then, sir, as an underservant."

"Mr. Holladay and his wife were very happy together, weren't they?" I questioned.

"Very happy; yes, sir. They were just like lovers, sir, until her death. They seemed just made for each other, sir," and the trite old saying gathered a new dignity as he uttered it.

I paused a moment to consider. This, certainly, seemed to discredit the theory that Holladay had ever had a liaison with any other woman, and yet what other theory was tenable?

"There was nothing to mar their happiness that you know of? Of course," I added, "you understand, Thompson, that I'm not asking these questions from idle curiosity, but to get to the bottom of this mystery if possible."

"I understand, sir," he nodded. "No, there was nothing to mar their happiness—except one thing."

"And what was that?"

"Why, they had no children, sir, for fifteen years and more. After Miss Frances came, of course that was all changed."

"She was born abroad?"

"Yes, sir; in France. I don't just know the town."

"But you know the date of her birth?"

"Oh, yes, sir—the 10th of June, 1876. We always celebrated it."

"Mr. Holladay was with his wife at the time?"

"Yes, sir. He and his wife had been abroad nearly a year. His health had broken down, and the doctor made him take a long vacation. He came home a few months later, but Mrs. Holladay stayed on. She didn't get strong again, some way. She stayed nearly four years, and he went over every few months to spend a week with her, and at last she came home to die, bringing her child with her. That was the first time any of us ever saw Miss Frances."

"Mr. Holladay thought a great deal of her?"

"You may well say so, sir. She took his wife's place," said the old man simply.

"And she thought a great deal of him?"

"More than that, sir. She fairly worshiped him. She was always at the door to meet him; always dined with him; they almost always spent their evenings together. She didn't care much for society. I've often heard her tell him that she'd much rather just stay at home with him. It was he who rather insisted on her going out, for he was proud of her, as he'd a right to be."

"Yes," I said, for all this fitted in exactly with what I had always heard about the family. "There were no other relatives, were there?"

"None at all, sir. Both Mr. Holladay and his wife were only children. Their parents, of course, have been dead for years."

"Nor any intimate friends?"

"None I'd call intimate, sir. Miss Frances had some school friends, but she was always—well—reserved, sir."

"Yes," I nodded again. "And now," I added, "tell me, as fully as you can, what has happened within the last three weeks."

"Well, sir," he began slowly, "after her father's death she seemed quite distracted for awhile—wandered about the house, sat in the library of evenings, ate scarcely anything. Then Mr. Royce got to coming to the house, and she brightened up, and we all hoped she'd soon be all right again. Then she seemed to get worse of a sudden and sent us all away to get Belair ready. I got the place in order, sir, and telegraphed her that we were ready. She answered that she'd come in a few days. Ten days ago the rest of the servants came, and I looked for her every day, but she didn't come. I telegraphed her again, but she didn't answer, and finally I got so uneasy, sir, I couldn't rest, and came back to the city to see what was the matter. I got here early this morning and went right to the house. Thomas, the second butler, had been left in charge, and he told me that Miss Frances and her maid her started for Belair the same day the servants did. That's all I know."

"Then she's been gone ten days?" I questioned.

"Ten days; yes, sir."

Ten days! What might not have happened in that time! Dr. Jenkinson's theory of dementia recurred to me, and I was more than ever inclined to credit it. How else explain this flight? I could see from Mr. Royce's face how absolutely nonplused he was.

"Well," I said at last, for want of something better, "we'll go with you to the house and see the man in charge there. Perhaps he can tell us something more."

But he could tell us very little. Ten days before a carriage had driven up to the door. Miss Holladay and her maid had entered it and been driven away. The carriage had been called, he thought, from some neighboring stable, as the family coachman had been sent away with the other servants. They had driven down the avenue toward Thirty-fourth street, where he supposed they were going to the Long Island station. We looked through the house; it was in perfect order. Miss Holladay's rooms were just as she would naturally have left them. Her father's rooms, too, were evidently undisturbed.

