



*The Adventures of
Sherlock Holmes*

*The Memoirs of
Sherlock Holmes*

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Edited with a Foreword and Notes by
LESLIE S. KLINGER

Introduction by
JOHN LE CARRÉ

I

THE NEW ANNOTATED

**SHERLOCK
HOLMES**



SHERLOCK HOLMES.

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THE NEW ANNOTATED

SHERLOCK HOLMES

VOLUME I



THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

THE MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Edited with a Preface and Notes by LESLIE S. KLINGER

with additional research by PATRICIA J. CHUI

Introduction by JOHN LE CARRÉ

TO SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

“Steel true, blade straight”



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PREFACE

IN 1968, WHEN I was supposed to be engrossed in law school studies, I received a gift of William S. Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, published the previous year. This magical pair of volumes entranced me and led me back to the stories that I had enjoyed when I was young(er) and had subsequently forgotten. More importantly, the books introduced me to the idea of Sherlockian scholarship, the "game" of treating the stories as biography, not fiction. In later years, as I avidly collected things Sherlockian, I dreamed that someday I, too, would produce an annotated version of the Canon.

Baring-Gould's *Annotated Sherlock Holmes* remained in print for more than twenty-five years and became the cornerstone of every Sherlock Holmes library. Yet it had its idiosyncrasies, with the stories arranged in the controversial chronological order created by Baring-Gould and with footnotes that embraced, in many cases, Baring-Gould's personal theories regarding the life of Holmes. Sadly, Baring-Gould did not live to see publication of his greatest work, and as a result, occasional errors were not corrected. In contrast to the Baring-Gould edition, the *Oxford Sherlock Holmes*,

published in 1993, presented the stories in nine volumes (as they were originally published in book form), but the scholarly notes largely ignored Sherlockian scholarship, concentrating more traditionally on analysis of Conan Doyle's sources.

I set out to create for this edition an annotated text that reflects the spectrum of views on Sherlockian controversies rather than my own theories. In addition, this work brings current Baring-Gould's long-outdated survey of the literature, including references to hundreds of works published subsequently. Recognizing that many of the events recorded in the stories took place in England over 100 to 150 years ago, it also includes much background information on the Victorian age, its history, culture, and vocabulary. For the serious scholar of the Sherlockian Canon, there is an extensive bibliography at the end of Volume II. Chronological tables, summarizing the key dates in the lives of Holmes, Watson, and Conan Doyle and major world events, are set forth at the end of each volume. I have avoided "lawyerly" citations of the works consulted, but full citations may be found in the nine volumes of my *Sherlock Holmes Reference Library*, published by Gasogene Books.

Thirty-seven years have passed since publication of Baring-Gould's monumental work, and the world of Sherlock Holmes has grown much larger. This edition was created with the assistance of new resources that now

exist for the serious student—Ronald L. DeWaal's *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, Jack Tracy's *Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana*, Steve Clarkson's *Canonical Compendium*, and scores of other handbooks, reference works, indexes, and collections, many in computerised format. It also reflects the aid of a new tool—the Internet, which makes accessible immense quantities of minute detail.

This is not a work for the serious student of Arthur Conan Doyle. While Doylean scholarship is vitally important, the reader of these volumes will not find reference to the literary sources of the stories or to biographical incidents in the life of Sir Arthur that may be reflected in the Canon. I perpetuate the gentle fiction that Holmes and Watson really lived and that (except as noted) Dr. John H. Watson wrote the stories about Sherlock Holmes, even though he graciously allowed them to be published under the byline of his colleague and literary agent Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

To keep this work from approaching the length of a telephone book, it is published in three volumes: The first two volumes consist of the fifty-six short stories that appeared from 1891 to 1927 (Volume I containing the stories collected in the volumes called *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, Volume II containing the stories collected under the titles *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, *His Last Bow*, and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*); the third volume (to be

published in 2005) presents the four novels, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), *The Sign of Four* (1890), *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), and *The Valley of Fear* (1915). All in all, here is the complete record of the career of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. For the first-time reader of these tales, my best advice is to plunge immediately into the stories, skipping the introduction. Whether this is your first reading or your fifty-first reading of the Canon, I wish you joy in the experience, and I hope that you find that this edition enriches it.

LESLIE S. KLINGER

INTRODUCTION BY JOHN LE CARRÉ

DR. WATSON DOESN'T write to you, he talks to you, with Edwardian courtesy, across a glowing fire. His voice has no barriers or affectations. It is clear, energetic, and decent, the voice of a tweedy, no-nonsense colonial Britisher at ease with himself. Its owner is travelled. He has knocked about, as they say, browned his knees. Yet he remains an innocent abroad. He is a *first-class chap, loyal to a fault, brave as a lion, and the salt of the earth*. All the clichés fit him. But he is not a cliché.

Finer feelings confuse Dr. Watson. He is a stranger to art. Yet, like his creator, he is one of the greatest story-tellers the world has ever listened to. On the rare occasions he leaves the stage to Holmes, we long for him to return. Holmes—mercurial, brilliant, complex, turbulent Holmes—is not safe out there alone. Oh, he manages. He can dissemble, go underground, disguise himself to the point where his own mother wouldn't know him, he can act dead or dying, trawl opium dens, wrestle with Moriarty on a cliff's edge, or dupe the kaiser's spy. But none of that changes the fact that when he is alone, he is only half the fellow he becomes the moment faithful Watson takes back the tale.

No amount of academic study, thank Heaven, no earnest dissertations from the literary bureaucracy, will ever explain why we love one writer's voice above another's. Partly it has to do with trust, partly with the good or bad manners of the narrator, partly with his authority or lack of it. And a little also with beauty, though not as much as we might like to think. As a reader, I insist on being beguiled early or not at all, which is why a lot of the books on my shelves remain mysteriously unread after page twenty. But once I submit to the author's thrall, he can do me no wrong. From my childhood onwards, Conan Doyle has had that power over me. I love his Brigadier Gerard, and his wicked pirate

Sharkey, and his Professor Challenger, too, but I love Holmes and Watson best of all. He has the same power over my sons, and I look on with delight as one by one my grandchildren fall under his spell.

Peek up Conan Doyle's literary sleeve and you will at first be disappointed; no fine turns of phrase, no clever adjectives that leap off the page, no arresting psychological insights. Instead, what you are looking at is a kind of narrative perfection: a perfect interplay between dialogue and description, perfect characterisation and perfect timing. No wonder that, unlike other great storytellers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Conan Doyle translates without loss into practically any language.

Professional critics can't lay a glove on Conan Doyle, and never could. They could mock his spiritualism, his magpie obsessions; they could declare the later Holmes to be no longer the man he once was. But nobody was listening then, and nobody is listening today. Now, as in his lifetime, cab-drivers, statesmen, academics, and raggedy-arsed children sit spellbound at his feet—proof, if proof were needed, that Doyle's modesty of language conceals a profound tolerance of the human complexity. Even in his own day, Conan Doyle had many imitators, all vastly inferior, though successful. If one of them, by some awful accident, had spawned the wicked Professor Moriarty, it's a pound to a penny, Moriarty would have been a scheming Jew. If Joseph Conrad, then an anguished Balkan radical hellbent on the destruction of industrial society. But Conan Doyle carried no such baggage. He knew that evil can live for itself alone. He has no need of hate or prejudice, and he was wise enough to give the Devil no labels.

Reflect for a moment on the cunning with which Doyle places the reader midway between his two great protagonists. Holmes the towering genius is miles ahead of us, and we know we shall never catch him up. We aren't meant to, and of course, we don't want to. But take heart: for we are smarter by a mile than that plodding Dr. Watson! And what is the result? The reader is delightfully trapped between his two champions. Is there anywhere in popular literature a sweeter portrait of what Thomas Mann sonorously called the relationship between the artist and the citizen? In Holmes, we are never allowed to forget the artist's urge towards self-destruction. Through Watson, we are constantly reminded of our love of social stability.

No wonder, then, if the pairing of Holmes and Watson has triggered more imitators than any other duo in literature. Contemporary cop dramas draw on them repeatedly. They are almost singlehandedly responsible for the buddy-buddy movie. The modern thriller would have been lost without them. With no Sherlock Holmes, would I ever have invented George Smiley? And with no Dr. Watson, would I ever have given Smiley his sidekick Peter Guillam? I would

like to think so, but I doubt it very much.

I was nine years old and at my second boarding school when the headmaster's brother, a saintly man with a golden voice, read us *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* once a week in the junior common room before bedtime. He followed the next term with *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and I can hear him now, and see his great bulk, with his bald head glinting before the coal fire.

"Footprints?"

It is Holmes, questioning Dr. Mortimer.

"Footprints."

"A man's or a woman's?"

Dr. Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he answered.

"Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"

Now read on. You have in your hand the Final Solution to the collected Sherlock Holmes stories, enriched by a lengthy and learned introduction. Do not be dismayed. Nobody writes of Holmes and Watson without love.

JOHN LE CARRÉ
October 24, 2003

THE WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

ALTHOUGH THE TWENTIETH century produced many firsts, the mystery or detective story was not among them. In 1901, one critic made reference to “thousands of tales of detection” published in the previous fifty years. Even then, however, only three detectives were memorable: Edgar Allan Poe had written three stories about Monsieur Dupin, a private investigator; Émile Gaboriau had invented tales about Monsieur Lecoq, a French policeman; and Arthur Conan Doyle had brought to the public’s attention a series of adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Today, Lecoq has effectively vanished, and while Poe’s short stories are revered as models of writing, the character of Dupin is all but forgotten.

Yet a century after this observation, Sherlock Holmes is quite alive and well.¹ The short stories have not been out of print since they first appeared in 1891, and the books have appeared in virtually every language. Hundreds of actors have portrayed Holmes on stage, radio, and screen, in his own milieu and in contemporary—even imaginary—settings. Dozens of scholarly books and magazines are published about Sherlock Holmes annually, and the stream of imitations appears to be inexhaustible. Fan clubs, some with scholarly agendas, others who gather for sheer enjoyment, meet every month in every major country. Holmes has been characterised as one of the three best-known personalities in the world, sharing the spotlight only with Mickey Mouse and Santa Claus.

What is it that we love (or should love) in Sherlock Holmes? Edgar W. Smith,

then leader of The Baker Street Irregulars and editor of the *Baker Street Journal*, pondered this question in 1946.² Perhaps emblematic of the times, he concluded:



Left to right: Robert Barr (publisher of *The Idler*), Miss Doyle (probably Ida, Arthur's sister), Arthur Conan Doyle, Louise Hawkins Doyle, and Robert McClure (publisher of *McClure's Magazine*).

The Idler, October 1894

[Holmes] stands before us as a symbol . . . of all that we are not but ever would be. . . . We see him as the fine expression of our urge to trample evil and to set aright the wrongs with which the world is plagued. . . . [He] is the personification of something in us that we have lost or never had. For it is not Sherlock Holmes who sits in Baker Street, comfortable, competent, and self-assured; it is we ourselves who are there, full of a tremendous capacity for wisdom, complacent in the presence of our humble Watson, conscious of a warm well-being and a timeless, imperishable content. . . . That is the Sherlock Holmes we love—the Holmes implicit and eternal in ourselves.

But this answer, although psychologically insightful, is necessarily only a partial one, for the stories are not mere character studies of Holmes but rather *detective* stories, set in a specific time and place, with a large cast of supporting players.

THE VICTORIAN AGE

HOLMES was not the first detective in literature. Some say that that honour must be given to the biblical sleuth Daniel, for his fine investigations into the cases of Bel and the Dragon and Susanna and the Elders. Others point to François Eugène Vidocq, a French detective whose memoirs, published in 1828, captured the public's eye and established the sleuth as a man of action. American writer Edgar Allan Poe introduced the cerebral detective, also French, in the character of C. August Dupin. Dupin first appeared in Poe's short story "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841). Also, Poe invented the character of the partner and chronicler (nameless in Poe's tales) who is less intelligent than the detective but serves as a sounding board for the detective's brilliant deductions. In the three Dupin stories, the detective outwits the police and shows them to be ineffective crimefighters and problem solvers. Yet Poe apparently lost interest in the notion, and his detective "series" ended in 1845.

Another Frenchman, Émile Gaboriau, created the detective known as Monsieur Lecoq, drawing heavily on Vidocq as his model. First appearing in *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866), Lecoq was a minor police detective who rose to fame in six cases, appearing between 1866 and 1880. Although Sherlock Holmes describes Lecoq as a "miserable bungler," Gaboriau's works were immensely popular, and Fergus Hume, English author of the best-selling detective novel of the nineteenth-century *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* (1886), which sold over 500,000 copies worldwide, explained that Gaboriau's financial success inspired his own work.

In England, criminals and detectives peopled Charles Dickens's tales as well. While certainly not regarded as an author of detective fiction, Dickens created Inspector Bucket, the first significant detective in English literature. When Bucket appeared in *Bleak House* (1852–1853), he became the prototype of the official representative of the police department: honest, diligent, stolid, and confident, albeit not very colourful, dramatic, or exciting. Wilkie Collins, author of two of the greatest novels of suspense of the nineteenth century, *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868), contributed Sergeant Cuff, who appears in *The Moonstone*. Cuff is known as the finest police detective in England; he solves his cases with perseverance and energy rather than genius. Sadly, after *The Moonstone*, he is not heard from again.

Without question, the British public, by the late nineteenth century, had become accustomed to the notion of a police force. Introduced in England in

1829 by Sir Robert Peel, the official police spread to the countryside of England in 1856. The detective bureau—the real Inspector Buckets of London—had been added to Scotland Yard in 1842, with two detectives, remarkably non-uniformed. By 1868, this had increased to fifteen detectives. In 1878, the detective and the constable were separated, and the Detective Department was renamed the Criminal Investigation Department. Thus by the end of the nineteenth century, the English were familiar with official detectives, and perhaps, like Holmes, regarded them as a “bad lot,” unlikely to solve complex crimes without help. In England, as contrasted with America, the rule of law was intimately connected with the constabulary, and guns and violence were the domain of the criminal, not the police.

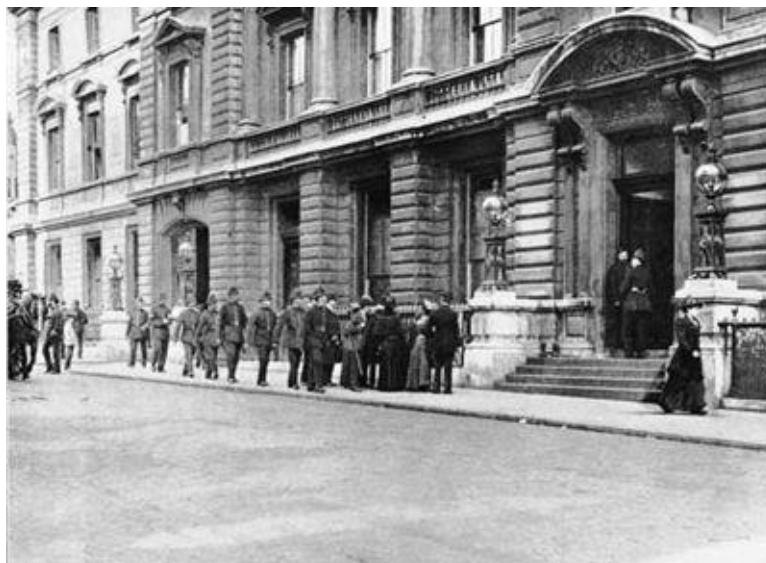
At least a rudimentary understanding of Victorian history is necessary to appreciate the social milieu of Sherlock Holmes. It is important to know that by the beginning of Victoria’s reign in 1837, Great Britain had not only helped to create the Industrial Revolution but had become the greatest industrialized nation in Europe. During the Victorian era, the acquisition of overseas territories and complex motives of commerce and charity propelled an exponential burst of industrial growth. Benjamin Disraeli, after he became prime minister in 1868, loudly and frequently advocated expansion, which reached its zenith with the coronation of Victoria, at his instigation, as Empress of India in 1876. Disraeli’s “imperialist” foreign policies were justified by invoking generalizations partly derived from Darwin’s theory of evolution, arguing that “imperialism” was a manifestation of what Kipling would refer to as “the white man’s burden.” The empire existed, argued its supporters, not for the benefit—economic, strategic, or otherwise—of Great Britain itself, but so that primitive peoples, incapable of self-government, could, with British guidance, eventually become civilized and Christianized. The doctrine served to legitimise Britain’s acquisition of portions of central Africa and her domination, with other European powers, of China.

In the Victorian age, the study of “natural philosophy” and “natural history” became “science,” and students, who had once been exclusively gentlemen and clerical naturalists, now were professional “scientists.” In the general population, belief in natural laws and continuous progress began to grow, and there was frequent interaction among science, government, and industry. Science education was expanded and formalised, and perhaps as a result, a fundamental transformation occurred in beliefs about nature and the place of humans in the universe. A revival of religious activity, largely unmatched since the days of the Puritans, swept England. This religious revival shaped that code of moral behaviour, or rather that infusion of all behaviour with moralism, which became known as “Victorianism.” Above all, religion occupied a place in the public

consciousness, a centrality in the intellectual life of the age, that it had not had a century before and did not retain in the twentieth century.

This was the world into which Sherlock Holmes was born. While his sphere of influence was global, his spiritual and intellectual home was indubitably London, that “great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire [were] irresistibly drained,” in short, the greatest city in the world. Although the city itself initially consisted of only its ancient centre (called “The City”) together with the boroughs of Westminster and Mayfair, the industrialisation movement expanded London’s physical size almost eightfold between 1810 and 1900. In less than a century, it included diverse neighbourhoods such as Chelsea, Battersea, Belgravia, Brompton, Kensington, Hampstead, and Southwark. The population rose from about 850,000 citizens in 1810 to almost 5 million by the turn of the century.

With the growth of the city came an explosion of building. Railroad terminals, museums, theatres, public buildings, parks, colleges, grand hotels and stores, churches, and row upon row of connected private houses sprang up and, with them, a welter of disease and poverty. The air, water, and ground became fouled from the soot of soft coal burned for heat as well as from the leavings of humans and the horses that drew their vehicles. Inevitably, the urban sprawl of London also bred crime: In 1880, in the Metropolitan police district, encompassing most of London, 23,920 felonies were reported, and 13,336 persons were apprehended for felonies.



Police going to work.

The Queen's London (1897) Sherlock Holmes's London was home not only to

criminals but also to the greatest celebrities of the era. No more dominating figure, of course, lived in the nineteenth century than Queen Victoria, the icon of the age, who, along with her husband, Prince Albert, and their son, Edward, Prince of Wales, provides a powerful but almost invisible backdrop to the world of Sherlock Holmes. Other prominent London residents included economist John Stuart Mill, philosopher-historian Thomas Carlyle, writers Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, statesman William Gladstone, singer Jenny Lind, actress Ellen Terry, artist and designer William Morris, and painters James McNeill Whistler, J. M. W. Turner, and John Singer Sargent. London's cosmopolitanism drew in large part from the diversity of its citizenry. It was estimated that in 1880 one-third of the population of London had been born outside its limits, and its largest "foreign" groups were, in order of size, the Irish, Scots, Asiatics, Africans, Americans, Germans, French, Dutch, Poles, Italians, Swiss, and Jews. Among this milieu were economist Karl Marx, composer Richard Wagner, writers Henry James and George Bernard Shaw, and painter-poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The shadows of many of these prominent Londoners fall across the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

THE LIFE OF SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

A SCOT named Arthur Conan Doyle, credited with authorship of every tale of Sherlock Holmes, is one of the most famous men associated with the literary history of London, even though he lived there only briefly. Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859, the second of nine children, seven of whom survived to maturity. His early family life was difficult. His father, Charles Altamont Doyle, was the youngest son of John Doyle, the popular political caricaturist "H.B." Charles's brothers were all prominent: James authored *The Chronicles of England*; Henry managed the National Gallery in Dublin; and Richard was well known for his cover design for *Punch* and for his illustrations of fairies. Charles, however, pursued an unambitious post as a civil servant, a post that he eventually lost, and then descended into alcoholism. Suffering severely from epilepsy, he was eventually institutionalised, dying in 1893. Because the family was poor, Conan Doyle's early education took place at home, administered by his beloved mother, Mary. "The Ma'am" was of Irish extraction and traced her ancestry back to the famous Percy family of Northumberland and from there to the Plantagenet line. She told young Arthur, her eldest son, tales of his illustrious ancestors.

At the age of nine, Conan Doyle was sent to the Jesuit preparatory school of

Hodder in Lancashire. Hodder was attached to the Jesuit secondary school of Stonyhurst, and it was to the latter that Conan Doyle moved two years later. His time at Stonyhurst was not a particularly happy one. Here, his agnosticism developed, and at the end of his time at Stonyhurst, by 1875, Conan Doyle no longer considered himself a Catholic. After leaving Stonyhurst, he spent a further year with the Jesuits in Feldkirch, Austria, before returning to Edinburgh to study medicine at the university from 1876 to 1881.