"Here's one thing," I said, "that might help," and I picked up a photograph from the mantel. "You won't mind my using it?"

Mr. Royce took it with trembling hand and gazed at it for a moment—at the dark eyes, the earnest mouth. Then he handed it back to me.

"No," he answered, "not if it will really help. We must use every means we can. Only"—

"I won't use it unless I absolutely have to," I assured him. "And when I'm done with it I'll destroy it."

"Very well," he assented, and I put it in my pocket.

There was nothing more to be discovered there, and we went away, after warning the two men to say not a word to any one concerning their mistress' disappearance.

Plainly the first thing to be done was to find the coachman who had driven Miss Holladay and her maid away from the house, and with this end in view we visited all the stables in the neighborhood, but from none of them had a carriage been ordered by her. Had she ordered it herself from a stable in some distant portion of the city for the purpose of concealing her whereabouts, or had it been ordered for her by her maid, and was she really the victim of foul play? I put this question to Mr. Royce, but he seemed quite unable to reach a conclusion. As for myself, I was certain that she had gone away of her own accord and had deliberately planned her disappearance. Why? Well, I began to suspect that we had not yet really touched the bottom of the mystery.

We drove back to the office and found Mr. Graham there. I related to him the circumstances of our search and submitted to him and to our junior one question for immediate settlement.

"At the best, it's a delicate case," I pointed out. "Miss Holladay has plainly laid her plans very carefully to prevent us following her. It may be difficult to prove that she has not gone away entirely of her own accord. She certainly has a perfect right to go wherever she wishes without consulting us. Have we the right to follow her against her evident desire?"

For a moment Mr. Graham did not answer, but sat tapping his desk with that deep line of perplexity between his eyebrows. Then he nodded emphatically.

"It's our duty to follow her and find her," he said. "It's perfectly evident to me that no girl in her right mind would act as she has done. She had no reason whatever for deceiving us—for running away. We wouldn't have interfered with her. Jenkinson's right—she's suffering with dementia. We must see that she receives proper medical treatment."

"It might not be dementia," I suggested, "so much as undue influence—on the part of the new maid, perhaps."

"Then it's our duty to rescue her from that influence," rejoined Mr. Graham, "and restore her to her normal mentality."

"Even if we offend her?"

"We can't stop to think of that. Besides, she won't be offended when she comes to herself. The question is how to find her most speedily."

"The police, probably, could do it most speedily," I said, "but since she can be in no immediate danger of any kind I rather doubt whether it would be wise to call in the police. Miss Holladay would very properly resent any more publicity"—

"But," objected Mr. Graham, "if we don't call in the police, how are we to find her? I recognize, of course, how undesirable it is that she should be subjected to any further notoriety, but is there any other way?"

I glanced at Mr. Royce and saw that he was seemingly sunk in apathy.

"If I could be excused from the office for a few days, sir," I began hesitatingly, "I might be able to find some trace of her. If I'm unsuccessful, we might then call in the authorities."

Mr. Royce brightened up for a moment.

"That's it," he said. "Let Lester look into it."

"Very well," assented Mr. Graham. "I agree to that. Of course any expense you may incur will be borne by the office."

"Thank you, sir," and I rose with fast beating heart, for the adventure appealed to me strongly. "I'll begin at once then. I should like assistance in one thing. Could you let me have three or four clerks to visit the various stables of the city? It would be best, I think, to use our own people."

"Certainly," assented our senior instantly. "I'll call them in and we can give them their instructions at once."

So four clerks were summoned, and each was given a district of the city. Their instructions were to find from which stable Miss Holladay had ordered a carriage on the morning of Thursday, April 3. They were to report at the office every day, noon and evening, until the search was finished. They started away at once, and I turned to follow them, when my eye was caught by the expression of our junior's face.

"Mr. Royce is ill, sir!" I cried. "Look at him!"

He was leaning forward heavily, his face drawn and livid, his eyes set, his hands plucking at the arms of his chair. We sprang to him and led him to a couch. I bathed his hands and face in cold water, while Mr. Graham hurriedly summoned a physician. The doctor soon arrived and diagnosed the case at a glance.

"Nervous breakdown," he said tersely. "You lawyers drive yourselves too hard. It's a wonder to me you don't all drop over. We'll have to look out or this will end in brain fever."

He poured out a stimulant, which the sick man swallowed without protest. He seemed stronger in a few moments and began talking incoherently to himself. We got him down to the doctor's carriage and drove rapidly to his lodgings, where we put him to bed without delay.

"I think he'll pull through," observed the doctor after watching him for awhile. "I'll get a couple of nurses, and we'll give him every chance. Has he any relatives here in New York?"

"No; his relatives are all in Ohio. Had they better be notified?"

"Oh, I think not—not unless he gets worse. He seems to be naturally strong. I suppose he's been worrying about something?"

"Yes," I said. "He has been greatly worried by one of his cases."

"Of course," he nodded. "If the human race had sense enough to stop worrying there'd be mighty little work for us doctors."

"I'd like to call Dr. Jenkinson into the case," I said. "He knows Mr. Royce and may be of help."

"Certainly. I'll be glad to consult with Dr. Jenkinson."

So Jenkinson was called and confirmed the diagnosis. He understood, of course, the cause of Mr. Royce's breakdown and turned to me when the consultation was ended and his colleague had taken his departure.

"Mr. Lester," he said, "I advise you to go home and get some rest. Put this case out of your mind or you'll be right where Mr. Royce is. He had some more bad news, I suppose?"

I told him of Miss Holladay's disappearance. He pondered over it a moment with grave face.

"This strengthens my belief that she is suffering with dementia," he said.

We sprang to him and led him to a couch.

"Sudden aversion to relatives and friends is one of its most common symptoms. Of course she must be found."

"I'm going to find her," I assured him, with perhaps a little more confidence than I really felt.

"Well, remember to call on me if I can help you. But, first of all, go home and sleep for ten hours—twelve, if you can. Mind, no work before that—no building of theories. You'll be so much the fresher tomorrow."

I recognized the wisdom of this advice, but I had one thing to do first. I took a cab and drove to the nearest telegraph office. There I sent an imperative message to Brooks, the Holladay coachman, telling him to return to New York by the first train and report to me at the office. That done, I gave the driver my address and settled back in the seat.

No building of theories, Jenkinson had said; yet it was difficult to keep the brain idle. Where was Frances Holladay? Why had she fled? Was she really mentally deranged? Had the weight of the secret proved too great for her? Or had she merely fallen under the influence of the woman who was guilty? Supposing she was insane, what should we do with her when we found her? How could we control her? And, supposing she were not insane, what legal right had we to interfere with her? These and a hundred other questions crowded upon me till thought failed and I lay back confused, indifferent.

"Here we are, sir," said the driver, jumping down from his seat and jerking open the door.

I paid him and went stumbling up the steps. I have no doubt he was grinning behind me. As I fumbled with my key some one opened the door from the inside.

"Why, Mistair Lester!" exclaimed Martigny's voice. "What is it? You have no illness, I hope!"

"No," I murmured, "I'm just dead tired," and I started blindly for the stair.

"Let me assist you," and he took my arm and helped me up, then went on ahead, opened my door and lighted the gas.

"Thanks," I said as I dropped into a chair.

He sat quietly down opposite me, and, weary as I was, I was conscious of his keen eyes upon me.

"We heard from Miss Holladay this morning," I remarked, unconsciously answering their question.

He did not reply for a moment, but I had closed my eyes again, and I was too tired to open them and look at him.

"Ah!" he said in a voice a little hoarse. "And she is well?"

"No. She's disappeared."

"You mean"—

"I mean she's run away," I said, waking up a little.

"And she has informed you"—

"Oh, no. We've just found it out. She's been gone ten days."

"And you are going to search for her?" he questioned carelessly, after another pause.

"Yes. I'll begin in the morning."

Again there was a moment's silence.

"Ah!" he said, with a curious intensity. "Ah!"