At Edinburgh, Conan Doyle met Dr. Joseph Bell, whose medical observations and deductions amazed Bell's colleagues and impressed the young students. Bell was thirty-nine years old when Conan Doyle first attended one of his lectures. By the end of Conan Doyle's second year Bell had selected him to serve as an assistant in his ward. This gave Conan Doyle the opportunity to view Dr. Bell's remarkable ability to quickly deduce a great deal about a patient. Conan Doyle



wrote about it in 1892, in a letter to Bell:

Joseph Bell.

It is most certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes, and though in the stories I have the advantage of being able to place [the detective] in all sorts of dramatic positions, I do not think that his analytical work is in the least an exaggeration of some effects which I have seen you produce in the out-patient ward. Round the centre of deduction and inference and observation which I have heard you inculcate, I have tried to build up a man who pushed the thing as far as it would go—further occasionally . . .

In his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures*, published in 1924, Conan Doyle expanded:

I felt now that I was capable of something fresher and crisper and more workmanlike. Gaboriau had rather attracted me by a neat dovetailing of his plots, and Poe's masterful detective, M. Dupin, had from boyhood been one of my heroes. But could I bring an addition of my own? I thought of my old teacher Joe Bell, of his eagle face, of his curious ways, and his eerie trick of spotting details. If he were a detective he would surely reduce this fascinating but unorganized business to something nearer an exact science. I would try if I could get this effect. It was surely possible in real life, so why should I not make it plausible in fiction? It is all very well to say that a man is clever, but the reader wants to see examples of it—such examples as Bell gave us every day in the wards.

Reflecting on Doyle's days as a medical student, Dr. Bell wrote for the *Strand Magazine* and its loyal Sherlock Holmes fans,

You asked me about the kind of teaching to which Mr. Conan Doyle has so kindly referred, when speaking of . . . Sherlock Holmes. Dr. Conan Doyle has, by his imaginative genius, made a great deal out of very little, and his warm remembrance of one of his old teachers has coloured the picture. In teaching the treatment of disease and accident, all careful teachers have first to show the student how to recognize accurately the case. The recognition depends in great measure on the accurate and rapid appreciation of small points in which the diseased differs from the healthy state. In fact, the student must be taught to observe carefully. To interest him in this kind of work we teachers find it useful to show the student how much a trained use of the observation can discover in ordinary matters such as the previous history, nationality and occupation of a patient.

During his term as a medical student at Edinburgh, Conan Doyle took various jobs to assist with the family's upkeep, including service as a ship's doctor aboard a Greenland whaler. When a friend remarked to him that his letters were vivid and that surely he could write for pay, Conan Doyle, ever anxious to find new sources of money, tried his hand at a story. "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley," a treasure-hunt yarn set in South Africa, drew heavily from Poe and Bret Harte, two of his favourite writers at the time. To Conan Doyle's delight, it was accepted by a prominent Edinburgh magazine called *Chambers's Journal*,

and the story appeared anonymously there in 1879.

Conan Doyle's initial interest in writing was as a means of making money, but the dozens of stories that he wrote at this stage had little success. Upon publication of his second story, "An American's Tale," in 1880, the publisher advised him to give up medicine for writing, but Conan Doyle was too uncertain of his economic future to heed the advice. Graduating in 1881, he accepted an appointment as a ship's doctor on a voyage to the West African coast. When he returned, he visited London to confer with his prominent family relations about establishing a practice there. Problems arose, however, with the Catholic Doyles, for Conan Doyle refused to compromise his agnostic stand. Returning to Edinburgh, he continued to seek opportunities.



Louise Hawkins.

In 1882, a fellow student at Edinburgh, Dr. George Turnavine Budd, invited Conan Doyle to join him in a medical practice in Plymouth. After their stormy partnership broke up, Conan Doyle moved to Southsea and established his own practice. In 1885 Conan Doyle moved a patient named Jack Hawkins into his house so as to supervise his treatment. The treatment failed, and Hawkins died (without any blame ascribed to Conan Doyle). Conan Doyle subsequently looked after the welfare of the patient's mother and sister, who also resided in

Southsea, and within a few months, he courted and married Louise Hawkins (“Touie”), Jack’s sister. By all accounts Touie was a sweet-natured young woman with a pleasant, open face and captivating blue-green eyes. Conan Doyle described her as “gentle and amiable.” They remained married until Louise’s death of tuberculosis in 1906 and produced two children, Mary Louise and Kingsley.

In 1886, apparently inspired by meetings he attended in Southsea, Conan Doyle became interested in psychic studies. In later years, such studies, or “Spiritualism,” would become the entire focus of his life, and he often pointed to these early interests as evidence of the long and careful study he had made of the field. Legend has it that Conan Doyle’s Southsea medical practise was a failure; in truth, it was increasingly successful. In his spare moments, Conan Doyle kept at his avocation of story writing, publishing thirty stories between 1879 and 1887.

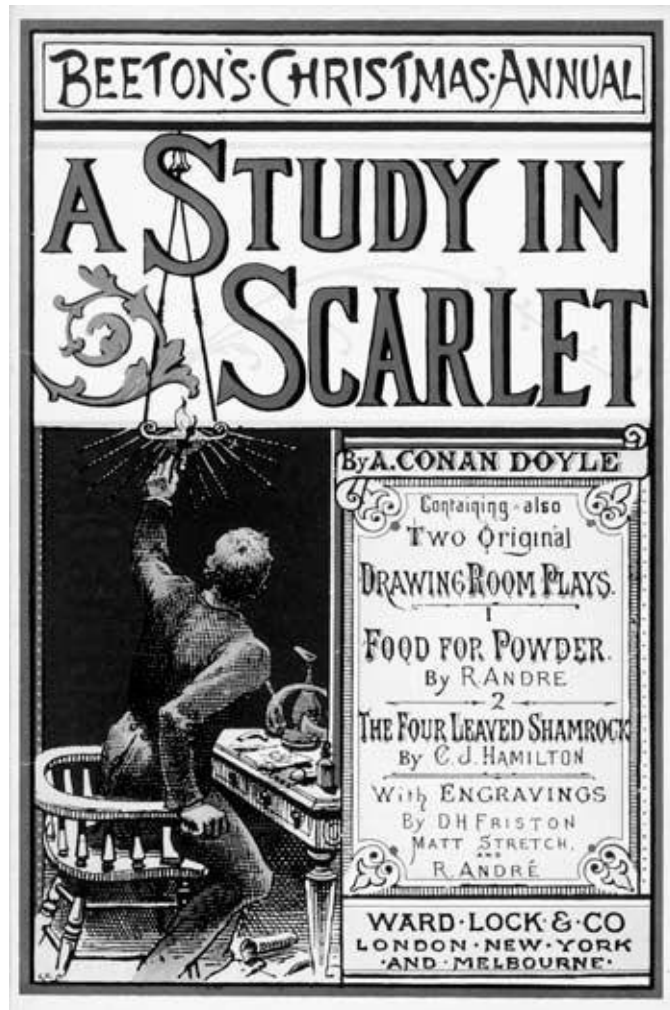


Conan Doyle at his desk in Southsea.

While the famous meeting of Sherlock Holmes and John H. Watson, m.d., is well documented (in *A Study in Scarlet*), the meeting of Conan Doyle and Dr.

Watson remains in the imagination. Perhaps these two young writers met in Edinburgh; perhaps they attended some literary society meeting together; or perhaps their similar medical backgrounds led them to the same lecture. But they must have met, for in 1887, a portion of Dr. Watson's reminiscences were published under the byline of Arthur Conan Doyle, with the title *A Study in Scarlet*.³ Conan Doyle had struggled to find a publisher for this modest book. After rejection by three publishers, Ward, Lock and Company of London accepted the manuscript in September 1886, printing it the following year in their *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887. This publication was a collection of fiction and short occasionals that had been founded in 1867 by Samuel Orchart Beeton, publisher and husband of the renowned Mrs. Beeton of cookbook fame. Priced at one shilling, the annual had a red, white, and yellow cover that apparently featured the villain of *A Study in Scarlet*, warming a syringe by the flame of a hanging lamp. The annual sold out rapidly, although this owed more to the Beeton reputation than to the contents. The story was published in a separate edition in 1888 illustrated by Conan Doyle's father, Charles Doyle.

Following the acceptance of *A Study in Scarlet*—for which Conan Doyle received only £25⁴ for all rights to the tale (undoubtedly to be shared with Dr. Watson)—Conan Doyle wrote *The Mystery of Cloomber*, his first published novel. It was first serialised in the *Pall Mall Budget* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a format that had been wildly popularised by Charles Dickens. Published in 1888, *Cloomber*, which Conan Doyle considered immature, was not among his favourite works. It drew heavily on Conan Doyle's Edinburgh experiences and used Wilkie Collins's "thrillers" as models. After completion, Conan Doyle turned his hand to an historical novel, *Micah Clarke*, which appeared in book form in 1889. It was successful commercially, and Conan Doyle regarded it as the "first solid cornerstone laid for some sort of literary reputation." As a result, he was able to arrange publication of several collections of his previously published short stories.



A Study in Scarlet.

Conan Doyle also found time in 1890 to prepare for publication *The Firm of Girdlestone*, a novel he had begun in 1884, and to respond to a commission from J. M. Stoddart, agent for *Lippincott's Magazine* of Philadelphia, with a short book. In a letter in 1890, Conan Doyle described it to Stoddart: "My story will either be called 'The Sign of the Six' or 'The Problem of the Sholtos.' You said you wanted a spicy title. . . . I shall give Sherlock Holmes of 'A Study in Scarlet' something else to unravel." Because of the limited publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, as it was finally called in its initial appearance, was America's introduction to Sherlock Holmes, and the work had some success. It was published in book form later that year, and after the appearance of the first series of Holmes stories in the *Strand Magazine* in 1891, it became a best-seller.

By late 1890, however, Conan Doyle concluded that he had reached a professional and domestic plateau, and, compelled by the announcement of

Robert Koch's new treatment for tuberculosis (ironically, the disease that would strike his wife in these years), he acted on impulse and travelled to Berlin to witness the demonstrations of the treatment. On the trip, he met a medical specialist—a dermatologist—who urged him to develop his own speciality. Two days later, he announced the closing of his Southsea practice and hurried off to Vienna to study the eye. The Viennese trip was a failure, for Conan Doyle found himself unable to understand sufficient portions of the German lectures to make use of the information. Leaving after two months, he and Louise took an extended vacation, returning in the spring of 1891 to London. There, they rented rooms in Montague Place, while Conan Doyle sought a suitable medical office. He eventually located one at 2 Upper Wimpole Street but, to the delight of future readers everywhere, found that he had no patients. Conversely, literary planets were moving into alignment. In January 1891, a publisher named George Newnes conceived the idea of the *Strand Magazine*. Newnes, who had had remarkable success with a weekly paper entitled *Tit-Bits*, hoped to create a publication in the style of the American magazines *Harper's* and *Scribner's*. He wanted a British magazine with a picture on every page but soon modified his plan to allow for a picture every other page. Further, he resolved that the magazine should be complete in itself each month, "like a book." This meant that the *Strand* would not feature the serial stories other magazines preferred, instead publishing short stories. Newnes's idea caught hold immediately, and the first issue sold 300,000 copies, which no other magazine, British or American, approached. Conan Doyle had a story, "The Voice of Science," in one of the first issues.

In the late spring of 1891, Greenhough Smith, the newly appointed literary editor of the *Strand*, received a submission of two handwritten manuscripts. Forty years later he described how he reacted on that day:



The *Strand Magazine* (February 1893).

I at once realised that here was the greatest short story writer since Edgar Allan Poe. I remember rushing into Mr. Newnes's room and thrusting the stories before his eyes. . . . Here was a new and gifted story-writer; there was no mistaking the ingenuity of the plot, the limpid clearness of the style, the perfect art of telling a story.

The two stories that excited Smith's interest were "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Red-Headed League." Conan Doyle received thirty guineas each for the first set of stories, titled the *Adventures*, and fifty guineas each for the *Memoirs*.⁵

In another great stroke of fortune, W. J. K. Boot, the *Strand* art editor, sent the commission for illustration of the Holmes stories to an illustrator named Paget. According to one source, Boot wanted Walter Paget, an artist for the *Illustrated London News* with the General Gordon Relief Expedition in Africa. Instead, the commission ended up in *Sidney Paget's* hands. Winifred Paget, Sidney Paget's daughter, says Boot wrote to Sidney (Walter's brother) because he had forgotten Walter's first name. In another version of this story, Sidney opened an envelope addressed to "Mr. Paget the illustrator." Happily, Sidney, himself a commercial artist, took the commission and began an association with the Holmes stories that lasted until Paget's death in 1908. Sidney Paget produced over 350 illustrations of the stories, all included in this edition. Sidney Paget's Holmes

was a commanding figure, tall but not overly lean, perhaps, in the words of one writer, “only a shade less elegant in person and appearance than a popular matinee idol.” This bore little resemblance to Conan Doyle’s descriptions. Unlike Sidney, Walter, reported Winifred, was “an artist who took great pains to get every detail accurate. It is thus possible that he would have given the world a less handsome Holmes, portraying him perhaps more as the author saw him, ‘with a great hawk’s-bill of a nose and two small eyes set close together.’ ” “Perhaps,” Conan Doyle admitted, “from the point of view of my lady readers it was as well.”⁶



Sidney Paget.

The combination of writer, subject, and artist was an immense success. “A Scandal in Bohemia” created a considerable sensation when it appeared in England in July 1891, and each subsequent Holmes adventure published that year saw an increase in sales of the *Strand Magazine*. An historian of the magazine called the circulation response “as immediate and as conclusive as a reflex action.” Readers reportedly stood in line for new issues of the magazine containing Holmes tales, and Conan Doyle wrote his mother, “Sherlock Holmes appears to have caught on . . .” By the end of the second series of stories, in 1893, it was estimated that Conan Doyle’s name on the cover of the magazine added 100,000 copies to its circulation.

In November 1891, Conan Doyle had apparently had enough of his association with Holmes and Watson. He wrote to his mother, “I think of slaying

Holmes . . . and winding him up for good and all.” Mary Doyle persuaded him to defer any final resolution, and the stories continued. Twelve appeared between July 1891 and June 1892 and were collected in book form as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. In an extraordinary period of productivity, Conan Doyle published three novels, *The Refugees: A Tale of Two Continents* (concerning the suppression of the Huguenots), *The Great Shadow* (the Battle of Waterloo), and *Beyond the City* (a tale of domestic life and manners). He let Greenhough Smith of the *Strand Magazine* know that for the unprecedented sum of £1,000,⁷ he would produce another dozen Holmes stories. Later collected as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, these began appearing in December 1892, with “Silver Blaze.”

In December 1893, upon publication of “The Final Problem,” the last story of the second series, the public was shocked to learn that Conan Doyle and Watson had for over two years kept secret a fatal struggle between Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty, which had occurred in May 1891. The revelation of Holmes’s death horrified the nation, and young City men that month put mourning crepe on their silk hats or wore black armbands. One anguished correspondent wrote to Conan Doyle: “You brute!” “I was amazed,” Conan Doyle admitted, “at the concern expressed by the public.” The publisher of the *Strand Magazine* described Holmes’s death to his shareholders as the “dreadful event,” and twenty thousand people reportedly cancelled their subscriptions.

Conan Doyle turned away from Sherlock Holmes, with no regret. “Poor Holmes is dead and damned,” he was to say in 1896.

I have had such an overdose of him that I feel towards him as I do towards *paté de foie gras*, of which I once ate too much, so that the name of it gives me a sickly feeling to this day. . . . I have been much blamed for doing that gentleman to death, but I hold that it was not murder, but justifiable homicide in self-defence, since, if I had not killed him, he would certainly have killed me.



Jean Leckie.

In 1893, in the midst of Conan Doyle's greatest celebrity, tragedy struck. Louise was diagnosed with tuberculosis, then a virtual death sentence. The disease completely disrupted the lives of the couple, with the family travelling from spa to spa in search of a cure or at least a respite. In the autumn of 1895, they journeyed to Cairo, hoping that the hot, dry climate would aid Louise's convalescence. Here Conan Doyle absorbed the background for his desert drama *The Tragedy of the Korosko*, which first appeared in 1898. When fighting broke out in the Sudan between the British-controlled Egyptian army and the Sudanese Dervishes (an anti-British faction), Conan Doyle became the war correspondent for the *Westminster Gazette*. Returning to England in 1896, he continued to produce a variety of literary works, including his sporting novel of the Regency, *Rodney Stone*; a charming tale of a young married couple, *A Duet with an Occasional Chorus*; and his first novel of the Napoleonic era, *Uncle Bernac*.

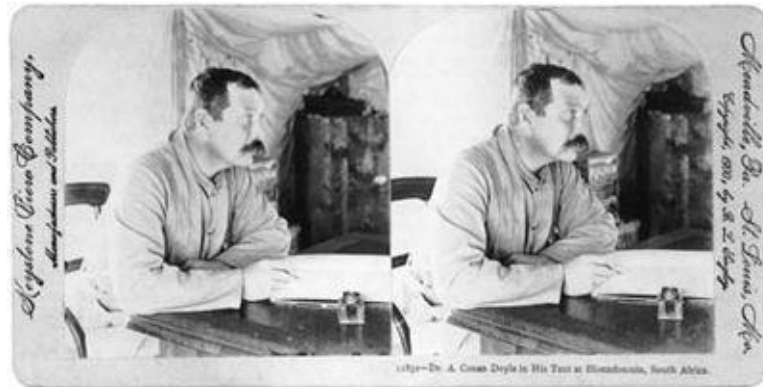
On March 15, 1897, while his wife was ill, Arthur Conan Doyle met Jean Leckie. In Conan Doyle's autobiography, he makes no mention of her until reporting their 1907 wedding, describing Jean as "the younger daughter of a

Blackheath family whom I had known for years, and who was a dear friend of my mother and sister.” While that characterisation is true, it conceals the fact that Conan Doyle fell in love with Jean immediately in 1897. He was a married man, however, and his personal code of chivalry and honour kept him at Louise’s side. Instead, he conducted secret meetings with Jean—secret, that is, from Louise, for apparently everyone else in Conan Doyle’s family, including his mother and even Louise’s mother, knew about and condoned the relationship. Divorce appeared to be out of the question, and Conan Doyle struggled to maintain balance in his personal life. Certainly neither Holmes (“I am not a whole-souled admirer of womankind, as you are aware, Watson”) nor Watson (with “an experience of women which extends over many nations and three continents”) could serve as a rôle model for the troubled writer. “[Louise] is as dear to me as ever,” he wrote in 1899, “but, as I said, there is a large side of my life which was unoccupied but is no longer so.”

Sherlock Holmes was still very much a part of Conan Doyle’s commerce. In late 1897, he drafted a play about Sherlock Holmes, probably because his expenses had been unexpectedly heavy in building a new home in Hindhead, which he named “Undershaw.” Production of the play languished until May 1899, when American stage actor William Gillette approached Conan Doyle about a stage play based on the *Adventures* and the *Memoirs* (to be backed by American impresario Charles Frohman), and Conan Doyle revived the idea. The play, although styled *Sherlock Holmes* and billed as having been written by Conan Doyle and Gillette, was wholly written by Gillette. Drawing freely from the stories, the “melodrama in four acts” opened in Buffalo, New York, on October 23, 1899, and, some say, has never really ceased being performed. Gillette, who wrote his plays principally for himself, toured in it virtually continuously in America and England until 1932, giving over 1,300 performances as Holmes;⁸ and numerous amateur and professional theatre companies essayed the drama throughout the twentieth century and around the globe on stage, radio, and television. Since 1976, such luminaries as John Wood, Leonard Nimoy, and Frank Langella have assumed the lead rôle.

In 1898, war broke out in South Africa between the British and the Boers. Conan Doyle, keen to serve in any capacity but denied recruitment in the military on the grounds of his age and weight, agreed to supervise a hospital in Cape Town. His experiences there left an indelible mark on his character, and the Sherlock Holmes adventure “The Blanched Soldier” echoes many of those experiences. When, after the war, Britain’s treatment of its enemies (and in particular the British “concentration camps”) was called into question in world opinion, Conan Doyle rose to the defence of England, penning a pamphlet

entitled *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct* (1900). Widely translated, the pamphlet caused much public attention, and Conan Doyle stood for Parliament as a Unionist candidate.



Conan Doyle at Bloemfontein.