Then he arose and left me to tumble incontinently into bed.

CHAPTER XI.

TIRED nature asserted herself and took the full twelve hours, but I felt like another man when I left the house next morning, and I was eager to grapple anew with the mystery. I found two reports awaiting me at the office. Mr. Royce had passed a good night and was better; the clerks who had spent the afternoon before in visiting the stables had as yet discovered nothing, and were continuing their search.

I looked up a time card of the Long Island railroad and found that Miss Holladay's coachman could not reach the city until 9:30; so I put on my hat again, sought a secluded table at Wallack's, and over a cigar and stein of bock drew up a resume of the case—to clear the atmosphere, as it were. It ran something like this:

March 13, Thursday.—Holladay found murdered; daughter drives to Washington square.
March 14, Friday.—Coroner's inquest; Miss Holladay released; mysterious note received.
March 15, Sunday.—Holladay buried.
March 18, Tuesday.—Will opened and probated.
March 23, Friday.—Miss Holladay returns from drive, bringing new maid with her and discharges old one.
March 29, Saturday.—Gives orders to open summer house.
April 1, Tuesday.—Asks for $100,000.
April 2, Wednesday.—Gets it.
April 3, Thursday.—Leaves home, ostensibly for Belair, in company with new maid.
April 14, Monday.—Butler reports her disappearance; Royce taken ill; I begin my search.

There I stopped. The last entry brought me up to date. There was nothing more to add. But it seemed impossible that all the developments of this mystery should have taken only a month. For years, as it seemed to me, I had thought of nothing else.

I looked over the schedule again carefully. There was only one opening that I could see where it was possible to begin work with the hope of accomplishing anything. That was in the very first entry. Miss Holladay had driven to Washington square; she had, I felt certain, visited her sister; I must discover the lodging of this woman. Perhaps I should also discover Frances Holladay there. In any event, I should have a new point to work from.

The police had been over the ground, I knew. They had exhausted every resource in the effort to locate Mr. Holladay's mysterious visitor and had found not a trace of her. But that fact did not discourage me, for I hoped to start my search with information which the police had not possessed. Brooks, the coachman, should be able to tell me—

Recalled suddenly to remembrance of him, I looked at my watch and saw that it was past his hour. I was pleased to find him awaiting me when I opened the office door three minutes later. I had only a few questions to ask him.

"When your mistress left the carriage the day you drove her to Washington square did you notice which street she took after she left the square?"

"Yes, sir; she went on down West Broadway."

"On which side?"

"Th' left hand side, sir; th' east side."

"She must have crossed the street to get to that side."

"Yes, sir; she did. I noticed pertic'lar, for I thought it funny she shouldn't 've let me drive her on down th' street to wherever she was goin'. It's a dirty place along there, sir."

"Yes, I know. When you drove her out on the 28th—the day she brought back the maid—where did she go?"

"To Washington square again, sir."

"And left you waiting for her?"

"Yes, sir; just th' same."

"And went down the same street?"

"Yes, sir; crossed to th' east side just th' same as th' time before."

"How long was she gone?"

"Over an hour, sir; an hour an' a half, I should say."

"Did you notice anything unusual in her appearance when she came back?"

"No, sir; she was wearin' a heavy veil. She had th' other woman with her, an' she just said 'Home!' in a kind o' hoarse voice as I helped them into th' carriage."

That was all that he could tell me, and yet I felt that it would help me greatly. In the first place, it narrowed my investigations to the district lying to the east of West Broadway, and I knew that the French quarter extended only a block or two in that direction. And, again, it gave me a point to insist on in my inquiries—I knew the date upon which the mysterious woman had left her lodging, or, at least, I knew that it must be one of two dates. The lodging had been vacated, then, either on the 28th of March or the 3d of April. As a last resource I had the photograph. I was ready to begin my search and dismissed Brooks, warning him to say nothing to any one about the mystery.

As I passed out the door to the pavement I happened to glance across the way, and there, in the crowd of brokers who always line the street, I perceived Martigny. He was listening intently to one of the brokers, who was talking earnestly in his ear—telling him how to make his fortune, I suppose—and did not see me. For an instant I was tempted to cross to him and get him out of danger. Then I smiled at the absurdity of the thought. It would take a clever man to fleece Martigny, and I recalled his strong face, his masterful air. He was no fool, no lamb ready for the shears. He was perfectly able to look out for himself—to wield the shears with power and effect, if need be.

I turned west toward Broadway, still, I suppose, thinking of him subconsciously, for a few moments later some irresistible impulse caused me to glance around, and there he was walking after me on the opposite side of the street! Then in a flash I understood. He was following me!

It is difficult to describe the shock that ran through me, that left me numbed and helpless. For an instant I stumbled on, half dazed; then gradually my self control came back and with it a certain fierce joy, a hot exultation. Here at last was something definite, tangible, a clew ready to my hand, if only I were clever enough to follow it up; a ray of light in the darkness. I could feel my cheeks burning and my heart leaping at the thought.

But what had been his part in the affair? For a moment I groped blindly in the dark, but only for a moment. Whatever his share in the tragedy, he had plainly been left behind to watch us; to make sure that we did not follow the fugitives; to warn them in case of danger. I understood now his solicitude for Miss Holladay—"in her I take such an interest!" It was important that he should know the moment we discovered her absence. And he had known; he knew that I was even at this moment commencing the search for her. My cheeks reddened at the thought of my indiscreetness; yet he was a man to command confidence. Who would have suspected him? And an old proverb which he had repeated one evening flashed through my mind.

"Silly is the sheep who to the wolf herself confesses." I had translated it, with that painful literalness characteristic of the beginner. Well, I had been the sheep and silly enough, heaven knows!

I had reached Broadway, and at the corner I paused to look at a display of men's furnishings in a window. Far down the street on the other side, almost lost in the hurrying crowd, Martigny was buying a paper of a newsboy. He shook it out and looked quickly up and down its columns, like a man who is searching for some special item of news. Perhaps he was a speculator; perhaps, after all, I was deceiving myself in imagining that he was following me. I had no proof of it; it was the most natural thing in the world that he should be in this part of the town. I must test the theory before accepting it. It was time I grew wary of theories.

I entered the store and spent ten minutes looking at some neckties. When I came out again Martigny was just getting down from a bootblack's chair across the street. His back was toward me, and I watched him get out his little purse and drop a dime into the bootblack's hand. I went on up Broadway, loitering sometimes, sometimes walking straight ahead; always, away behind me, lost in the crowd, was my pursuer. It could no longer be doubted. He was really following me, though he did it so adroitly, with such consummate cunning, that I should never have seen him, never have suspected him, but for that fortunate intuition at the start.

A hundred plans flashed through my brain. I had this advantage—he could not know that I suspected him. If I could only overmaster him in cunning, wrest his secret from him—and then, as I remembered the strong face, the piercing eyes, the perfect self control, I realized how little possible it was that I could accomplish this. He was my superior in diplomacy and deceit; he would not pause now at any means to assure the success of his plot.

Yes, I could doubt no longer that there was a plot, whose depths I had not before even suspected, and I drew back from the thought with a little shiver. What was the plot? What intricate, dreadful crime was this which he was planning? The murder of the father, then, had been only the first step. The abduction of Frances Holladay was the second. What would the third be? How could we prevent his taking it? Suppose we should be unsuccessful? And, candidly, what chance of success could we have, fighting in the dark against this accomplished scoundrel? He had the threads all in his fingers; he controlled the situation; we were struggling blindly, snarled in a net of mystery from which there seemed no escaping. My imagination clothed him with superhuman attributes. For a moment a wild desire possessed me to turn upon him, to confront him, to accuse him, to confound him with the very certainty of my knowledge, to surprise his secret, to trample him down!