To the great benefit of the reading public, Conan Doyle lost the election, and he returned full-time to writing. In March 1901, he approached the *Strand Magazine* with “the idea of a real creeper.” This was to be a novel based on Dartmoor, home of many legends and nightmares in the west of England. Although Conan Doyle reportedly stated that he introduced Sherlock Holmes into the tale because the story needed a strong central character, the decision to do so was undoubtedly partially influenced by money, for he earned nothing from his Boer War activities. Conan Doyle well understood that a new Sherlock Holmes book would revive sales of the *Adventures* and the *Memoirs*. In August 1901, the first installment of his greatest work, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, appeared in the *Strand Magazine*.

Publication of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was not a real return of Sherlock Holmes. Carefully styled a “reminiscence” of Holmes, the tale is set in an uncertain period, likely before the events recounted in “The Final Problem,” set in 1891. Public clamour continued as his friends around the world hoped for more news of the detective. In 1902, Conan Doyle received a knighthood, and while no specific grounds were cited for the monarch’s action, there were many who felt that the tale of the detective and the spectral hound was a prime cause.

In 1903, Dr. Watson penned a remarkable tale, entitled “The Empty House.” In it, he revealed that Holmes had not died in 1891 but instead had gone into hiding from the vengeance of Professor Moriarty’s gang. After a series of sojourns in the Indian peninsula, the Middle East, and the south of France, Holmes secretly returned to England in 1894 and again took up his career as a

consulting detective. Conan Doyle and Watson conspired to suppress this news for nine years, until Holmes relented and Conan Doyle was able to strike a remarkably lucrative deal with the *Strand Magazine* for another series of tales about the celebrated detective. These appeared from 1903 through 1905 and were collected under the title *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1905. Some critics felt that the tales did not measure up to Watson's earlier works. "The most trenchant criticism of the stories as a series came from a Cornish boatman," wrote Conan Doyle later in an article for the *Strand Magazine*, "who remarked to me: 'When Mr. Holmes had that fall he may not have been killed, but he was certainly injured, for he was never the same afterwards.'" Whether Holmes's performance suffered, however, is a different question from that regarding the quality of Watson's writing, and it is difficult to find fault with such gems as "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons," "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans," "The Problem of Thor Bridge," and "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot."

Louise died in July 1906, after thirteen years of illness. Sinking into depression, Conan Doyle ceased to work, until the case of George Edalji seized his attention at the end of 1906. Conan Doyle, who, like Dickens, came to use his celebrity to right social injustices, became convinced that Edalji, a young solicitor of Parsee Indian descent, had been wrongly accused of the crime of mutilating local livestock. Having been imprisoned for the crime and then released without explanation, Edalji sought to prove his innocence and return to the practice of law, from which he was now banned. Doyle, calling it an "appalling tragedy," plunged into investigation of the matter and wrote a book on the Edalji case. In 1907, Conan Doyle helped to secure a pardon for George Edalji, married Jean Leckie (Edalji attended the wedding), and published his paean to reading entitled *Through the Magic Door*. The following year, perhaps in an effort to regain his popularity to impress his new wife, Conan Doyle arranged for the publication of new tales of Holmes in the *Strand Magazine*, "Wisteria Lodge" and "The Bruce-Partington Plans." Four more adventures appeared in print from 1910 through 1913.

In 1912 Conan Doyle introduced Professor George Challenger to the public, in his highly influential account *The Lost World* (strikingly filmed in 1925 with stop-motion animation of dinosaurs by pioneer Willis O'Brien). Challenger's further adventures were recounted in *The Poison Belt* (1913) and *The Land of Mist* (1926). Challenger's popularity at its peak was said to have rivalled Holmes's.



The Strand Magazine.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Conan Doyle, then fifty-five years old, sought to enlist. This act was consistent with Conan Doyle's love of chivalry and his personal code of conduct. Not surprisingly, he was rejected. Frustrated, he conceived of the idea of a civilian volunteer corps, forming a company in Crowborough, his residence. Within weeks, the government took over his idea and formed a centrally administered volunteer corps, into which the Crowborough company was incorporated. Conan Doyle refused command and entered service as Private Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, actively contributing ideas to the War Department about the conduct of the war and in particular advocating various life-saving devices such as inflatable collars, inflatable lifeboats, and body armour. He also assisted Dr. Watson in publication of *The Valley of Fear*, the last "long" story of Sherlock Holmes, a tale of murder set in the countryside near Conan Doyle's home. In 1916 Conan Doyle began writing his six-volume history *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, which was completed in 1920. This work drew on his correspondence with at least fifty generals, many of whom gave him access to their personal papers. The work, which sacrificed historical perspective for contemporary reporting, was ultimately criticised for

its excessive fascination with troop movements and technical details. Conan Doyle was actually approached by the government about heading up a propaganda office, but he declined, preferring to be a free agent. Almost as a response, *His Last Bow*, a collection of short adventures of Holmes, which included the remarkable tale of Holmes's war service entitled "His Last Bow," appeared in 1917.

By late 1917, however, Conan Doyle's interest in Sherlock Holmes was waning once again. At a meeting of the London Spiritualist Alliance, Conan Doyle publicly declared himself a dedicated Spiritualist. Psychic phenomena had interested him for many years, and Conan Doyle, who had long sought "some big purpose" for which he was destined, became convinced that he should devote the balance of his life to the promotion of Spiritualism. He began to write extensively on Spiritualism, in such works as *The New Revelation* (1918), *The Vital Message* (1919), and, in 1921, after the death of his mother (and perhaps, along with her, the severing of his connection to his childhood religion), *Wanderings of a Spiritualist*. He toured extensively, lecturing on Spiritualism around the world. Conan Doyle's assertions, and his apparent gullibility, were widely assailed by the press and the public. In October 1919, the *New York Times*, under the heading "Credulity Hard to Understand," wrote:

Admirers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as a writer of detective stories—a company about as numerous as readers of the English language—have reason for a peculiar grief because of the strange, the pathetic, thoroughness with which he has accepted as realities the "spiritualistic" interpretation of the phenomena of trance speaking and writing. There is little of the mysterious and nothing of the other world in these phenomena for modern psychologists, and yet this well-educated and intelligent man—with not a little of the scientific and the philosophic, too, in his mental furnishings—talks much as did the followers of the Fox sisters [notorious fraudulent psychics of the nineteenth century] fifty years ago.

Conan Doyle's personal experiences with communication with the dead made him impervious to these criticisms. In his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures* (1924), he wrote,

People ask me, not unnaturally, what is it which makes me so perfectly certain that this thing is true. That I am perfectly certain is surely demonstrated by the mere fact that I have abandoned my congenial and lucrative work, left my home for long periods at a time, and subjected

myself to all sorts of inconveniences, losses, and even insults, in order to get the facts home to the people. . . . I may say briefly that there is no physical sense which I possess which has not been separately assured.

Conan Doyle's most recent biographer, Daniel Stashower, in the award-winning *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle* (1999), summed up Conan Doyle's mission:

Many others felt as [Conan Doyle] did [about Spiritualism]; all but a few kept quiet about it. Conan Doyle's sense of duty would not permit him to keep quiet. He had found solace in the face of devastating loss, and felt he must share it with others. The task would absorb him for the rest of his life. If this makes him a madman, so be it.

There were still a few more adventures of Holmes to be published (some said to finance the Spiritualism cause), and the last round of tales, commencing in 1921 with "The Mazarin Stone" and concluding in 1927 with "Shoscombe Old Place," included some cases which critics found offered little challenge to Holmes's talents; yet "Thor Bridge," "The Retired Colourman," and "The Illustrious Client" must rank among Holmes's triumphs. The cases were collected in the last Holmes volume under Conan Doyle's supervision, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, in 1927. One in particular, "The Sussex Vampire," shows the marked differences between Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes, as the latter rejects entirely the notion of supernatural intervention in his cases—"No ghosts need apply."

Conan Doyle also wrote a science fiction story in 1927. *The Maracot Deep*, set in Atlantis, seems to express Conan Doyle's frustration with the public's reception of his Spiritualist message. A very personal Spiritualist book, *Pheneas Speaks*, which details spirit messages delivered through his wife, was published that year as well. In 1928–1929, Conan Doyle and his family toured Africa, and he produced a book (*Our African Winter*) covering both his psychical researches there and his political and economic commentary on the continent. His last Spiritualist tract (*The Edge of the Unknown*) was published in 1930, but at last Conan Doyle's seemingly inexhaustible pen came to rest. In 1929, he toured Scandinavia and Holland but returned to England exhausted, and there he suffered a heart attack.

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle died at home on July 7–8, 1930. Five days later, almost 6,000 people crowded London's Royal Albert Hall to hear him speak from beyond the grave. A medium, Mrs. Estelle Roberts, sat on stage with Lady

Conan Doyle (Jean Leckie) and other family members, and the audience was electrified by Roberts's shout: "He is here!" She then delivered a message to Lady Conan Doyle. Later Lady Conan Doyle told a reporter, "I am as sure of . . . the fact that he has been here, as I am that I am speaking to you." Not all were convinced, however; a reporter from the *Saturday Review* wrote, "I should like to have heard Sherlock Holmes examining the medium at Albert Hall last Sunday, for the methods that were employed were hardly reminiscent of Baker Street. Indeed, far from satisfying Holmes, I doubt if the evidence would even have been good enough for Watson."⁹

Christopher Roden, founder of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society, recently summed up Conan Doyle's contribution to the literature of the English language as "immense." While Conan Doyle was proudest of his major historical novels, *The White Company*, *Sir Nigel*, *Micah Clarke*, *Uncle Bernac*, *The Refugees*, and *The Great Shadow*, contemporary readers hardly know them. Instead, Conan Doyle is remembered best for his extraordinary production of short stories, chiefly for the popular magazines of his time: tales of sport, the outdoors, pirates, science fiction, horror and the supernatural—over 200 stories, published between 1879 and 1930. His records of the adventures of Professor George Challenger and the boisterous memoirs of Brigadier Etienne Gerard, soldier of the Napoleonic Wars, have loyal fans today. Professor Challenger's adventures in *The Lost World* have inspired a book by Michael Crichton and a series of films (the *Jurassic Park* series) and numerous television productions. In sum, Conan Doyle was a successful playwright and poet, political journalist, war correspondent, historian, detective, scientist, visionary, prophet—a giant of the Victorian age.

Conan Doyle's autobiography *Memories and Adventures* was published in 1924. While the work is seen by some as primarily another vehicle for Conan Doyle's Spiritualist message, it is fascinating to examine Conan Doyle's selection of the portions of his life that he sought to emphasize. For example, he suppresses entirely his terrible yet exemplary ordeal of suffering with Louise's illness and his own love for Jean Leckie. The book was a great disappointment as well to readers of Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle had little to say about Holmes, devoting only one chapter to the work that was to immortalize him. He termed Holmes "my most notorious character." "I do not wish to be ungrateful to Holmes," wrote Conan Doyle,

who has been a good friend to me in many ways. If I have sometimes been inclined to weary of him it is because his character admits of no light or shade. He is a calculating machine, and anything you add to that simply

weakens the effect. Thus the variety of the stories must depend upon the romance and compact handling of the plots. I would say a word for Watson also, who in the course of seven volumes never shows one gleam of humour or makes one single joke. To make a real character one must sacrifice everything to consistency and remember Goldsmith's criticism of Johnson that "he would make the little fishes talk like whales."¹⁰



Arthur Conan Doyle.

Quite a remark from one whose lack of attention to detail in recounting the adventures of Holmes has led to one hundred years of correcting "errors" in the tales and a volume like this one!

THE RECORDED LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

THE study of the life of Sherlock Holmes begins with the records attributed to Conan Doyle,¹¹ and from those sixty episodes, a biographical outline may be created. While no specific date is given in the stories, January 6 (the traditional Twelfth Night of Christmas), 1854, is traditionally celebrated as Holmes's birthday, based on the flimsy evidence of a description of Holmes as "a man of

60” in 1914 (though Holmes is only in disguise at the time as a man of 60) and Holmes’s supposed fondness for Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (because he twice quotes from the play). Nothing is known of his early years, and Holmes is remarkably reticent about his parents and his childhood. The only link to these years is his brother Mycroft, whom he concealed from Dr. Watson for many years.

Mycroft, seven years Sherlock’s senior, was ostensibly employed to audit the books in some of the government departments. In fact, in Sherlock’s words, Mycroft occasionally *was* the British government: “The same great powers which I have turned to the detection of crime he has used for this particular business. The conclusions of every department are passed to him, and he is the central exchange, the clearing-house, which makes out the balance. All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience.”

Holmes insisted that his brother had even better powers of observation and deduction than he had himself, but that Mycroft had no ambition and no energy and would rather be considered wrong than take the trouble to prove himself right. “Mycroft has his rails and he runs on them,” Sherlock remarked. “His Pall Mall lodgings, the Diogenes Club, Whitehall—that is his cycle.”¹² Reported Watson:

Heavily built and massive, there was a suggestion of uncouth physical inertia in the figure, but above this unwieldy frame there was perched a head so masterful in its brow, so alert in its steel-gray, deep-set eyes, so firm in its lips, and so subtle in its play of expression, that after the first glance one forgot the gross body and remembered only the dominant mind.

Although scholars attempt to make much of the rôle of Mycroft in Sherlock’s life (and in the Victorian era), he had little apparent influence on Sherlock, except perhaps as a negative example. The earliest recollections that Sherlock Holmes shared with Dr. Watson were of the two years he spent at college. There, after astonishing Trevor Sr. with a series of deductions, he realized that “a profession might be made out of what had up to that time been the merest hobby.”¹³ Later, he recalled that “during my last years at the university there was a good deal of talk there about myself and my methods.”¹⁴

After two years of university, Holmes moved to London, where he took up rooms in Montague Street, near the British Museum. There he continued his unique study of the literature of crime, criminals, and related sciences, handling only occasional cases of which little or nothing is recorded. In 1881 he came to the momentous decision to seek other lodgings. He found a “most desirable

residence” at 221 Baker Street, in the flat labelled “221B,” but concluded that his economic circumstances required that he share the rooms. Through the offices of his acquaintance Stamford, whom he met at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in London, he was introduced to John H. Watson, recently invalided out of the British Army, and the two became flat-mates. In March 1881, Holmes was brought in by Inspector Tobias Gregson of Scotland Yard to assist with a case, a mysterious murder near the Brixton Road. Holmes suggested that if Watson had nothing better to do, he might accompany him on the initial investigation. From this seed grew the first reported adventure of Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet*, published in 1887, and the partnership of Holmes and Watson.



St. Bartholomew’s Hospital.

The Queen’s London (1897) While his practice began slowly, by 1889 Holmes could claim to have investigated some five hundred cases “of capital importance” and a thousand in all by 1891. His clients ranged from humble typewriters to royalty, from the police to the crowned heads of Europe, while his cases took him across London and its suburbs, to the countryside and villages of England, even to the capitals of the Continent and the Vatican. While he pursued criminal investigation as a means of earning a living and asserted that he charged fees “on a fixed scale,” he added “or not at all,” for he often took up matters out of public interest or even to avoid boredom. Although Holmes protested that he “was not engaged by the police to supply their deficiencies,” in fact he often was brought in by the police to assist with a case, for he had learned early to deflect publicity and to allow the official police to claim credit for his successes. Whether Holmes actually charged police officials for his assistance is unknown, but he was well

regarded by the regular forces. “We’re not jealous of you at Scotland Yard,” Holmes was told by Inspector Lestrade. “No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow, there’s not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn’t be glad to shake you by the hand.” Sadly for the scholar, this lack of publicity has made it impossible to trace Holmes’s activities in the reports of the press.

From the end of the 1880s to April 1891, Holmes, in addition to handling numerous smaller matters, devoted himself to exposing and breaking up the criminal organisation of Professor James Moriarty. Moriarty was the “Napoleon of crime,” cried Holmes, “the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them.” While Holmes expected these activities to lead to “the greatest criminal trial of the century, the clearing up of over forty mysteries, and the rope for all of [the gang],”¹⁵ instead it led to a ledge above the Reichenbach Falls, near Meiringen, Switzerland, and a face-to-face confrontation with the professor. Here the two wrestled on the brink of the falls, and here the professor died. Holmes vanished as well, presumed dead.

In 1894, however, the newspaper reports of the murder of the Honourable Ronald Adair, which had “all London . . . interested and the fashionable world dismayed,” had an unanticipated benefit: Holmes returned to active practice. In the course of capturing the criminal, Colonel Sebastian Moran, the lieutenant of the Moriarty “gang,” the detective revealed to Watson that he had not fallen into the abyss with Professor Moriarty but had survived their hand-to-hand combat and intentionally gone into hiding. He travelled for two years in Tibet and amused himself by visiting Lhasa and spending some days with the head lama. He then passed through Persia, looked in at Mecca, and paid a “short but interesting visit” to the Khalifa at Khartoum, the results of which he communicated to the Foreign Office. Returning to France, he spent some months in a research into the coal-tar derivatives, which he conducted in a laboratory at Montpellier, in the south of France. Or so he said, for numerous scholars contend that the “Great Hiatus,” as the period from 1891 to 1894 has become known, was spent in an entirely different fashion.¹⁶

Following Holmes’s return, from 1894 to 1901 he handled hundreds of cases. It was apparently during this period that Watson at last weaned him from the “drug mania which had threatened once to check his remarkable career.” His services to England earned him a private audience with Queen Victoria in 1895

(the Royal Family reportedly were devoted readers of Dr. Watson's stories), and though a devoted servant of the Crown, in June 1902, without explanation, he refused the offer of a knighthood (coincidentally Arthur Conan Doyle received his knighthood in 1902). He retired in 1903 or 1904 to the solitude of the Sussex coast, where he took up bee-keeping and began work on his monumental *The Whole Art of Detection*, a comprehensive work on criminology that has apparently never been completed. He also penned (sans Watson) two reports of old cases, "The Blanched Soldier," published in 1903, and "The Lion's Mane," published in 1907, with the aid of Arthur Conan Doyle. In 1912, he put aside this work and took up his most dangerous assignment: building an identity as an Irish dissident and obtaining employment from German intelligence. In this capacity, he was able to communicate much false intelligence to the Germans and, in 1914, bring about the arrest of the Prussian spy-master Von Bork.

There is no credible record of any further activities of Holmes. His death, if it occurred at all—and there are those who claim that his mastery of chemistry and bee-keeping led him to an elixir of immortality derived from the royal jelly of the queen bee—has not been reported. Some attribute the ultimate triumph of reason and order over the madmen of the twentieth century—the downfall of Hitler, Stalin, and the Communist Party—to his continued undercover work, but present no evidence for this supposition. Others, such as Laurie King, author of a series of books about Mary Russell, record Holmes's life post-1914, but these works are plainly fiction. While Holmes was a prolific writer of monographs on various aspects of criminology and other topics of idiosyncratic interest (such as the polyphonic motets of Lassus, early English charters), there are no extant copies of these publications.

THE RECORDED LIFE OF JOHN H. WATSON, M.D.

WITH the exception of two weak efforts by Holmes himself,¹⁷ only the records of his friend and partner John H. Watson preserve Holmes's history. The eminent writer Christopher Morley subtitled his 1944 annotated collection of Holmes's adventures, *A Study in Friendship*, and the remarkable relationship between the men is the connecting thread among virtually all of the published stories. "I am lost without my Boswell," cries Holmes in one adventure, and Watson is absent from only two reported cases.¹⁸ Even in those cases, Watson's literary skills are much on Holmes's mind as he writes his own reports of the events, and it is through Watson's eyes that we learn virtually everything known about Holmes.

In the words of Monsignor Ronald Knox, “Any studies in Sherlock Holmes must be, first and foremost, studies in Dr. Watson.”

As in the case of Holmes, little is known of the young adulthood of John H. Watson.¹⁹ He took his doctor’s degree at the University of London in 1878, and scholars place his birthdate at 1851 or 1852, seven or eight years before Arthur Conan Doyle’s. There is some evidence that he spent a portion of his boyhood in Australia,²⁰ and he attended public school in England. Watson’s mother apparently died shortly after the birth of young John, although his father (H. Watson) and his elder brother survived until the mid-1880s. In his youth, Watson played rugby for Blackheath, and his love of sport and physical activity may have led him, after his residency at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, to take up a military career. Whatever his motivations, Dr. Watson enrolled in the required course for army surgeons at Netley. Upon completion of his training, he was posted to the Northumberland Fusiliers as assistant surgeon.

The second Afghan war had broken out before Watson could join the Fusiliers. In spring 1880 he was sent to India. Upon arriving in Bombay, he received word that his corps “had advanced through the passes and was already deep in the enemy’s country.” At Kandahar (now famous as a former Taliban stronghold), which had been occupied by the British in July, he joined his regiment. His assignment to the regiment was brief; he was quickly attached to the Berkshires (the 66th Foot) and rushed into battle—in particular, the battle of Maiwand, where the Berkshires won glory for their heroic resistance. After seeing his comrades “hacked to pieces,” Watson was struck on the left shoulder by a Jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery. His orderly, Murray, in a remarkable display of courage and devotion, saved Watson from falling into the hands of “the murderous Ghazis” and carried Watson to the British lines on a pack horse.