But the frenzy passed. No, he must not discover that I suspected him. I must not yield up that advantage. I might yet surprise him, mislead him, set a trap for him, get him to say more than he wished to say. That battle of wits would come later on—this very night perhaps—but for the moment I could no nothing better than carry out my first plan, yet he must not suspect the direction of my search. I must throw him off the track. Why, this was for all the world just like the penny dreadfuls of my boyhood. And I smiled at the thought that I had become an actor in a drama fitted for a red and yellow cover!

My plan was soon made. I crossed Broadway and turned into Cortlandt

He staggered and seemed to fall.

street, sauntering along it until the elevated loomed ahead; I heard the roar of an approaching train and stopped to purchase some fruit at the corner stand. My pursuer was some distance behind, closely inspecting the bric-a-brac in a peddler's cart. The train rumbled into the station, and, starting as though I had just perceived it, I bounded up the stair, slammed my ticket into the chopper and dashed across the platform. The guard at the rear of the train held the gate open for me for an instant and then clanged it shut. We were off with a jerk. As I looked back I saw Martigny rush out upon the platform. He stood staring after me for an instant; then, with a sudden grasping at his breast, staggered and seemed to fall. A crowd closed about him, the train whisked around a corner, and I could see no more.

But at any rate I was well free of him, and I got off at Bleecker street, walked on to the square and began my search. My plan was very simple. Beginning on the east side of West Broadway, it was my intention to stop at every house and inquire whether lodgers were kept. My experience at the first place was a pretty fair sample of all the rest.

A frowsy headed woman answered my knock.

"You have rooms to let?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, monsieur," she answered, with an expansive grin. "Step zis way."

We mounted a dirty stair, and she threw open a door with a flourish meant to be impressive.

"Zese are ze rooms, monsieur; zey are ver' fine."

I looked around them with simulated interest, smothering my disgust as well as I could.

"How long have they been vacant?" I asked.

"Since only two days, monsieur. As you see, zey are ver' fine rooms."

That settled it. If they had been vacant only two days, I had no further interest in them, and with some excuse I made my way out, glad to escape from that fetid atmosphere of garlic and onions. So I went from house to house, stumbling over dirty children, climbing grimy stairs, catching glimpses of crowded sweatshops, peering into all sorts of holes called rooms by courtesy, inhaling a hundred stenches in as many minutes, gaining an insight that sickened me into the squalid life of the quarter. Sometimes I began to hope that at last I was on the right track, but further inquiry would prove my mistake. So the morning passed, and the afternoon. I had covered two blocks to no purpose, and I turned eastward to Broadway and took a car downtown to the office. My assistants had reported again—they had met with no better success than I. Mr. Graham noticed my dejected appearance and spoke a word of comfort.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Too Much Nothing.

"This cheese is full of holes," complained the prospective purchaser.

"Yes, sir," said the proprietor. "That's right."

"Haven't you got one with the holes full of cheese?"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

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No 401 11:44 pm	Fbro Express..	No 402 3:41 a m
No 83 †5:53 p m	....Clipper....	No 84 †8:55 a m
No 5 † 8:30 a m	Local Express	No 6† 11:18 a m
No 3 2:40 p m	Day Express.	No 4 3:38 a m
No 21 7:97 a m	Ft Dodge Ex	No 22 7:50 p m

CEDAR RAPIDS BRANCH.

North Bound —Arrive—	Set Cedar Rpds and Manchester	South Bound —Leave—
No.322 5:45 p.m	...†Passenger..	No.325 9:00 a.m
No 384 8.15 a.m	..†Passenger..	No.385 8:00 p.m
No.360 1:00 p.m	...†Freight...	No.365 3:15 p.m

All above trains carry passengers.
*Daily.
†Daily Except Sunday.

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No. 3 Runs to Omaha only.
No. 1 has connections to Omaha, Sioux City and Sioux Falls and No. 2 from same points.

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Day Express daily.....2:30 p m
Way Freight daily ex. Sunday.....11:30 a.m

Going West, North and South.

Way Freight, daily ex. Sunday.....11:20 a.m
Day Express daily.....4:16 p.m
St Paul & Kansas City Exp. daily.....5:31 a m

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