Watson convalesced at the base hospital at Peshawar, where he unfortunately developed a near-fatal case of enteric fever. Upon recovering, he was discharged from the army and returned to England, in late 1880 or early 1881. Here, with no “kith or kin,” he stayed in a hotel in the Strand, eking out existence on his wound pension of 11s. 6d. a day. When his former dresser, young Stamford, introduced him to a friend seeking a roommate, Watson’s life was changed forever: “Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes . . .”

“How are you?” said Holmes. “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.”

“How on earth did you know that?” replied Watson.²¹

Watson took rooms with Sherlock Holmes, and in March 1881 accompanied him on an investigation. Upon its conclusion, Watson uttered fatal words to

Holmes: “It is wonderful! . . . Your merits should be publicly recognized. You should publish an account of the case. If you won’t, I will for you.”

“You may do what you like,” he answered.

And Watson did, though not until 1887, when, evidently with the aid of his friend Arthur Conan Doyle, he arranged for publication of “A Reprint from the Reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D., Late of the Army Medical Department,” under the shorter title of *A Study in Scarlet*.

From what source arose Watson’s urge to take up his pen? There is no direct evidence of any literary training or artistic bent in Watson’s own records. However, another branch of the family produced celebrated artists, most notably the Scottish painter John Watson, known as John Watson Gordon (1788–1864) and his brother George Watson, both noted portraitists. After the death of Sir Henry Raeburn in 1823, John Watson succeeded to much of his clientele; and as there were at that time in Edinburgh four artists of the name of Watson, all of them portrait painters, he assumed in 1826 the name of Gordon, by which he is best known. Watson Gordon was unmarried and childless. His fame was at its zenith in 1850, shortly before the birth of young John H., and therefore it is possible that the parents of John H. Watson named him after Watson Gordon, in a deliberate attempt at flattery, to win young John a patron.²²

If John H. Watson had kin in Scotland, it seems unlikely that he would visit there without exposure to the public buildings and museums of Edinburgh housing his illustrious relative’s work. Indeed, he may have spent time in Watson Gordon’s studio, soaking up the artistic culture of Edinburgh. He might even have met a young Arthur Conan Doyle at this time, for Conan Doyle’s family were renowned artists. And he would have visited London with his family and viewed Watson Gordon’s work there in the galleries. Watson’s fascination with art is notable in his records of Holmes’s cases. The title of Watson’s first book, *A Study in Scarlet*, while suggested by Holmes, deliberately apes “art jargon.” In “The Copper Beeches,” Holmes contrasts his and Watson’s viewpoints: “You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation and of the impunity with which crime may be committed there.” In “The Crooked Man,” Holmes refers to Dr. Watson’s tales as “these little sketches of yours.”

Whatever the origin of Watson’s talent and interest, he pursued it diligently. A *Study in Scarlet* could only have brought him slight commercial reward;²³ yet he followed this effort with *The Sign of Four* (1890), another report of a singular case of Holmes’s—especially memorable to Watson, for it occasioned the first

meeting with his future wife, Mary Morstan. Mary Morstan entered Watson's life as a client of Holmes's, and Watson fell under her spell immediately: "In an experience of women which extends over many nations and three separate continents," Watson records, in recollecting his first sight of her, "I have never looked upon a face which gave a clearer promise of a refined and sensitive nature."²⁴ When the Agra treasure was recovered and Mary Morstan stood to become the richest woman in England, Watson despaired that a gulf had opened between them that he would be unable to cross. But the treasure sank to the bottom of the Thames, and Watson joyfully proposed. They were wed in a few months.

Watson naturally moved out of the Baker Street flat at that time, and Holmes lived there alone. Mary, however, revealed herself to be most supportive of Watson's relationship with Holmes, and their friendship and association continued unabated. When Mary travelled out of town, Watson returned to the "digs" to stay with Holmes and to record Holmes's adventures. While it is clear that Watson kept notes of numerous cases that took place between 1881 and 1891, surprisingly only two records were published during that period.²⁵ Apparently Holmes was displeased by the publicity attendant upon Watson's books, and it is understandable that Holmes may have believed that further publications would hamper his movements among the criminal classes. Also, Holmes may have been concerned about Watson's ability to disguise the true names and events, for it would have been a severe breach of professional ethics for "doctor" Holmes to have disclosed his "patients' " confidences. In any event, Watson ceased publishing.

In 1891, two events appear to have ended Watson's silence. First, as reported in certain newspapers in May 1891,²⁶ Holmes died.²⁷ Second, Watson's beloved Mary became fatally ill, perhaps with tuberculosis. Perhaps out of grief for Holmes, perhaps out of an effort to create an enduring record, Watson wrote his first series of short stories recounting his adventures with Holmes. The first published was "A Scandal in Bohemia," and it appeared in the *Strand Magazine* to great acclaim. This was quickly followed by seven more stories of Holmes.²⁸ Mary died in 1892, and Watson's writing, now fuelled by a double bereavement, gave him solace. Ten more stories of Holmes²⁹ were published in 1893, and Watson's fame as a writer soared.

Then, in December 1893, he was moved by a series of letters to the press, written by Colonel James Moriarty, brother of the late Professor Moriarty, attacking Sherlock Holmes, to write one more report. "In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion," he wrote,

I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in . . . [the] company [of Sherlock Holmes] from the chance which first brought us together at the period of the “Study in Scarlet,” up to the time of his interference in the matter of the “Naval Treaty”—an interference which had the unquestionable effect of preventing a serious international complication. It was my intention to have stopped there, and to have said nothing of that event which has created a void in my life which the lapse of two years has done little to fill.

What followed was the painful account of the death of Sherlock Holmes and Watson’s paean to “the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known.”

In 1894 an event occurred that caused Watson to faint for the first and only time in his life: the return of Sherlock Holmes. Cruelly deceived by Holmes, Watson had mourned for three years for his friend but now embraced him upon his “resurrection.” Without a selfish thought (for Watson clearly had ample notes of pre-1891 cases to write up), Watson sold his practice and returned to Baker Street to live with Holmes. Then began another “Great Hiatus”—the temporary cessation of Watson’s career as a writer. While Holmes continued to jibe at Watson regarding his writing (see Holmes’s remarks in “The Abbey Grange” and “Wisteria Lodge,” both definitely post-1891 cases), he apparently forbade Watson to publish anything further. Holmes did not relent until 1901, when Watson was permitted to publish the first instalment of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a report of an astonishing case that evidently took place before Holmes’s disappearance in 1891. This case is all the more remarkable because it was published while Holmes was in active practice in London.³⁰

Clearly, after 1894 Holmes made no secret of his return to active practice. Clients continued to turn up on the steps of 221 Baker Street with pleasant regularity, and Holmes’s career flourished. Why, then, did Holmes impose a ban on publication, which was not to relent until Holmes’s retirement in 1903? In part, the ban appears to have been a matter of Holmes’s ego: “Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise,” he remarks to Watson, “has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over work of the utmost finesse and delicacy, in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite, but cannot possibly instruct, the reader.”³¹ Perhaps Holmes wished to save the recounting of his cases for his *Whole Art of Detection*, where he could present the cases as he wished. Then too, Holmes may have had quite legitimate concerns regarding client confidentiality. For example, one may read “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” with horror at Watson’s naivete (or crass

commercialism), when, after presumably disguising the names and places involved in the appalling crime, and after Holmes's efforts to keep the matter from the public, Watson writes, "there is every prospect that the son and daughter may come to live happily together in ignorance of the black cloud which rests upon their past." While Watson may have concealed the clients' names and the locales from the public, did he think that those involved would not learn of his report and so dispel their "ignorance of the black cloud"?

Watson must have been convinced by Holmes, for he refrained from any further publication until Holmes retired. In 1902, Watson remarried.³² This wife is never named. The couple moved to rooms in Queen Anne Street. There Watson took up the practice of medicine again, but fortunately, notwithstanding his remarks in September 1902 on the demands of his practice,³³ he must not have been very engaged. Perhaps with the encouragement of the new Mrs. Watson, perhaps from a feeling of uselessness resulting from Holmes's retirement, another flood of stories burst forth in 1903, and, apparently with Holmes's permission, Watson was able to acknowledge publicly his elation at Holmes's return. He may also have sought subtle revenge against Holmes for Holmes's cruel treatment of Watson, for though Holmes utters no unkind words in "The Empty House," he comes across as cold and unfeeling, utterly heedless of the emotional pain caused by his years of hiding.

Watson published fifteen more stories between 1904 and 1913, and then, in 1914, came the call he had subconsciously awaited for so long: Holmes needed his assistance with a case. Watson's rôle in the capture of Von Bork, the German spy, was a small one compared to Holmes's, but the two old friends had an opportunity to chat intimately and recall the days of the past. "Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age," remarked Holmes. Watson continued to write and publish, producing a long tale of Holmes detecting murder in Sussex (*The Valley of Fear*, 1915, which probably occurred in 1888) and additional short reports through 1927, recording pre-1904 cases. Curiously, he allowed the last batch of short stories to be collected as *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927), with an introduction by Arthur Conan Doyle, rather than by himself (as in the case of *His Last Bow*, 1917).

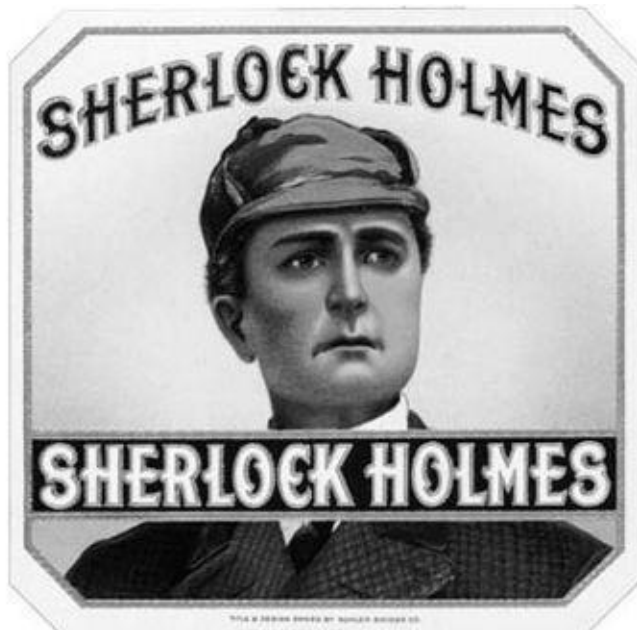
The date of Watson's death is unknown, and those who dream of an immortal Sherlock Holmes long for Watson to remain by his side. Without Holmes's aid, however, the "old campaigner," as he styled himself in 1891, must have passed over those Reichenbach Falls in the sky not long after his friend and colleague Arthur Conan Doyle. "Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself; but talent instantly recognizes genius," Watson wrote of Inspector Macdonald in *The*

Valley of Fear, but he might well have said the same of himself. Without the talents of John H. Watson, Holmes may well have laboured in obscurity.

THE PUBLIC LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND JOHN H. WATSON

OBSCURITY has surely not been the fate of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, nor of John H. Watson. Holmes's "public life," as film historian Michael Pointer put it in his ground-breaking study *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1975), began in 1893. In that year a production of "Under the Clock," a parody of Sherlock Holmes written by and starring C.H.E. Brookfield and Seymour Hicks, ran on the stage of the Royal Court Theatre in London for 92 performances. This was followed by a five-act play in 1894 by Charles Rogers. In 1899, William Gillette's "Sherlock Holmes," nominally co-authored by Conan Doyle, began its remarkable record of performances, and in 1900 Holmes made his debut on the screen, in *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*, a 49-second-long peep-show (mutascope). In 1905, Vitagraph made *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, shown in England as "Held for a Ransom," based loosely on *The Sign of Four*. Most scholars credit Maurice Costello as starring in this film, and if this is correct, Costello was the first identifiable filmed Sherlock Holmes.

"After this," Pointer writes, "scarcely a year passed without Sherlock Holmes appearing on the screen somewhere in the world, even if only in the title." While well over one hundred Sherlock Holmes films have been made, three actors dominate the public's vision of Holmes: William Gillette, star of the stage play and later silent film; Basil Rathbone, appearing as Holmes in a series of 14 films in the 1940s; and Jeremy Brett, cast as Holmes in 44 television episodes. One's Holmes of choice seems to be almost a matter of generation rather than taste, for each of these three actors dominated his era's portrayals.



William Gillette (from a contemporary cigar label).

Among silent films, the most notable are the Nordisk Film Company series from 1908 to 1911 starring Viggo Larsen (13 films), the Franco-British Film Company series of 1912 starring George Treville (8 films), the 1916 film production of Gillette's stage play (starring Gillette himself), and the remarkable Stoll Picture Productions from 1921 to 1923 starring Eille Norwood and Hubert Willis (45 films). Sadly, most of the silent films are lost or viewable only in museums, but public domain reproductions of some of the Norwood films are widely available. Conan Doyle applauded Norwood's performances, calling them "extraordinary clever personations"; the views of Holmes and Watson are unknown. Certainly the actor had a magnetic and masterful appearance as the detective.

Sound was introduced to the Holmes films in 1929 (Clive Brook's *Return of Sherlock Holmes*).³⁴ Raymond Massey (*The Speckled Band*, 1931), the splendid actor known to later generations as "Dr. Gillespie" on television's "Dr. Kildare," Robert Rendel (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1932), and Reginald Owen (*A Study in Scarlet*, 1933) all had single film appearances as Holmes. The first great series of Holmes performances of the sound era were those of Arthur Wontner, who took on the rôle of Holmes in a quintet of films made from 1930 to 1936.³⁵ Wontner's performance as Holmes was magnificent—"Sherlock Holmes come to life," in the words of one critic. He was age sixty-two in his last appearance, however, and with his retirement from the rôle, he soon came to be

overshadowed.

The year 1939 saw the fortunate convergence of man and rôle, in the casting of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce as Holmes and Watson, in the first Holmes film to be set in the Victorian period, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Curiously, every previous Holmes film had been set in the contemporary scene of the 1910s and 1920s. This highly successful Twentieth Century Fox production, which electrified a generation, was quickly followed by *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. When Fox lost interest in the series, it was taken up by Universal Pictures in 1942, with the first of twelve more films starring Rathbone and Bruce.³⁶ Sadly, these were set in contemporary times and showed Holmes battling Nazis and other villains in contemporary dress. Nevertheless, Rathbone captured perfectly the nervous energy and dominating personality of Holmes, and while Bruce's buffoonish portrait of Watson would shame the memory of the "trustworthy comrade" and "man of action," as the real Holmes characterized him, the public adored both actors, and neither found he could leave the rôle behind.

The series lapsed in 1946, and it was not until 1959 that another theatrical feature brought Holmes to the Victorian age—Peter Cushing's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the first Holmes film in colour. Over a dozen more films have appeared since then, including most recently *Without a Clue* (1988), a comedy disclosing that Watson was the real investigator, with Holmes merely an actor hired to handle the public aspects of Watson's investigations. Michael Caine starred as Holmes, and Ben Kingsley as Watson. None of these recent versions has risen to the heights of perfection, but many point to the 1965 *A Study in Terror* (known as *Fog* in England), starring John Neville and Donald Houston, as the most literate script and high-quality production ever combined in a Sherlock Holmes film. The first film to depict Holmes dealing with Jack the Ripper, it broke new ground in its theory of the Ripper and showed a warm and believable relationship between Holmes and a highly competent Dr. Watson.



Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce (publicity photo).

Television has produced an equally large number of Sherlock Holmes stories. One of the very first television broadcasts was an NBC field test dramatization of “The Three Garridebs,” in 1937. In 1953, a series of 39 episodes were produced for the series called *The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, starring Ronald Howard and Howard Marion Crawford. The series is notable for its poor production quality and rushed scripts, but in “The Case of the Cunningham Heritage,” it presented the first filmed version of the meeting of Holmes and Watson. Peter Cushing returned to his film rôle as Holmes, opposite Nigel Stock as Watson, in a series of 17 stories for BBC television, aired in 1968. In 1980, a Polish television series of 24 episodes was filmed, using the “New Adventures” scripts but starring English actors Geoffrey Whitehead and Donald Pickering, which received limited release in Germany and the U.S. in dubbed versions. Two splendid films were made for television in 1983, of *The Sign of Four* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, starring Ian Richardson as Holmes and David Healy (in the former) and Donald Churchill (in the latter) as Watson. Then, commencing in 1984, another fortunate combination of man and rôle occurred, when the U.K.’s Granada Television cast Jeremy Brett as Holmes in a magnificent series of 44 episodes, beginning with the series entitled “Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.” David Burke played Watson splendidly in the first 13 episodes and was replaced in later episodes by the equally superb Edward Hardwicke. The stories are by and large excellent interpretations of the Canon, and while Brett is not the Holmes of everyone’s imagination, his larger-than-life

characterisation will certainly stand for a generation as *the* screen Sherlock Holmes. Even more importantly, Burke's and Hardwicke's portrayals of Watson finally do justice to the "old campaigner" as a man of courage, intelligence, and compassion. Most recently, Matt Frewer and Kenneth Welsh have appeared in a series of Canadian productions of original Sherlock Holmes stories.



Jeremy Brett and David Burke (publicity photo).

Other media have also provided venues for portrayals of Holmes and Watson. There are over 750 radio shows in the English language alone, with such brilliant actors as Rathbone and Bruce (in an American series that ran from 1939 to 1950, with a few cast changes along the way), Sir John Gielgud and Sir Ralph Richardson, Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley, and most recently Clive Merrison and Michael Williams. The latter pair had the honour of being the first team ever to perform all sixty tales of Sherlock Holmes. Comic strip versions of the Sherlock Holmes stories appeared in newspapers as early as the 1930s, and there are hundreds of appearances of Holmes (or an iconic version of the Great Detective) in comic books. Animated cartoon portrayals of Sherlock Holmes are plentiful as well, both serious adaptations of the stories and comedic gems such as Daffy Duck's "Deduce, You Say!" by Chuck Jones. There are hundreds of board games, puzzles, and toys incorporating the figure of Sherlock Holmes and the stories. Holmes has even penetrated the world of computers, starring in several computer games.

IMITATIVE WRITINGS

“THERE are probably more imitations of Sherlock Holmes than of any other character from literature,” writes Paul D. Herbert, introducing his masterful historical survey of parodies, pastiches, and other imitative writings of Sherlock Holmes, *The Sincerest Form of Flattery* (1983).³⁷ The “flattery” of Dr. Watson began quite early in Watson’s literary career. The earliest parody found, “My Evening with Sherlock Holmes,” appeared in *The Speaker*, an English magazine, in its November 28, 1891, issue, only four months after the first Holmes story appeared in the *Strand Magazine*. Through 1979, over nine hundred imitative stories had been tabulated. In the 1995 bibliography prepared by Ronald B. DeWaal, over two thousand were listed. Some are “pastiche,” fictional adventures written in the style of Dr. Watson. The first group of these reports the unpublished cases of Dr. Watson actually mentioned in the Canon, including such tantalizing references as the “giant rat of Sumatra,” the “red leech,” the “remarkable worm,” and a dozen more. Even Arthur Conan Doyle’s son Adrian joined in this pursuit, collaborating with mystery doyen John Dickson Carr to pen the “Exploits of Sherlock Holmes,” collected in book form in 1954. Other “tributes” are wholly invented and supplement the Canon. These purport to report Holmes’s activities in some very unlikely places, including Minnesota, New York, the Vatican, and South America. Some include other historical figures, such as Karl Marx, W. S. Gilbert, Arthur Sullivan, Harry Houdini, Winston Churchill, Teddy Roosevelt, Sigmund Freud, Annie Oakley, Oscar Wilde, Aleister Crowley, Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Robert Louis Stevenson, Harry Flashman, Count Dracula, Jack the Ripper (of course), and even Arthur Conan Doyle! Some pastiches are science fictional, placing Holmes in time machines or spaceships or transporting him to distant galaxies.



The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes.

One particular imitation, Solar Pons, is so well drawn that he has inspired pastiches and study groups himself. The creation of August Derleth, also known for his horror and science fiction writing and publishing, Pons was admittedly not a copy of Holmes but a purported student of the Master. Set in the decades of the 1910s and 1920s, Pons's adventures (with his companion Dr. Lyndon Parker) were meticulously crafted mysteries. Derleth's first story of Pons was written in 1928, with the express permission of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; his seventieth was written in 1971. "Solar Pons is not a caricature of Sherlock Holmes," wrote Vincent Starrett, in his foreword to the first Pons collection. "He is, rather, a clever impersonator, with a twinkle in his eye, which tells us that he knows he is not Sherlock Holmes, knows that we know it, but that he hopes we will like him anyway for what he symbolizes." Indeed, Pons was so liked that in 1967, Luther Norris formed the Praed Street Irregulars, patterned after the Baker Street Irregulars, the Sherlock Holmes literary society, and after Derleth's death, author Basil Copper wrote a number of additional volumes of short stories and a novel about Pons's further adventures.

A different branch of imitations consists of parodies of the original adventures. The first known series, by R. C. Lehmann, began in 1893, almost immediately upon completion of the appearance of the *Memoirs*. These were the

“Picklock Holes” adventures, which were first published in the magazine *Punch*. When the adventures comprising the *Return* began to appear in the *Strand Magazine*, Lehman revived Picklock, and “Picky Back” stories began in 1903. The parodies were not only British; John Kendrick Bangs, a well-known American humourist, wrote a series of parodies, under both the character name of “Sherlock Holmes” and later that of “Shylock Homes.” The first of these, *The Pursuit of the House-Boat*, was novel-length and appeared in 1897, dedicated to A. Conan Doyle. The largest series of parodies, with a lead character named Herlock Sholmes, were written by Charles Hamilton under the pseudonym Peter Todd. His efforts were published in various boys’ magazines, including, *The Gem*, *The Magnet*, and *The Greyfriar’s Herald*, between 1915 and 1925. Another early parodist was Maurice Leblanc, creator of the successful rogue Arsène Lupin, who matched wits with Herlock Sholmes in several tales. Modern parodies include such gems as John Ruyle’s “Turlock Loams,” among whose cases are found “The Five Buffalo Chips,” “The Freckled Hand,” and “The Giant Bat of Sonoma,” and Robert L. Fish’s priceless “Schlock Homes” (and “Dr. Watney”) of 221 Bagel Street.



“How now, Sirrah?” he replied; “how dare you insinuate that——”

“Picklock Holes.”

A third class of imitations is those using Holmes as an instructor. There are several series of stories relating to bridge (the card game), including Frank Thomas’s and George Gooden’s *Sherlock Holmes, Bridge Detective* (the series was continued by Thomas alone), and Alfred Sheinwold’s frequent columns. The great mathematician Raymond Smullyan created *The Chess Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes*, and there are books on computer languages (e.g., *Elementary Basic*), numerology, life insurance, gardening, logic, mathematics, and balloon modelling in which Holmes teaches a novice Watson to master these pursuits.

THE STUDY OF THE CANON

SERIOUS study of Sherlock Holmes and the Watsonian Canon is generally considered to begin with Frank Sidgwick, who, under the signature “F. S.,” wrote an “open letter to Dr. Watson,” published in the *Cambridge Review* of January 23, 1902. Almost simultaneously, in America, Arthur Bartlett Maurice wrote “Some Inconsistencies of Sherlock Holmes” for *The Bookman*. In 1904, the English critic and poet Andrew Lang, best known for his collections of fairy tales, carefully analysed “The Three Students” in *Longman’s Magazine*. The real launch of Sherlockian studies, however, can be attributed to Father Ronald Knox, who wrote, as a parody of serious biblical scholarship, a paper entitled “Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes” (1911). He urged the reader of the Holmes cycle (which in a Biblical reference, became known as the Canon) to apply “the method by which we treat as significant what the author did not mean to be significant, by which we single out as essential what the author regarded as incidental.” There was a special fascination, he suggested, in applying this method to Sherlock Holmes “because it is, in a sense, Holmes’s own method. ‘It has long been an axiom of mine,’ he says, ‘that the little things are infinitely the most important.’ It might be the motto of his life’s work.” The essay became very popular among his fellow Oxford students, but not until 1928, when the essay was published in book form, did it have a more widespread impact. Other scholars in England and America began to publish works considering the biographical aspects of Watson and later Holmes, and in 1934, the first collection of essays, *Baker Street Studies*, was published in England (by an American, H. W. Bell).

Bell’s fine anthology marks the beginning of the “golden age” of Sherlockian scholarship. This era saw publication of such cornerstones as Christopher Morley’s introduction to *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1930), still in print; Vincent Starrett’s *Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1934); *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*, an anthology of essays edited by Starrett (1940); Christopher Morley’s *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: A Textbook of Friendship* (1944), the first annotated effort (five stories); Ellery Queen’s *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1944), a collection of parodies and pastiches; Edgar W. Smith’s anthology *Profile by Gaslight: An Irregular Reader about the Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1944); and *An Irregular Chronology of Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* by Professor Jay Finley Christ.

While many other excellent scholarly works were published between the

1940s and the late 1960s, the year 1967 produced probably the most influential work of Sherlockian scholarship ever published, William S. Baring-Gould's *Annotated Sherlock Holmes*. Christopher Morley, in introducing his own modest effort at annotating some of Watson's writing (*Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: A Study in Friendship*, 1944), wrote, "The enthusiast likes to dream of the great omnibus volume in which the whole Sherlockian codex would be annotated from end to end for a new generation." Baring-Gould's two-volume work did precisely that: It included all 60 of the Sherlock Holmes tales, with numerous annotations collecting into summary form the scholarship of the golden age as well as Baring-Gould's own theories, especially relating to the internal chronology of the stories. With numerous illustrations and useful introductory essays on a variety of Sherlockian topics, Baring-Gould's work became the standard text of reference for every student of the Canon.


Baring-Gould, the creative director of *Time* magazine's Circulation and Corporate Education Department, was known in Sherlockian circles for his chronology of the stories. He had achieved previous success with his biography of Holmes, entitled *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective*, published in 1962. That book had the curious preface, "No characters in this book are fictional, although the author should very much like to meet any who claim to be." The book was both hailed and criticised by Sherlockians for achieving great success in bringing the "serious" study of Holmes to the public's attention and for its outlandish theories of Holmes's encounter with Jack the Ripper, his romance with Irene Adler, and his death. Baring-Gould, the grandson of Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, author of numerous books of ghost lore and local colour, also wrote *The Lure of the Limerick* and, with his wife, Ceil, co-wrote *The Annotated Mother Goose*. Unfortunately, he died before *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* was published.

A great deal of additional scholarship was written in the ensuing decades. The most important work was the publication of a bibliography by Ronald B. DeWaal in 1974. Entitled *The World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: A Classified and Annotated List of Materials Relating to Their Lives and Adventures*, the work included a near-comprehensive listing of editions of the tales, foreign editions, scholarly works, pastiches, parodies, films, radio and television shows, stage plays, cartoons, comics, and even puzzles, games, and toys, with over 6,000 entries. This was supplemented in 1980 with another volume of over 6,000 entries. In 1995, the entire work was reformulated as *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, with over 13,000 new entries, for a total of over 25,000 listings. Now available on the Internet, the award-winning bibliography is also available in computerised format.

More recently, another milestone was achieved with the publication in 1993 of the *Oxford Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Owen Dudley Edwards, Reader in History at the University of Edinburgh and author of *Quest for Sherlock Holmes: A Biographical Study of Arthur Conan Doyle*, as well as Christopher Roden, founder of the “Arthur Conan Doyle Society” and editor of its *A.C.D.* journal, W. W. Robson, professor emeritus of the University of Edinburgh and author of *Modern English Literature*, and Richard Lancelyn Green, co-author (with John Michael Gibson) of the definitive bibliography of the works of Arthur Conan Doyle. As may be expected, the Oxford edition treats the stories as fiction and traces in detail the literary and biographical antecedents for many of the references in the tales. As such, therefore, it offers little for the *Sherlockian* scholar, that is, the follower of Father Knox’s dictates, and virtually ignores the vast literature created in Knox’s wake. This deficit was partially remedied in 1998, with the commencement of publication by this editor of the *Sherlock Holmes Reference Library*, a series of heavily annotated editions of the original nine volumes of the Canon, designed to survey all *Sherlockian* scholarship to date.

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THE
BAKER STREET
JOURNAL

An Irregular Quarterly of Sherlockiana

Editor: STEVEN ROTHMAN



THE BAKER STREET IRREGULARS
NEW YORK

The Baker Street Journal.

Notwithstanding these valuable books, the deepest source for the study of Sherlock Holmes remains the same as at its inception: the scholarly journal. The leading publication is, and has been for over fifty years, *The Baker Street Journal*, the official publication of The Baker Street Irregulars, a nonprofit organisation whose headquarters is in New York. To understand the origins of the *Journal* and its numerous companions, one must first consider Holmes's friends, the various Sherlock Holmes societies and literary organisations around the world.

THE FRIENDS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

ALTHOUGH recent studies suggest that there may have been an organisation of students of Sherlock Holmes in Germany in the 1910s, the first-known formal organisation dedicated to “the study of the Sacred Writings” (as the constitution of the organisation states its purpose) was The Baker Street Irregulars. Officially founded in 1934, it was an outgrowth of the literary critic and author Christopher Morley’s “3 Hours for Lunch” club, an informal group of his literary cronies who met “irregularly” to discuss art and literature over long, alcoholic lunches. Morley had a regular column entitled “Bowling Green” in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, which he used frequently to write about Holmes, and from Morley’s great love of the Canon sprang the notion for a more formal organisation dedicated to Holmes. Initially, the members exchanged notes of research and contributed “papers” to the general knowledge of Holmes, much as did other scientific and literary groups. In late 1934, a formal meeting was held: a dinner at Christ Cella’s restaurant in New York, attended by luminaries including Morley, actor William Gillette, bookman Vincent Starrett, well-known wit and Algonquin Round Table regular Alexander Woollcott (who wrote a long report on the dinner), and retired boxer Gene Tunney. Morley resisted the notion of regular meetings, however, and the organisation proceeded in a desultory fashion until Morley ceded the leadership to Edgar W. Smith, a vice-president of General Motors overseas operations and a loyal fan of the Great Detective. With the ascension of Smith, the Irregulars took on “regularity.” Membership expanded nationally and today stands at around three hundred diverse individuals. The current head of the Irregulars is known as “Wiggins,” after the head of the gang of street urchins first mentioned in *A Study in Scarlet* from which the organisation takes its name. Membership is not “open”; it is conferred autocratically on a select few each year by “Wiggins” using criteria shrouded in mystery. Members are young and old and include actors, doctors, lawyers, writers, businesspeople, teachers, librarians, and others who love the study of Holmes; they hail from the United States, England, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, New Zealand, and Australia. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman were Irregulars; so, too, were leading literary figures such as Christopher Morley, Vincent Starrett, Ellery Queen (both of them!), Rex Stout, Isaac Asimov, and Poul Anderson. The Irregulars meet once a year in New York City at a formal dinner attended by Irregulars and specially invited guests that includes toasts, rituals, papers,

remembrances, and camaraderie.



Christopher Morley.

In 1946, the Irregulars undertook to publish their “papers” in an academic journal known as *The Baker Street Journal*. The original *Journal* was a financial fiasco, and it ceased publication in 1949, after thirteen issues. In January 1951, however, Edgar Smith revived the *Journal* on a more modest scale, and it flourished. The *Journal* has been published continuously since 1951 on a quarterly basis and, in celebration of its fiftieth volume in 2001, released its entire run as a CD-ROM archive, containing over 16,000 pages of Sherlockian study.

The friends of Christopher Morley were not alone. Coincidentally, in 1934, a small group of English aficionados formed the Sherlock Holmes Society, which sadly languished.³⁸ As an offshoot of the 1951 Festival of Britain and a magnificent exhibition on Sherlock Holmes, the organisation reformed as the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and today boasts hundreds of members. The English group has published *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* regularly since 1951, and it contains much serious “Holmesian”³⁹ study as well as reports of the meetings of the Society. Numerous other national groups have formed as well, including Australian, French, Italian, Spanish, Danish, German, Canadian, and Japanese societies.

While the national-based groups were growing, local interest was also rising.

Known as “scion societies”—many of which have been “officially” recognised by the national “root” societies—local or special-interest groups arose to further the study of Holmes. The first of these was The Five Orange Pips of Westchester County, formed in 1935, followed by others in metropolitan areas around America. In Canada, the Bootmakers of Toronto was formed. In Great Britain, independent organisations called the Northern Musgraves (based in northern England) and the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, billing itself as an “international Sherlock Holmes study group,” were formed and fostered their own offspring. Other occupation-based groups arose, such as the Sir James Saunders Society of dermatologists interested in the Canon, The Practical but Limited Geologists, and the Sub-Librarians. A blemish on the history of The Baker Street Irregulars is its evolution into a group that excluded women from active membership. This was rectified in 1991, but not before the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes, a national organisation excluding male members, was formed. In 1989, Christopher Roden founded the Arthur Conan Doyle Society, dedicated to the study of *all* of the works of the author. An incomplete list of the current societies is included as an appendix to these volumes.

Not every “scion society” has a publication, but many produce elaborate, carefully edited journals, rivalling the output of academia. Donald Hobbs’s checklist *The Crowded Box-Room*, published in 1998, listed over 200 publications, most of which remain active. Among the leaders are *Canadian Holmes*, the publication of the Bootmakers of Toronto; *The Ritual* and *The Musgrave Papers* of the Northern Musgraves; *The Camden House Journal* of the Occupants of the Empty House; *The Passengers’ Log* of the Sydney Passengers; and the *Shoso-in Bulletin*, published by a consortium of Japanese and American scholars. While some societies’ releases consist only of local news, many include high-quality essays and “papers” written by members and other contributors, rivalling those that appear in *The Baker Street Journal* or *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*. DeWaal’s bibliography lists thousands of such scholarly works, but thousands more have been published since 1995. With the advent of the Internet, scholarship has expanded into electronic format as well, with scholars around the world contributing their views and thoughtful essays. In addition, dozens of websites feature articles about Holmes and Watson, parodies, pastiches, and other material relating to their lives and times. Especially noteworthy are the websites of Christopher Redmond, www.sherlockian.net, the centre of the “spider’s web” of Sherlockian materials; The Sherlock Holmes Society of Lon-don (www.sherlock-holmes.org.uk) and *The Baker Street Journal* (www.bakerstreetjournal.com); and the invaluable reference tools online at the University of Minnesota Sherlock Holmes Collection website

(<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/ush/ush.html>). See the appendix “The Sherlockian Web” for further references.

The topics of Sherlockian scholarship seem inexhaustible. While the classic issues—Watson’s wounds, Watson’s marriages, Holmes’s education, the Great Hiatus, and of course, the chronology of the tales—were amply debated in the golden age, some student always seems to find a new approach. For example, Carey Cummings has daringly created a biorhythmic analysis of the tales and constructed part of an excellent chronology. Also, studies related to the author’s own interests persist. Such a formula follows the logic, “I am interested in the study of X. I am interested in the study of Sherlock Holmes. Therefore, Sherlock Holmes must have been interested in X.” Scholarly works have demonstrated that Holmes was a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a druid, an agnostic, a Catholic, a Stoic, a deist, an atheist; that Holmes studied medicine, law, music, graphology, phrenology, early computer science, astronomy, astrology, numerology, and endless other subjects; that Holmes travelled to Russia, China, India, Tibet, the South Seas, America, Canada, Japan; that Holmes was an American (a thesis asserted by no less than Franklin Delano Roosevelt), a Canadian, a Frenchman. No student of the Canon need fear that, even after 100 years of study, there is nothing left to write about!

Sherlock Holmes was born into the Victorian age, but at the beginning of the twenty-first century, interest in the detective, his companions, and his life and adventures continues unabated—and indeed, has swelled. The fifty-six short adventures in these volumes, and the four short novels that will appear in the final volume, represent all that can be *definitely* known about the Great Detective and the Good Doctor. Yet, as the annotations that appear below in the following stories will reveal, there is an infinite universe to study and in which to speculate.

The game is afoot!

LESLIE S. KLINGER
July 4, 2003

¹ Some students of the Master Detective contend that he is indeed still among the living. Their principal proof for this contention is the observation that the death of one so famous would not have gone unreported by *The Times* of London, which has to date published no obituary for Holmes. Others sneer that Sherlock Holmes was a fictional character. However, such a wild assertion will not be considered in a work as serious as these volumes. In the words of the eminent bookman Vincent Starrett, writing of Holmes, “Only those things the heart believes are true.”

² “The Implicit Holmes,” *Baker Street Journal* (O. S.) 1, no. 2 (April 1946), 111–112 (The Editor’s Gas-Lamp).

³ Whether Conan Doyle ever met Sherlock Holmes is equally speculative, although it is widely reported that Conan Doyle gave illustrator Sidney Paget a cigarette case on the occasion of Paget’s wedding with the inscription “From Sherlock Holmes, 1893.”

⁴ £1,595 in current purchasing power. All conversions to modern equivalencies of currency are based on the work of John J. McCusker, “Comparing the Purchasing Power of Money in Great Britain from 1264 to Any Other Year Including the Present,” Economic History Services, 2001, URL <http://www.eh.net/hmit/ppowerbp/>, and McCusker’s *How Much Is That in Real Money?: A Historical Commodity Price Index for Use as a Deflator of Money Values in the Economy of the United States* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 2001).

⁵ Conan Doyle apparently omitted to mention to either Newnes or Smith that he was submitting the manuscripts on behalf of his friend John Watson, and, as happened with *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*, the stories—and every successive tale of Sherlock Holmes—were published with Arthur Conan Doyle credited as the author.

⁶ Walter himself illustrated only one story, “The Dying Detective” (included in volume II).

⁷ £61,039 in current purchasing power.

⁸ Gillette was not the only actor who was identified with the rôle; English actor H. A. Saintsbury gave an estimated 1,400 performances in the part in England between 1902 and 1905 and in 1929, and H. Hamilton Stewart appeared as Holmes more than 2,000 times in the English provinces between 1906 and 1918.

⁹ Quoted in Stashower, *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*.

¹⁰ *Memories and Adventures*, p. 103.

¹¹ Some skeptics say that the study of Holmes’s life *ends* with the records of Conan Doyle as well. See *Preface*.

¹² “The Bruce-Partington Plans.”

¹³ “The ‘Gloria Scott’.”

¹⁴ “The Musgrave Ritual.”

¹⁵ “The Final Problem.”

¹⁶ The variety of theories is discussed in detail on page 745 below.

¹⁷ “The Lion’s Mane” and “The Blanched Soldier.” Although “The Mazarin Stone” and “His Last Bow” are written in the third person, both are generally attributed to Watson. Subsequent to Watson’s publication of “Shoscombe Old Place” in 1927, numerous writers claimed to have “discovered” lost writings of Watson or other records of Holmes’s life and adventures, but these must be discarded as weak fictions. This edition

contains every authentic record of Sherlock Holmes.

[18](#) “The Lion’s Mane” and “The Blanched Soldier.” Note that while Watson does not participate in the events recounted in “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” or “The Musgrave Ritual,” he is present as an audience for Holmes’s reminiscences.

[19](#) The student of Watson’s life is bedeviled with the same problems as a biographer of Holmes, namely, the lack of any record of his existence outside the purportedly fictional works of Arthur Conan Doyle. See *Preface*.

[20](#) Dr. Watson evidences a familiarity with the diggings at Ballarat, Victoria, which suggests personal knowledge (*The Sign of Four*). However, Watson states there that he “visited” Ballarat, and in “Boscombe Valley Mystery,” he had no knowledge of the Australian slang expression “Cooee!” The matter is unsettled at best.

[21](#) *A Study in Scarlet*.

[22](#) See this editor’s “Art in Whose Blood?” for a more detailed consideration of this speculation.

[23](#) Conan Doyle reported that he received £25 for all rights to the story.

[24](#) *The Sign of Four*.

[25](#) *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890), both classed as “novels” even though quite short by modern standards.

[26](#) Sadly, no scholar has been able to find any copies of the articles in newspaper archives.

[27](#) “The Final Problem.”

[28](#) “The Blue Carbuncle,” “The Speckled Band,” “The Engineer’s Thumb,” “The Noble Bachelor,” “The Beryl Coronet,” “The Copper Beeches,” and “Silver Blaze.”

[29](#) “The Cardboard Box,” “The Yellow Face,” “The Stock-Broker’s Clerk,” “The ‘Gloria Scott’,” “The Musgrave Ritual,” “The Reigate Squires,” “The Crooked Man,” “The Resident Patient,” “The Greek Interpreter,” and “The Naval Treaty.”

[30](#) Holmes practised in London from 1881 (perhaps earlier, but not recorded by Watson) to 1891 and 1894 to 1902. Only *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) were published during these periods.

[31](#) “The Abbey Grange.”

[32](#) Watson’s second marriage is evident in “The Blanched Soldier,” set in January 1903 (“The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I can recall in our association”), and in 1902, in “The Illustrious Client” and “The Three Gables,” it is plain that he is no longer living with Holmes at Baker Street, suggesting that the marriage had already occurred.

³³ These remarks were made to Baron Gruner in “The Illustrious Client,” however, and may have been dissembling.

³⁴ Brooks also appeared as Holmes in *Sherlock Holmes* (1932), based on Gillette’s play.

³⁵ *The Sleeping Cardinal* (1930), *The Missing Rembrandt* (1932), *The Sign of Four* (1932), *The Triumph of Sherlock Holmes* (1934; released in the United States as *The Valley of Fear*), and *Silver Blaze* (1936; released in the United States as *Murder at the Baskervilles*).

³⁶ These were *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror* (1942), *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon* (1943), *Sherlock Holmes in Washington* (1943), *Sherlock Holmes Faces Death* (1943), *Sherlock Holmes and the Spider Woman* (1944), *The Scarlet Claw* (1944), *The Pearl of Death* (1944), *The House of Fear* (1945), *The Woman in Green* (1945), *Pursuit to Algiers* (1946), *Terror by Night* (1946), and *Dressed to Kill* (1946).

³⁷ A “pastiche” is generally a serious attempt to produce a story in the style of the original author. A “parody” imitates the writer’s style for comic effect or ridicule.

³⁸ A. G. Macdonnell, then head of the English group, actually attended the first formal dinner of the Irregulars in late 1934.

³⁹ For reasons undiscerned, English Sherlockians are known as “Holmesians”; American Holmesians are known as “Sherlockians.”

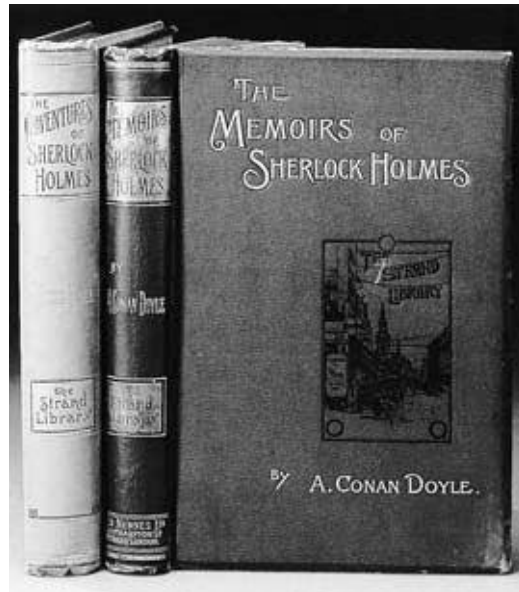
THE NEW ANNOTATED

SHERLOCK HOLMES



VOLUME I






The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (London: George
Newnes, 1892);
The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (London: George
Newnes, 1893).



THE ADVENTURES OF

SHERLOCK HOLMES¹



¹ First published in book form by George Newnes Ltd. on October 14, 1892, in an edition of 10,000 copies, with 104 illustrations by Sidney Paget. The first American edition was published by Harper & Brothers, New York, on the following day (4,500 copies).

[A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA](#)¹

“A Scandal in Bohemia” is the first of the Sherlock Holmes short stories to have appeared in the Strand Magazine; eventually, all of the works but the novels A Study in Scarlet and The Sign of Four appeared there. “A Scandal in Bohemia” is memorable for what it reveals about Holmes’s attitude toward women, and it is the only story in which we see Holmes defeated—although he may well have decided that he was on the wrong side in the matter and been glad of his “defeat.” The opera singer “heroine,” Irene Adler, has inspired generations of women Sherlockians, leading to the 1965 formation of the “Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes” by women who were banned from joining The Baker Street Irregulars (a rule subsequently reversed). In “Scandal,” we see for the first time the partnership of Holmes and Watson in action. Watson is no longer merely the reporter, as he is in A Study in Scarlet or The Sign of Four, and his participation is essential

in carrying out Holmes's plans. There is little mystery in this first tale, but the reader's interest is seized by Watson's opening words: "To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman."

I

TO SHERLOCK HOLMES she is always *the* woman.² I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen; but, as a lover, he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer.³ They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men’s motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler,⁴ of dubious and questionable memory.

I had seen little of Holmes lately. My marriage had drifted us away from each other. My own complete happiness,⁵ and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention; while Holmes, who loathed every form of society⁶ with his whole Bohemian⁷ soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature. He was still, as ever, deeply attracted by the study of crime, and occupied his immense faculties and extraordinary powers of observation in following out those clues, and clearing up those mysteries which had been abandoned as hopeless by the official police.⁸ From time to time I heard some vague account of his doings: of his summons to Odessa⁹ in the case of the Trepoff murder,¹⁰ of his clearing up of the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers at Trincomalee,¹¹ and finally of the mission which he had accomplished so delicately and successfully for the reigning family of Holland.¹² Beyond these signs of his activity, however, which I merely shared with all the readers of the daily press, I knew little of my former friend and companion.

One night—it was on the twentieth of March, 1888—I was returning from a

journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice¹³), when my way led me through Baker Street. As I passed the well-remembered door,¹⁴ which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again. He had risen out of his drug-created dreams and was hot upon the scent of some new problem. I rang the bell, and was shown up to the chamber which had formerly been in part my own.

His manner was not effusive. It seldom was; but he was glad, I think, to see me. With hardly a word spoken, but with a kindly eye, he waved me to an armchair, threw across his case of cigars, and indicated a spirit case¹⁵ and a gasogene¹⁶ in the corner. Then he stood before the fire, and looked me over in his singular introspective fashion.

“Wedlock suits you,” he remarked. “I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you.”

“Seven,” I answered.

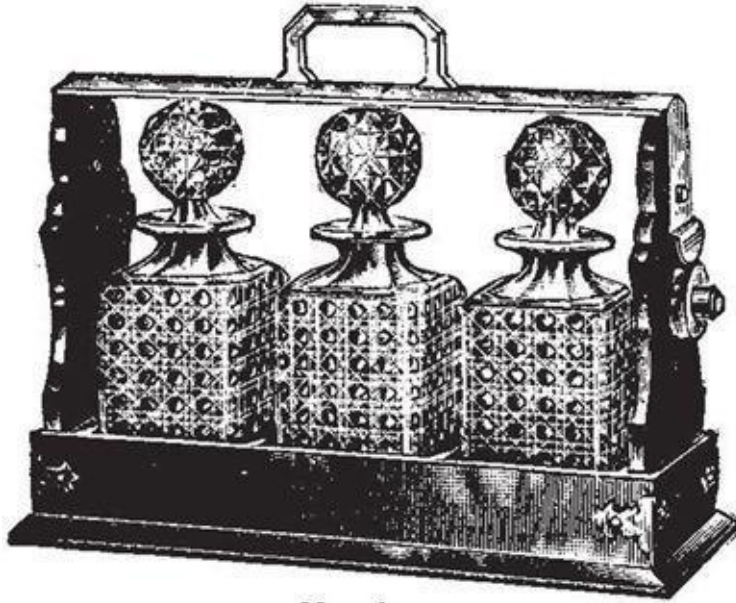


“Then he stood before the fire.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson. And in practice again, I observe. You did not tell me that you intended to go into harness.”¹⁷

“Then, how do you know?”



No. 60.
Full Hole Nail Cut Bottles.. 8s/0
Bramah Lock.

Spirit case.

Harrod's Catalogue, 1895

“I see it, I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?”

“My dear Holmes,” said I, “this is too much. You would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago. It is true that I had a country walk on Thursday and came home in a dreadful mess; but as I have changed my clothes, I can’t imagine how you deduce it. As to Mary Jane,¹⁸ she is incorrigible, and my wife has given her notice; but there again I fail to see how you work it out.”

He chuckled to himself and rubbed his long nervous hands together.

“It is simplicity itself,” said he; “my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by some one who has very carelessly

scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey.¹⁹ As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform,²⁰ with a black mark of nitrate of silver²¹ upon his right-forefinger, and a bulge on the right side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope,²² I must be dull indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.”



Harrod's Catalogue, 1895

I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. “When I hear you give your reasons,” I remarked, “the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled, until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours.”

“Quite so,” he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. “You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room.”

“Frequently.”

“How often?”

“Well, some hundreds of times.”

“Then how many are there?”

“How many? I don’t know.”

“Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed. By the way, since you are interested in these little problems, and since you are good enough to chronicle one or two of my trifling experiences,²³ you may be interested in this.” He threw over a sheet of thick, pink-tinted notepaper which had been lying open upon the table. “It came by the last post,”²⁴ said he. “Read it aloud.”

The note was undated, and without either signature or address.

There will call upon you to-night, at a quarter to eight o’clock [it said], a gentleman who desires to consult you upon a matter of the very deepest moment. Your recent services to one of the Royal Houses of Europe have shown that you are one who may safely be trusted with matters which are of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated. This account of you we have from all quarters received. Be in your chamber then at that hour, and do not take it amiss if your visitor wear a mask.

“This is indeed a mystery,” I remarked. “What do you imagine that it means?”

“I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts. But the note itself. What do you deduce from it?”

I carefully examined the writing, and the paper upon which it was written.

“The man who wrote it was presumably well to do,” I remarked, endeavouring to imitate my companion’s processes. “Such paper could not be bought under half-a-crown²⁵ a packet. It is peculiarly strong and stiff.”

“Peculiar—that is the very word,” said Holmes. “It is not an English paper at all. Hold it up to the light.”

I did so, and saw a large *E* with a small *g*, a *P*, and a large *G* with a small *t* woven into the texture of the paper.

“What do you make of that?” asked Holmes.

“The name of the maker, no doubt; or his monogram, rather.”



“I carefully examined the writing.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Not at all. The *G* with the small *t* stands for ‘Gesellschaft,’ which is the German for ‘Company.’ It is a customary contraction like our ‘Co.’ *P*, of course, stands for ‘Papier.’ Now for the *Eg*. Let us glance at our Continental Gazetteer.”²⁶ He took down a heavy brown volume from his shelves. “Eglow, Eglonitz—here we are, Egria.²⁷ It is in a German-speaking country²⁸—in Bohemia,²⁹ not far from Carlsbad.³⁰ ‘Remarkable as being the scene of the death of Wallenstein,³¹ and for its numerous glass factories and paper mills.’ Ha, ha, my boy, what do you make of that?” His eyes sparkled, and he sent up a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette.

“The paper was made in Bohemia,” I said.

“Precisely. And the man who wrote the note is a German. Do you note the peculiar construction of the sentence—‘This account of you we have from all quarters received.’ A Frenchman or Russian could not have written that. It is the German who is so uncourteous to his verbs. It only remains, therefore, to discover what is wanted by this German who writes upon Bohemian paper, and prefers wearing a mask to showing his face. And here he comes, if I am not mistaken, to resolve all our doubts.”

As he spoke there was the sharp sound of horses’ hoofs and grating wheels against the curb, followed by a sharp pull at the bell. Holmes whistled.

“A pair, by the sound,” said he. “Yes,” he continued, glancing out of the window. “A nice little brougham³² and a pair of beauties. A hundred and fifty guineas apiece.³³ There’s money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else.”

“I think that I had better go, Holmes.”³⁴

“Not a bit, Doctor. Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell.³⁵ And this promises to be interesting. It would be a pity to miss it.”

“But your client—”

“Never mind him. I may want your help, and so may he. Here he comes. Sit down in that armchair, Doctor, and give us your best attention.”

A slow and heavy step, which had been heard upon the stairs and in the passage, paused immediately outside the door. Then there was a loud and authoritative tap.

“Come in!” said Holmes.



“A man entered.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1894

A man entered who could hardly have been less than six feet six inches in height, with the chest and limbs of a Hercules. His dress was rich with a richness which would, in England, be looked upon as akin to bad taste. Heavy bands of Astrakhan³⁶ were slashed across the sleeves and fronts of his double-breasted coat, while the deep blue cloak which was thrown over his shoulders was lined with flame-coloured silk and secured at the neck with a brooch which consisted of a single flaming beryl. Boots which extended half way up his calves, and which were trimmed at the tops with rich brown fur, completed the impression of barbaric opulence which was suggested by his whole appearance. He carried a broad-brimmed hat in his hand, while he wore across the upper part of his face, extending down past the cheek-bones, a black vizard mask,³⁷ which he had apparently adjusted that very moment, for his hand was still raised to it as he entered. From the lower part of the face he appeared to be a man of strong character, with a thick, hanging lip, and a long straight chin suggestive of resolution pushed to the length of obstinacy.

“You had my note?” he asked, with a deep harsh voice and a strongly marked German accent. “I told you that I would call.” He looked from one to the other of us, as if uncertain which to address.

“Pray take a seat,” said Holmes. “This is my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, who is occasionally good enough to help me in my cases. Whom have I the honour to address?”

“You may address me as the Count Von Kramm, a Bohemian nobleman. I understand that this gentleman, your friend, is a man of honour and discretion, whom I may trust with a matter of the most extreme importance. If not, I should much prefer to communicate with you alone.”

I rose to go, but Holmes caught me by the wrist and pushed me back into my chair. “It is both, or none,” said he. “You may say before this gentleman anything which you may say to me.”

The Count shrugged his broad shoulders. “Then I must begin,” said he, “by binding you both to absolute secrecy for two years, at the end of that time the matter will be of no importance. At present it is not too much to say that it is of such weight it may have an influence upon European history.”

“I promise,” said Holmes.

“And I.”

“You will excuse this mask,” continued our strange visitor. “The august person who employs me wishes his agent to be unknown to you, and I may confess at once that the title by which I have just called myself is not exactly my own.”

“I was aware of it,” said Holmes drily.

“The circumstances are of great delicacy, and every precaution has to be taken to quench what might grow to be an immense scandal and seriously compromise one of the reigning families of Europe. To speak plainly, the matter implicates the great House of Ormstein, hereditary kings of Bohemia.”

“I was also aware of that,” murmured Holmes, settling himself down in his armchair, and closing his eyes.

Our visitor glanced with some apparent surprise at the languid, lounging figure of the man who had been no doubt depicted to him as the most incisive reasoner, and most energetic agent in Europe. Holmes slowly reopened his eyes, and looked impatiently at his gigantic client.

“If your Majesty would condescend to state your case,” he remarked, “I should be better able to advise you.”



“He tore the mask from his face.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

The man sprang from his chair, and paced up and down the room in uncontrollable agitation. Then, with a gesture of desperation, he tore the mask from his face and hurled it upon the ground. “You are right,” he cried, “I am the King. Why should I attempt to conceal it?”



“I am the King.”

Artist unknown, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, July 11, 1891

“Why, indeed?” murmured Holmes. “Your Majesty had not spoken before I was aware that I was addressing Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia.”³⁸

“But you can understand,” said our strange visitor, sitting down once more and passing his hand over his high, white forehead, “you can understand that I am not accustomed to doing such business in my own person. Yet the matter was so delicate that I could not confide it to an agent without putting myself in his power. I have come *incognito* from Prague for the purpose of consulting you.”

“Then, pray consult,” said Holmes, shutting his eyes once more.

“The facts are briefly these: Some five years ago, during a lengthy visit to Warsaw, I made the acquaintance of the well-known adventuress,³⁹ Irene Adler. The name is no doubt familiar to you.”

“Kindly look her up in my index, Doctor,” murmured Holmes without opening his eyes. For many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information. In this case I found her biography sandwiched in between that of a Hebrew Rabbi⁴⁰ and that

of a staff-commander⁴¹ who had written a monograph upon the deep sea fishes.

“Let me see,” said Holmes. “Hum! Born in New Jersey in the year 1858.⁴² Contralto—hum! La Scala,⁴³ hum! Prima donna Imperial Opera of Warsaw—yes! Retired from operatic stage⁴⁴—ha! Living in London—quite so! Your Majesty, as I understand, became entangled with this young person,⁴⁵ wrote her some compromising letters, and is now desirous of getting those letters back.”

“Precisely so. But how—”

“Was there a secret marriage?”

“None.”

“No legal papers or certificates?”

“None.”

“Then I fail to follow your Majesty. If this young person should produce her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove their authenticity?”

“There is the writing.”

“Pooh, pooh! Forgery.”

“My private notepaper.”

“Stolen.”

“My own seal.”

“Imitated.”

“My photograph.”

“Bought.”⁴⁶

“We were both in the photograph.”

“Oh, dear! That is very bad! Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion.”

“I was mad—insane.”

“You have compromised yourself seriously.”

“I was only Crown Prince then. I was young. I am but thirty now.”

“It must be recovered.”

“We have tried and failed.”

“Your Majesty must pay. It must be bought.”

“She will not sell.”

“Stolen, then.”

“Five attempts have been made. Twice burglars in my pay ransacked her house. Once we diverted her luggage when she travelled. Twice she has been waylaid. There has been no result.”

“No sign of it?”

“Absolutely none.”

Holmes laughed. "It is quite a pretty little problem," said he.

"But a very serious one to me," returned the King reproachfully.

"Very, indeed. And what does she propose to do with the photograph?"

"To ruin me."

"But how?"

"I am about to be married."

"So I have heard."

"To Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen,⁴⁷ second daughter of the King of Scandinavia.⁴⁸ You may know the strict principles of her family. She is herself the very soul of delicacy. A shadow of a doubt as to my conduct would bring the matter to an end."

"And Irene Adler?"

"Threatens to send them the photograph. And she will do it. I know that she will do it. You do not know her, but she has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men. Rather than I should marry another woman, there are no lengths to which she would not go—none."

"You are sure that she has not sent it yet?"

"I am sure."

"And why?"

"Because she has said that she would send it on the day when the betrothal was publicly proclaimed. That will be next Monday."

"Oh, then we have three days yet," said Holmes, with a yawn. "That is very fortunate, as I have one or two matters of importance to look into just at present. Your Majesty will, of course, stay in London for the present?"

"Certainly. You will find me at the Langham,⁴⁹ under the name of the Count Von Kramm."

"Then I shall drop you a line to let you know how we progress."

"Pray do so. I shall be all anxiety."

"Then, as to money?"

"You have *carte blanche*."

"Absolutely?"

"I tell you that I would give one of the provinces of my kingdom to have that photograph."

"And for present expenses?"

The King took a heavy chamois leather bag from under his cloak and laid it on the table.

"There are three hundred pounds in gold and seven hundred in notes,"⁵⁰ he

said.

Holmes scribbled a receipt upon a sheet of his note-book and handed it to him. “And Mademoiselle’s address?” he asked.

“Is Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue, St. John’s Wood.”⁵¹

Holmes took a note of it. “One other question,” said he. “Was the photograph a cabinet?”⁵²

“It was.”

“Then, good-night, your Majesty, and I trust that we shall soon have some good news for you. And good-night, Watson,” he added, as the wheels of the Royal brougham rolled down the street. “If you will be good enough to call tomorrow afternoon at three o’clock, I should like to chat this little matter over with you.”

II

AT three o'clock precisely I was at Baker Street, but Holmes had not yet returned. The landlady informed me that he had left the house shortly after eight o'clock in the morning. I sat down beside the fire, however, with the intention of awaiting him, however long he might be. I was already deeply interested in his inquiry, for, though it was surrounded by none of the grim and strange features which were associated with the two crimes which I have elsewhere recorded,⁵³ still, the nature of the case and the exalted station of his client gave it a character of its own. Indeed, apart from the nature of the investigation which my friend had on hand, there was something in his masterly grasp of a situation, and his keen, incisive reasoning, which made it a pleasure to me to study his system of work, and to follow the quick, subtle methods by which he disentangled the most inextricable mysteries. So accustomed was I to his invariable success that the very possibility of his failing had ceased to enter into my head.

It was close upon four before the door opened, and a drunken-looking groom, ill-kempt and side-whiskered, with an inflamed face and disreputable clothes, walked into the room. Accustomed as I was to my friend's amazing powers in the use of disguises, I had to look three times before I was certain that it was indeed he. With a nod he vanished into the bedroom, whence he emerged in five minutes tweed-suited and respectable, as of old. Putting his hands into his pockets, he stretched out his legs in front of the fire and laughed heartily for some minutes.

"Well, really!" he cried, and then he choked; and laughed again until he was obliged to lie back, limp and helpless, in the chair.

"What is it?"

"It's quite too funny. I am sure you could never guess how I employed my morning, or what I ended by doing."

"I can't imagine. I suppose that you have been watching the habits, and perhaps the house, of Miss Irene Adler."

"Quite so, but the sequel was rather unusual. I will tell you, however. I left the house a little after eight o'clock this morning in the character of a groom out of work. There is a wonderful sympathy and freemasonry among horsy men. Be one of them, and you will know all that there is to know. I soon found Briony Lodge. It is a *bijou*⁵⁴ villa, with a garden at the back, but built out in front right up to the road, two stories. Chubb lock⁵⁵ to the door. Large sitting-room on the right side, well furnished, with long windows almost to the floor, and those

preposterous English window fasteners which a child could open. Behind there was nothing remarkable, save that the passage window could be reached from the top of the coach-house. I walked round it and examined it closely from every point of view, but without noting anything else of interest.



“A drunken-looking groom.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“I then lounged down the street, and found, as I expected, that there was a mews⁵⁶ in a lane which runs down by one wall of the garden. I lent the ostlers a hand in rubbing down their horses, and received in exchange twopence, a glass of half-and-half,⁵⁷ two fills of shag tobacco,⁵⁸ and as much information as I could desire about Miss Adler, to say nothing of half a dozen other people in the neighbourhood in whom I was not in the least interested, but whose biographies I was compelled to listen to.”

“And what of Irene Adler?” I asked.

“Oh, she has turned all the men’s heads down in that part. She is the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet. So say the Serpentine-mews, to a man. She lives quietly, sings at concerts, drives out at five every day, and returns at seven sharp for dinner. Seldom goes out at other times, except when she sings. Has only one male visitor, but a good deal of him. He is dark, handsome, and

dashing; never calls less than once a day, and often twice. He is a Mr. Godfrey Norton, of the Inner Temple.⁵⁹ See the advantages of a cabman as a confidant. They had driven him home a dozen times from Serpentine-mews, and knew all about him. When I had listened to all they had to tell, I began to walk up and down near Briony Lodge once more, and to think over my plan of campaign.

“This Godfrey Norton was evidently an important factor in the matter. He was a lawyer. That sounded ominous. What was the relation between them, and what the object of his repeated visits? Was she his client, his friend, or his mistress? If the former, she had probably transferred the photograph to his keeping. If the latter, it was less likely. On the issue of this question depended whether I should continue my work at Briony Lodge, or turn my attention to the gentleman’s chambers in the Temple. It was a delicate point, and it widened the field of my inquiry. I fear that I bore you with these details, but I have to let you see my little difficulties, if you are to understand the situation.”

“I am following you closely,” I answered.

“I was still balancing the matter in my mind, when a hansom cab⁶⁰ drove up to Briony Lodge, and a gentleman sprang out. He was a remarkably handsome man, dark, aquiline, and moustached—evidently the man of whom I had heard. He appeared to be in a great hurry, shouted to the cabman to wait, and brushed past the maid who opened the door with the air of a man who was thoroughly at home.

“He was in the house about half an hour, and I could catch glimpses of him, in the windows of the sitting-room, pacing up and down, talking excitedly, and waving his arms. Of her I could see nothing. Presently he emerged, looking even more flurried than before. As he stepped up to the cab, he pulled a gold watch from his pocket and looked at it earnestly. ‘Drive like the devil,’ he shouted, ‘first to Gross & Hankey’s⁶¹ in Regent Street, and then to the church of St. Monica in the Edgware Road.⁶² Half a guinea⁶³ if you do it in twenty minutes!’



A hansom in Baker Street (1900).

Victorian and Edwardian London

“Away they went, and I was just wondering whether I should not do well to follow them, when up the lane came a neat little landau,⁶⁴ the coachman with his coat only half buttoned, and his tie under his ear, while all the tags of his harness were sticking out of the buckles. It hadn’t pulled up before she shot out of the hall door and into it. I only caught a glimpse of her at the moment, but she was a lovely woman, with a face that a man might die for.



Regent Street.

The Queen’s London (1897) “ ‘The church of St. Monica, John,’ she cried, ‘and half a sovereign if you reach it in twenty minutes.’

“This was quite too good to lose, Watson. I was just balancing whether I should run for it, or whether I should perch behind her landau, when a cab came through the street. The driver looked twice at such a shabby fare; but I jumped in

before he could object. ‘The church of St. Monica,’ said I, ‘and half a sovereign if you reach it in twenty minutes.’ It was twenty-five minutes to twelve, and of course it was clear enough what was in the wind.

“My cabby drove fast. I don’t think I ever drove faster, but the others were there before us. The cab and the landau with their steaming horses were in front of the door when I arrived. I paid the man, and hurried into the church. There was not a soul there save the two whom I had followed and a surpliced clergyman, who seemed to be expostulating with them. They were all three standing in a knot in front of the altar. I lounged up the side aisle like any other idler who has dropped into a church. Suddenly, to my surprise, the three at the altar faced round to me, and Godfrey Norton came running as hard as he could towards me.

“ ‘Thank God!’ he cried. ‘You’ll do. Come! Come!’

“ ‘What then?’ I asked.

“ ‘Come man, come, only three minutes, or it won’t be legal.’

“I was half-dragged up to the altar, and before I knew where I was, I found myself mumbling responses which were whispered in my ear, and vouching for things of which I knew nothing, and generally assisting in the secure tying up of Irene Adler, spinster, to Godfrey Norton, bachelor. It was all done in an instant, and there was the gentleman thanking me on the one side and the lady on the other, while the clergyman beamed on me in front. It was the most preposterous position in which I ever found myself in my life, and it was the thought of it that started me laughing just now. It seems that there had been some informality about their license, that the clergyman absolutely refused to marry them without a witness of some sort, and that my lucky appearance saved the bridegroom from having to sally out into the streets in search of a best man.⁶⁵ The bride gave me a sovereign, and I mean to wear it on my watch-chain in memory of the occasion.”



“I found myself mumbling responses.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“This is a very unexpected turn of affairs,” said I; “and what then?”

“Well, I found my plans very seriously menaced. It looked as if the pair might take an immediate departure, and so necessitate very prompt and energetic measures on my part. At the church door, however, they separated, he driving back to the Temple, and she to her own house. ‘I shall drive out in the Park⁶⁶ at five as usual,’ she said as she left him. I heard no more. They drove away in different directions, and I went off to make my own arrangements.”

“Which are?”

“Some cold beef and a glass of beer,” he answered, ringing the bell. “I have been too busy to think of food, and I am likely to be busier still this evening. By the way, Doctor, I shall want your co-operation.”

“I shall be delighted.”

“You don’t mind breaking the law?”

“Not in the least.”

“Nor running a chance of arrest?”

“Not in a good cause.”

“Oh, the cause is excellent!”



Rotten Row/Hyde Park.

The Queen's London (1897) "Then I am your man."

"I was sure that I might rely on you."

"But what is it you wish?"

"When Mrs. Turner⁶⁷ has brought in the tray I will make it clear to you. Now," he said, as he turned hungrily on the simple fare that our landlady had provided, "I must discuss it while I eat, for I have not much time. It is nearly five now. In two hours we must be on the scene of action. Miss Irene, or Madame, rather, returns from her drive at seven. We must be at Briony Lodge to meet her."

"And what then?"

"You must leave that to me. I have already arranged what is to occur. There is only one point on which I must insist. You must not interfere, come what may. You understand?"

"I am to be neutral?"

"To do nothing whatever. There will probably be some small unpleasantness. Do not join in it. It will end in my being conveyed into the house. Four or five minutes afterwards the sitting-room window will open. You are to station yourself close to that open window."

"Yes."

"You are to watch me, for I will be visible to you."

"Yes."

"And when I raise my hand—so—you will throw into the room what I give you to throw, and will, at the same time, raise the cry of fire. You quite follow me?"

"Entirely."

"It is nothing very formidable," he said, taking a long cigar-shaped roll from his pocket. "It is an ordinary plumber's smoke-rocket,⁶⁸ fitted with a cap⁶⁹ at either end to make it self-lighting. Your task is confined to that. When you raise

your cry of fire, it will be taken up by quite a number of people. You may then walk to the end of the street, and I will rejoin you in ten minutes. I hope that I have made myself clear?"

"I am to remain neutral, to get near the window, to watch you, and, at the signal, to throw in this object, then to raise the cry of fire, and to wait you at the corner of the street."

"Precisely."

"Then you may entirely rely on me."

"That is excellent. I think perhaps it is almost time that I prepare for the new *rôle* I have to play."

He disappeared into his bedroom, and returned in a few minutes in the character of an amiable and simple-minded Nonconformist clergyman.⁷⁰ His broad black hat, his baggy trousers, his white tie, his sympathetic smile, and general look of peering and benevolent curiosity were such as Mr. John Hare⁷¹ alone could have equalled. It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime.



“A simple-minded clergyman.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

It was a quarter past six when we left Baker Street, and it still wanted ten minutes to the hour when we found ourselves in Serpentine Avenue. It was already dusk, and the lamps were just being lighted as we paced up and down in front of Briony Lodge, waiting for the coming of its occupant. The house was just such as I had pictured it from Sherlock Holmes's succinct description, but the locality appeared to be less private than I expected. On the contrary, for a small street in a quiet neighbourhood, it was remarkably animated. There was a group of shabbily-dressed men smoking and laughing in a corner, a scissors grinder with his wheel, two guardsmen⁷² who were flirting with a nurse-girl, and several well-dressed young men who were lounging up and down with cigars in their mouths.

“You see,” remarked Holmes, as we paced to and fro in front of the house, “this marriage rather simplifies matters. The photograph becomes a double-edged weapon now. The chances are that she would be as averse to its being seen by Mr. Godfrey Norton, as our client is to its coming to the eyes of his Princess. Now the question is—Where are we to find the photograph?”

“Where, indeed?”

“It is most unlikely that she carries it about with her. It is cabinet size. Too large for easy concealment about a woman's dress. She knows that the King is capable of having her waylaid and searched. Two attempts of the sort have already been made. We may take it, then, that she does not carry it about with her.”

“Where, then?”

“Her banker or her lawyer. There is that double possibility. But I am inclined to think neither. Women are naturally secretive, and they like to do their own secreting. Why should she hand it over to any one else? She could trust her own guardianship, but she could not tell what indirect or political influence might be brought to bear upon a business man. Besides, remember that she had resolved to use it within a few days. It must be where she can lay her hands upon it. It must be in her own house.”

“But it has twice been burgled.”

“Pshaw! They did not know how to look.”

“But how will you look?”

“I will not look.”

“What then?”

“I will get her to show me.”

“But she will refuse.”

“She will not be able to. But I hear the rumble of wheels. It is her carriage. Now carry out my orders to the letter.”

As he spoke the gleam of the side lights of a carriage came round the curve of the avenue. It was a smart little landau which rattled up to the door of Briony Lodge. As it pulled up one of the loafing men at the corner dashed forward to open the door in the hope of earning a copper,⁷³ but was elbowed away by another loafer who had rushed up with the same intention. A fierce quarrel broke out, which was increased by the two guardsmen, who took sides with one of the loungers, and by the scissors grinder, who was equally hot upon the other side. A blow was struck, and in an instant the lady, who had stepped from her carriage, was the centre of a little knot of flushed and struggling men who struck savagely at each other with their fists and sticks. Holmes dashed into the crowd to protect the lady; but, just as he reached her, he gave a cry and dropped to the ground, with the blood running freely down his face. At his fall the guardsmen took to their heels in one direction and the loungers in the other, while a number of better dressed people, who had watched the scuffle without taking part in it, crowded in to help the lady and to attend to the injured man. Irene Adler, as I will still call her, had hurried up the steps; but she stood at the top with her superb figure outlined against the lights of the hall, looking back into the street.

“Is the poor gentleman much hurt?” she asked.

“He is dead,” cried several voices.

“No, no, there’s life in him,” shouted another. “But he’ll be gone before you can get him to hospital.”

“He’s a brave fellow,” said a woman. “They would have had the lady’s purse and watch if it hadn’t been for him. They were a gang, and a rough one too. Ah, he’s breathing now.”

“He can’t lie in the street. May we bring him in, marm?”

“Surely. Bring him into the sitting-room. There is a comfortable sofa. This way, please!”

Slowly and solemnly he was borne into Briony Lodge, and laid out in the principal room, while I still observed the proceedings from my post by the window. The lamps had been lit, but the blinds had not been drawn, so that I could see Holmes as he lay upon the couch. I do not know whether he was seized with compunction at that moment for the part he was playing, but I know that I never felt more heartily ashamed of myself in my life than when I saw the beautiful creature against whom I was conspiring, or the grace and kindness with which she waited upon the injured man. And yet it would be the blackest treachery to Holmes to draw back now from the part which he had intrusted to

me. I hardened my heart and took the smoke-rocket from under my ulster.⁷⁴ After all, I thought, we are not injuring her. We are but preventing her from injuring another.



“He gave a cry and dropped.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

Holmes had sat up upon the couch, and I saw him motion like a man who is in want of air. A maid rushed across and threw open the window. At the same instant I saw him raise his hand, and at the signal I tossed my rocket into the room with a cry of “Fire!” The word was no sooner out of my mouth than the whole crowd of spectators, well dressed and ill—gentlemen, ostlers, and servant maids—joined in a general shriek of “Fire!” Thick clouds of smoke curled through the room,⁷⁵ and out at the open window. I caught a glimpse of rushing figures, and a moment later the voice of Holmes from within, assuring them that it was a false alarm. Slipping through the shouting crowd I made my way to the corner of the street, and in ten minutes was rejoiced to find my friend’s arm in mine, and to get away from the scene of uproar. He walked swiftly and in silence for some few minutes, until we had turned down one of the quiet streets which lead towards the Edgware Road.

“You did it very nicely, Doctor,” he remarked. “Nothing could have been

better. It is all right.”

“You have the photograph!”

“I know where it is.”

“And how did you find out?”

“She showed me, as I told you that she would.”

“I am still in the dark.”

“I do not wish to make a mystery,” said he, laughing. “The matter was perfectly simple. You, of course, saw that every one in the street was an accomplice. They were all engaged for the evening.”⁷⁶

“I guessed as much.”

“Then, when the row broke out, I had a little moist red paint in the palm of my hand. I rushed forward, fell down, clapped my hand to my face, and became a piteous spectacle. It is an old trick.”

“That also I could fathom.”

“Then they carried me in. She was bound to have me in. What else could she do? And into her sitting-room, which was the very room which I suspected. It lay between that and her bedroom, and I was determined to see which. They laid me on a couch, I motioned for air, they were compelled to open the window, and you had your chance.”

“How did that help you?”

“It was all-important. When a woman thinks that her house is on fire, her instinct is at once to rush to the thing which she values most. It is a perfectly overpowering impulse, and I have more than once taken advantage of it. In the case of the Darlington⁷⁷ Substitution Scandal it was of use to me, and also in the Arnsworth Castle⁷⁸ business. A married woman grabs at her baby—an unmarried one reaches for her jewel box. Now it was clear to me that our lady of to-day had nothing in the house more precious to her than what we are in quest of. She would rush to secure it. The alarm of fire was admirably done. The smoke and shouting were enough to shake nerves of steel. She responded beautifully. The photograph is in a recess behind a sliding panel just above the right bell-pull. She was there in an instant, and I caught a glimpse of it as she half drew it out. When I cried out that it was a false alarm, she replaced it, glanced at the rocket, rushed from the room, and I have not seen her since. I rose, and, making my excuses, escaped from the house. I hesitated whether to attempt to secure the photograph at once; but the coachman had come in, and as he was watching me narrowly, it seemed safer to wait. A little over-precipitance may ruin all.”

“And now?” I asked.



“I saw it as she half drew it out.”

Artist unknown, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, July 11, 1891

“Our quest is practically finished. I shall call with the King to-morrow, and with you, if you care to come with us. We will be shown into the sitting-room to wait for the lady, but it is probable that when she comes she may find neither us nor the photograph. It might be a satisfaction to his Majesty to regain it with his own hands.”

“And when will you call?”

“At eight in the morning. She will not be up, so that we shall have a clear field. Besides, we must be prompt, for this marriage may mean a complete change in her life and habits. I must wire to the King without delay.”

We had reached Baker Street, and had stopped at the door. He was searching his pockets for the key, when some one passing said: “Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes.”

There were several people on the pavement at the time, but the greeting appeared to come from a slim youth in an ulster who had hurried by.



“Good-night, Mr. Sherlock Holmes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“I’ve heard that voice before,” said Holmes, staring down the dimly lit street.
“Now, I wonder who the deuce that could have been.”

III

I SLEPT at Baker Street that night, and we were engaged upon our toast and coffee⁷⁹ when the King of Bohemia rushed into the room.

“You have really got it!” he cried, grasping Sherlock Holmes by either shoulder and looking eagerly into his face.

“Not yet.”

“But you have hopes?”

“I have hopes.”

“Then, come. I am all impatience to be gone.”

“We must have a cab.”

“No, my brougham is waiting.”

“Then that will simplify matters.” We descended and started off once more for Briony Lodge.

“Irene Adler is married,” remarked Holmes.

“Married! When?”

“Yesterday.”

“But to whom?”

“To an English lawyer named Norton.”

“But she could not love him.”

“I am in hopes that she does.”

“And why in hopes?”

“Because it would spare your Majesty all fear of future annoyance. If the lady loves her husband, she does not love your Majesty. If she does not love your Majesty, there is no reason why she should interfere with your Majesty’s plan.”

“It is true. And yet—! Well! I wish she had been of my own station! What a queen she would have made!” He relapsed into a moody silence which was not broken until we drew up in Serpentine Avenue.

The door of Briony Lodge was open, and an elderly woman⁸⁰ stood upon the steps. She watched us with a sardonic eye as we stepped from the brougham.

“Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I believe?” said she.

“I am Mr. Holmes,” answered my companion, looking at her with a questioning and rather startled gaze.

“Indeed! My mistress told me that you were likely to call. She left this morning with her husband by the 5:15 train from Charing Cross for the Continent.”

“What!” Sherlock Holmes staggered back, white with chagrin and surprise.

“Do you mean that she has left England?”

“Never to return.”

“And the papers?” asked the King, hoarsely. “All is lost.”

“We shall see.” He pushed past the servant, and rushed into the drawing-room, followed by the King and myself. The furniture was scattered about in every direction, with dismantled shelves, and open drawers, as if the lady had hurriedly ransacked them before her flight. Holmes rushed at the bell-pull, tore back a small sliding shutter, and, plunging in his hand, pulled out a photograph and a letter. The photograph was of Irene Adler herself in evening dress, the letter was superscribed to “Sherlock Holmes, Esq. To be left till called for.” My friend tore it open, and we all three read it together. It was dated at midnight of the preceding night and ran in this way—

MY DEAR MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES—

You really did it very well. You took me in completely. Until after the alarm of fire, I had not a suspicion. But then, when I found how I had betrayed myself, I began to think. I had been warned against you months ago. I had been told that, if the King employed an agent, it would certainly be you. And your address had been given me. Yet, with all this, you made me reveal what you wanted to know. Even after I became suspicious, I found it hard to think evil of such a dear, kind old clergyman. But, you know, I have been trained as an actress myself.⁸¹ Male costume is nothing new to me.⁸² I often take advantage of the freedom which it gives. I sent John, the coachman, to watch you, ran upstairs, got into my walking clothes, as I call them, and came down

just as you departed.



Charing Cross Station.

The Queen's London (1897)

Well, I followed you to your door, and so made sure that I was really an object of interest to the celebrated Mr. Sherlock Holmes. Then I, rather imprudently, wished you good-night, and started for the Temple to see my husband.

We both thought the best resource was flight, when pursued by so formidable an antagonist; so you will find the nest empty when you call tomorrow. As to the photograph, your client may rest in peace. I love and am loved by a better man than he. The King may do what he will without hindrance from one whom he has cruelly wronged. I keep it only to safeguard myself, and to preserve a weapon which will always secure me from any steps which he might take in the future. I leave a photograph which he might care to possess; and I remain, dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,

very truly yours,

IRENE NORTON, *née* ADLER

“What a woman—oh, what a woman!” cried the King of Bohemia, when we had all three read this epistle. “Did I not tell you how quick and resolute she was? Would she not have made an admirable queen? Is it not a pity that she was not on my level?”

“From what I have seen of the lady, she seems, indeed, to be on a very different level to your Majesty,” said Holmes, coldly.⁸³ “I am sorry that I have not been able to bring your Majesty’s business to a more successful conclusion.”

“On the contrary, my dear sir,” cried the King. “Nothing could be more successful. I know that her word is inviolate. The photograph is now as safe as if it were in the fire.”

“I am glad to hear your Majesty say so.”

“I am immensely indebted to you. Pray tell me in what way I can reward you. This ring—” He slipped an emerald snake ring from his finger, and held it out upon the palm of his hand.⁸⁴

“Your Majesty has something which I should value even more highly,” said Holmes.

“You have but to name it.”

“This photograph!”⁸⁵

The King stared at him in amazement.

“Irene’s photograph!” he cried. “Certainly, if you wish it.”

“I thank your Majesty. Then there is no more to be done in the matter. I have the honour to wish you a very good morning.” He bowed, and, turning away without observing the hand which the King had stretched out to him, he set off in my company for his chambers.



“This photograph!”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

And that was how a great scandal threatened to affect the kingdom of Bohemia, and how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman’s wit. He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of the woman.⁸⁶

1 “A Scandal in Bohemia” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in July 1891. There was a New York edition of the *Strand Magazine*, and the story appeared there as well, in August 1891. However, many of the stories from the *Adventures* were also syndicated, that is, sold by a syndicate to newspapers across the United States. “A Scandal in Bohemia,” for example, appeared in at least seven newspapers *before* the New York *Strand Magazine* publication. Some of the papers did not use Watson’s titles as they appeared in the *Strand Magazine*; “A Scandal in Bohemia” appeared in one paper as “Woman’s Wit” and “The King’s Sweetheart” in another. “The Man with the Twisted Lip” ran under the title “The Strange Tale of a Beggar,” while “The Blue Carbuncle” was headed “The Christmas Goose that Swallowed a Diamond.”

2 Holmes is characterised throughout the balance of the Canon as verging on misogynistic. “Women are never entirely to be trusted—not the best of them,” he expresses in *The Sign of Four*. “I am not a whole-souled admirer of womankind, as you are aware, Watson,” he remarks in *The Valley of Fear*. His feelings toward Irene Adler, then, eventually form a startling contrast to the accepted picture of Holmes, and it is perhaps a shrewd touch by Watson to introduce Holmes to the *Strand Magazine* readers by showing his softer side.

“Whether Holmes in fact falls in love with [Irene Adler],” writes Christopher Redmond, “is not a question to be answered at once, but there cannot be much doubt that Sherlockians have done so—Sherlockians who are male, that is . . . ; Sherlockians who are female have been inclined to identify with

her.” Indeed, Irene Adler has captured the readers’ imagination to the point where a series of novels about her adventures, beginning with *Good Night, Mr. Holmes*, by mystery writer Carole Nelson Douglas, has flourished.

3 There is no real record of this reported attitude of Holmes, but here Watson wants to highlight Holmes’s reaction to Irene Adler as uncharacteristic, and so he exaggerates Holmes’s coldness. In “The Three Garridebs,” Watson remarks on Holmes’s “great heart,” and Holmes often endeavours to assist young lovers (for example, in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” and “The Missing Three-Quarter”).

4 There is no evidence that Irene Adler was deceased at the time of publication of this story in July 1891. Some scholars suggest that “late” was used by Watson in the sense of “former” Irene Adler, who becomes Irene Norton after her marriage. On the other hand, J. N. Williamson concludes (“A Scandal in ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’”) that the “Count von Kramm” had Irene murdered, using Holmes for an alibi. If this is so, then Holmes’s apparent relish (in “His Last Bow”), when he speaks of “the late King of Bohemia,” may be explained.

A natural death cannot be ruled out. Some wonder if Irene Adler had some long-standing complaint that accounted for her retirement from the operatic stage, even though, at the age of thirty-one, she might have been expected to be at the height of her powers.

5 Watson’s conduct in this case, in which he spends two nights at Baker Street with no mention of communication with his wife, is hardly consistent with his declaration of marital bliss—unless Watson did send a telegram to his wife and simply failed to mention it.

6 Watson means that Holmes preferred the solitary life to the social “whirl.” Cf. Holmes’s dread that he had received “one of those unwelcome social summonses” (“The Noble Bachelor”).

7 Holmes’s life style was certainly eccentric, and one who expresses as his philosophy “My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence” (“The Red-Headed League”) can hardly be regarded as conventional. Brewer’s *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (1894) characterises the Bohemians as men “of loose and irregular habits, living by what they can pick up by their brains.” This description surely fits the world’s first consulting detective.

8 Crime in England became less violent and declined in proportion to the population during the second half of the nineteenth century. Although the popular view may be that cities breed crime, in fact, as London grew, it became more orderly. The idea of the police, new in 1829, became more widely accepted, and the number of “official police” in Greater London grew as the population burgeoned. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th Ed.) reports that from 6,158 men in 1861, the Metropolitan force had swelled to 16,943 by 1880—one for every 430 citizens; the City of London police force grew from 628 to 830, or one policeman for every 61 citizens.

9 Odessa, at the time the third-largest city in Russia (now part of Ukraine), was one of the chief centres of the 1905 uprisings against the tsar. A mutiny took place that year on board the warship *Potemkin*, docked in Odessa, and Sergey Eisenstein’s classic 1925 film *Potemkin*, filmed in the city and on the docks, memorialised the suffering of the rebels.

10 One Fyodor Fyodorovich Trepoff (1803–1889) was military policemaster of St. Petersburg. Might he be connected with Holmes’s “summons to Odessa in the case of the Trepoff murder”? Such an identification would mean that Trepoff was not the victim but perhaps the murderer. Another possibility, suggested by Richard Lancelyn Green, is *General Trepoff*, who was shot by a Nihilist on January 24, 1878.

11 Trincomalee is in the eastern province of Ceylon. This is not the only reference to Ceylon, then a British territory and now Sri Lanka: In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes displays a mastery of the subject of Buddhism in Ceylon, suggesting that he actually visited there.

12 The “reigning family of Holland” was that of William III (1817–1890), who married Princess Emma of Waldeck-Pyrmont; they produced only one child, Wilhelmina, born 1880. When William died in 1890, Wilhelmina became queen.

13 This phrase implies that before 1888, Watson had been in private practice and then given it up. In *A Study in Scarlet* (Watson’s first novel, published in 1887, recording Holmes’s capture of an American killer), which is set in 1881, Watson had not yet taken up private practice. Little is known about the intervening years. See *Chronological Table*.

14 Watson refers here to the fact that during the events of *A Study in Scarlet* and through the events of *The Sign of Four*, Watson lived at 221 Baker Street as Holmes’s flat-mate. In the latter story, Watson met and courted the heroine Mary Morstan, and we learn in this tale of their wedding.

15 A “spirit case” or “tantalus” is a stand containing usually three cut-glass decanters, which, though apparently free, cannot be removed until the bar that engages the stoppers is raised. Many such cases have a padlock on the bar, to avoid “tantalising” the servants. The “tantalus” is also mentioned in “Black Peter.”

16 A “gasogene” is a device that produces sparkling soda water (seltzer). Despite its popular association with Sherlock Holmes, the gasogene is mentioned only in “A Scandal in Bohemia” and “The Mazarin Stone.”

17 That is, back to work.

18 “Mary Jane” was a generic name for a maid. *Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management* (1861) characterises the general servant, or maid-of-all-work, evidently the person described here, as “perhaps the only one of her class deserving of commiseration; her life is a solitary one, and in some places, her work is never done.” She starts in life, Mrs. Beeton explains, probably as a girl of thirteen, employed by some “small tradesman’s wife,” and, if she succeeds, moves to a respectable tradesman’s house, where she has to do herself all the work that, in larger establishments, is performed by cook, kitchen maid, housemaid, and even footman.

“The Canon is, in fact, pervaded with servants,” comments Christopher Redmond in his *Sherlock Holmes Handbook*. A. N. Wilson, the prominent biographer, notes that among nineteenth-century Englishwomen, “the largest occupational group . . . was, overwhelmingly, the servant class.” The 1841 census listed 751,540 domestic servants; forty years later, there were 1,386,167. As the middle class swelled, more servants were called upon to do more demeaning and back-breaking work; then again, it was preferable to factory employment, and servants often created their own household “below stairs” and were treated as members of their employers’ families. Holmes, as a lodger in a lodging house, had no personal servants.

19 “Slavey” was a term used for maid servants assigned primarily the lowest duties.

20 A compound of iodine then used as an antiseptic.

21 Silver nitrate is a caustic chemical reagent and compound then used as an antiseptic and disinfectant.

22 The stethoscope was invented by Laennec in 1819 but took the form of a hollow cylinder, rather than the modern tubing. W. J. Cairns, writing in the *Daily Telegraph* of May 24, 1951, reports, “Doctors were in the habit of carrying them in their hats, and as these caused a slight bulge it was always an elementary matter to pick out doctors from other wearers of silk hats.”

23 What “one or two”? Only *A Study in Scarlet* had been published by 1889. In “The Red-Headed League,” which apparently takes place in 1890, Holmes goes even further: “The enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle *so many* of my own little adventures . . .” [emphasis added]. Watson may have

shown Holmes the manuscript of some of his early stories pre-publication.

[24](#) Contrary to modern expectations, the mail was then a reliable and rapid means of communication. Reform began in 1837, with British educator Rowland Hill's study of the postal system, and in 1840, prepaid postage by stamps was introduced. The advent of the railway and the steamship permitted a far speedier, more regular, and more reliable mail service as the nineteenth century passed. By 1900, according to *Whitaker's Almanack* (1900), in the City district of London, there were twelve deliveries daily, while in other London districts there were from six to eleven collections and deliveries. Letters were normally delivered within two to four hours of posting. More urgent messages could be designated for "express delivery" at a small additional cost, or the "district messenger service," a private carrier, could be used for 3 pennies per half-mile. Overnight delivery was the standard for mail outside London.

[25](#) English currency is explained by *Baedeker's London and Its Environs*, the classic guidebook, in its 1896 edition: "The ordinary British Gold coins are the sovereign or pound (1.= libra), equal to 20 shillings, and the half-sovereign. The *Silver* coins are the crown (5 shillings), the half-crown, the double florin (4 shillings; seldom seen), the florin (2 shillings), the shilling (s. = solidus), and the six-penny and three-penny pieces. The *Bronze coinage* consists of the penny (*d.* = denarius), of which 12 makes a shilling, the halfpenny ($\frac{1}{2} d.$), and the farthing ($\frac{1}{4} d.$)." A half-crown, or approximately 60¢ in U.S. currency at the time, would have been a considerable expenditure for writing paper in Holmes and Watson's day.

[26](#) This volume also appears in Holmes's hands in *The Sign of Four*.

[27](#) The name "Egria" is an apparent corruption of Eger, the chief town of one of the twelve "circles" or districts of the kingdom of Bohemia, situated on the river Eger. The town was called Agria by the Romans, which may be the source of Holmes's error. In 1552, István Dóbo is said to have repelled a Turkish army of 100,000 with only 2,000 townspeople by arming the women with rocks and instructing the men to imbibe the local red wine. According to legend, the invading soldiers, whose religious scruples forbade drink, saw the wine stains on the men's clothes and, imagining that the men had become enraged by drinking bull's blood, fled the city. Today Eger, now in northern Hungary, is famed for its Bull's Blood wine.

[28](#) Holmes's *Gazetteer* was in error: German Bohemians were actually then a minority; the balance of the population was Slavonic, speaking Czech.

[29](#) A kingdom of the Austrian empire, marked by a continual struggle between its German and Czech residents for supremacy. Bohemia was the greatest coal-producing province of the empire as well as the most educated. Prague was its chief city, but Bohemia contained over 400 cities within its boundaries. By the late nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian empire, formerly the Holy Roman Empire, was falling apart as Czech nationalism increased. In 1918 Bohemia became part of the new state of Czechoslovakia and now occupies the centre portion of the Czech Republic.

[30](#) Karlsbad (German) or Karlovy Vary (Czech), was then a town and famous health-spa in Bohemia. The town was named after King Charles IV of Bohemia, whose dog, legend has it, discovered the hot springs.

[31](#) Albrecht Wenzel Eusebius von Waldstein, 1583–1634, Duke of Friedland, Sagan, and Mecklenburg. The subject of Friedrich Schiller's *Wallenstein: A Historical Drama in Three Parts*, Wallenstein served as a general of the Bohemian army in the Thirty Years' War. He was assassinated in Eger.

[32](#) A light closed carriage with seats inside for two or four.

[33](#) About \$825 apiece in U.S. currency at the time. A guinea is a former English gold coin, worth twenty-one shillings. It was customary to express professional fees and prices of luxury items in guineas. To some extent, this was a marketing ploy: 20 guineas sounds like less than 21 pounds, just as a \$99.99 sales ticket seems much less than \$100.00. There was also an element of snob appeal. *Mme. Lesurier* of Bond St.

charged 22 guineas for a costume (“Silver Blaze”).

34 Why does Watson start to go? By 1889, he had collaborated with Holmes on numerous cases. D. Martin Dakin, in his *Sherlock Holmes Commentary*, observes, “Watson’s mind seems to have worked in a curious way: He writes [*A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” and “The Red-Headed League”] as if they were Holmes’s first cases, although his own dating of them and of the others shows that this was not so.” See *Chronological Table*.

35 Contrast this affectionate reference to James Boswell (1740–1795), author of the classic *Life of Samuel Johnson*, which appears to express approval of Watson’s writing, to Holmes’s criticism of Watson in “The Copper Beeches”: “You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales.” Boswell met Johnson in 1763, when he was twenty-two, Johnson fifty-three. Ten years later, they toured the Hebrides together, and Boswell’s journal of the tour became the basis for the *Life*, which was not completed until 1784. In 1888, the time of “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Watson had only known Holmes for seven years, and Dr. Watson’s two published memoirs hardly constitute a biography of Holmes. However, the remark may indicate that during this period Dr. Watson had begun his lifelong habit of careful note-taking on Holmes’s activities. It also is indicative of Holmes’s attitude of superiority to the older Watson.

36 Lambskin with a curled wool, derived from Middle Eastern sheep; or a rough fabric made in imitation of this.

37 A mask that conceals the eyes and disguises the face, as worn by the “Lone Ranger” of comic strip and television fame.

38 The “King of Bohemia” may be a thin disguise for another historical personage. Suggestions include Archduke Rudolf, only son of Franz Josef, emperor of Austria-Hungary; Prince Alexander of Battenberg, monarch of Bulgaria; Archduke Franz Ferdinand; Kaiser Wilhelm II; the “Iron Chancellor” Otto von Bismarck; Milan Obrenovich IV, first King of Serbia; Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, Second Prince and first tsar of Bulgaria; Edward Albert, Prince of Wales, son of Queen Victoria, later King Edward VII; “mad” King Ludwig of Bavaria; Oscar Wilde (because of his relationship with Lillie Langtry, often identified with Irene Adler, and the subsequent scandal surrounding Wilde’s homosexuality); the “Count of Luxemburg,” immortalised in the eponymous musical comedy by Franz Lehár; Albert Wilhelm Heinrich von Hohenzollern, King of Prussia; and Count Herbert von Bismarck. Some are plainly impossible, based on the dates in Watson’s account, but the similarities are tantalising.

39 An opportunistic woman, although the implication is a “kept woman” or “mistress.” The nineteenth century termed the class the “*grandes horizontales*,” or “pretty horsebreakers,” and notables of the nineteenth century included Laura Bell, Cora Pearl, Catherine Walters, Caroline Otero, Sarah Bernhardt, Lillie Langtry, and Lola Montez. Many pursued “careers” on the stage, exploiting their celebrity, and had liaisons with nobility, including (in the case of Langtry) Albert Edward, Prince of Wales.

40 Ruth Berman suggests that this may be Hermann Adler, chief rabbi of the United Congregations of the British Empire from 1891 to 1911. Alternatively, Hartley Nathan and Clifford S. Goldfarb propose that this is Samuel Adler, the German-American Reformist (1809–1891). They contend that he was Irene’s father and that Irene was trained to become the first female rabbi. When she was barred from pursuing this career, she renounced her religion and turned to the stage, building on her oratorical and cantorial training.

41 Probably Cort Siverstein Adeler (1622–1675), a Danish naval commander, whose name, according to Richard Lancelyn Green, appears in contemporary biographical dictionaries above that of Rabbi Nathan Adler.

42 Historical personages nominated as the “real” Irene Adler include the male Viktor Adler; Johanna Loisinger; Pauline Lucca; Jersey-born Lillie Langtry (companion of Prince Albert Edward); Irene Heron

Forsythe (of John Galsworthy's *Forsythe Chronicles*); legendary actress Sarah Bernhardt; Lola Montez; Clara Stephens ("Aunt Clara"); Lillian Nordica (New Jersey-born opera singer); and *Mme. Adler-Dévriès*. Again, the dates in Watson's account render some of these impossible.

43 The Teatro alla Scala, the great opera house of Milan. It opened August 3, 1778, with a performance of Salieri's *L'Europa Riconosciuta*. It was first remodelled in 1867 and, bombed during World War II, restored in 1946.

44 What parts Irene Adler sang in her heyday is unknown, and contralto parts are limited. Possibilities suggested include Adalgisa of Bellini's *Norma* (premiered La Scala, December 26, 1831), Amneris of Verdi's *Aida* (premiered Cairo December 12, 1871), Azucena in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* (premiered Rome, January 19, 1853), and Maddalena in Verdi's *Rigoletto* (premiered Venice, March 11, 1851).

45 As William S. Baring-Gould points out, Holmes is being smug here: "When one considers that Irene was at the most twenty-nine at this time, and that Holmes himself was a mere thirty-three, this superior attitude begins to look a trifle absurd."

46 Holmes's frivolous estimate of the seriousness of the letters and other documents is contrary to his characterisation of the notorious blackmailer Charles Augustus Milverton as the "worst man in London." He says of Milverton, "How could one compare the ruffian, who in hot blood bludgeons his mate, with this man, who methodically and at his leisure tortures the soul and wrings the nerves in order to add to his already swollen money-bags?"

47 Properly Saxe-Meiningen, then a duchy of south-central Germany, one of the states of the German Empire. George II, duke of Saxe-Meiningen (1826–1914), pursued a career as founder of the influential theatrical group known as the Meiningen Company, which he served as producer, director, financial backer, and costume and scenery designer. The duke may have been the first to recognise the importance of central artistic control of a theatrical company, and under his direction, the company, using historically accurate costumes and settings, influenced a generation of theatrical directors. There is no record of Irene Adler performing with the company, but it is intriguing to imagine that the king and Irene met through the duke.

48 This was a monarch for whom Holmes managed a confidential case mentioned in "The Final Problem" and "The Noble Bachelor." At this time, Oscar II (1829–1907) was the king of Scandinavia (Sweden and Norway). He presided over the peaceful separation of the Swedish and Norwegian thrones in 1905 and was also a prolific poet, playwright, translator, and amateur musician, winning a prize from the Swedish Academy after submitting his 1858 poetry collection, *Memorials of the Swedish Fleet*, anonymously.

49 The Langham opened June 12, 1863. Now the Langham Hotel Hilton and restored in 1991, it was built in a florid style and, according to William H. Gill, it "was by far the most magnificent hotel in the world. It covered an acre of ground [and] contained over 600 rooms. Its huge dining room was packed with 2,000 diners on the day of its opening . . . Small wonder that it attracted the flashy King of Bohemia!"

50 The current equivalent of over £65,000 in purchasing power.

51 Upper Baker Street extended almost into St. John's Wood, a fashionable area the residents of which included author George Eliot, educator and writer Thomas Huxley, popular author George du Maurier, and sociologist and philosopher Herbert Spencer.

52 "Cabinet" was a commercial term that referred to a photograph 3-7/8" x 5-1/2" in size.

53 The two crimes of which Watson's records had been *published* were those reported in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890). It will be evident later that Watson had actually *recorded* (in the sense of note-taking) numerous cases by this time. See *Chronological Table*. This is perhaps the first

instance of Watsonian self-advertising. In the *Strand Magazine* text, the word “elsewhere” is replaced by “already.”

54 Small, marked by fine detail and workmanship.

55 A patent lock with tumblers. Named after its inventor, Charles Chubb, it was advertised in 1887 to be pick-proof.

56 Short streets or alleys behind London’s main thoroughfares. Originally intended for the stabling of horses, the mews now house mostly garages.

57 A drink, half ale and half porter or other bitter beer.

58 A strong smoking tobacco, usually of inferior grade, cut into fine shreds. Joseph Fune, writing in 1839, advised, “Persons of a nervous temperament, who take little exercise, ought to particularly avoid smoking this kind of tobacco, as its frequent use is apt to induce paralytic afflictions.” Shag tobacco was an “institution” in Holmes’s life (“The Creeping Man”).

59 In England, barristers are the class of lawyers who are permitted to appear in the superior courts. Every barrister must be a member of one of the four ancient societies called Inns of Court: Lincoln’s Inn, the Inner and Middle Temples, and Gray’s Inn.

60 These two-wheeled cabs, which were named after their inventor, Joseph Aloysius Hansom (1802–1882), were ubiquitous in London in the 1880s and 1890s. The interior seated two passengers; the driver sat on the outside.

61 A fictional name for a firm of jewellers, of which several were situated in Regent St.

62 The identity of the true “St. Monica’s” (a fictional name) has been hotly debated. St. Agnes’ Church, Cricklewood, just off the Edgware Road at the southern end, is suggested, as well as St. Anthony’s, at the far end of the Edgware Road. St. Saviour’s, at the Junction of Clifton Gardens and Warrington Crescent, is also a possibility, while Patrick J. Campbell contends that the Marylebone Presbyterian Chapel, near Baker Street, is a more likely candidate.

63 Note that Godfrey Norton pays half a guinea for this drive, while Irene Adler tenders half a sovereign. From this it has been suggested that Irene valued her prospective bridegroom less, by sixpence, than he did her, for a half-guinea is worth half a shilling (6d.) more than a half-sovereign. But consider that Norton was offering a half-guinea for a speedy trip involving *two* stops.

64 A four-wheeled carriage, with a top in two parts, so that it may be closed, half-open, or entirely open.

65 Although scholars argue over the full purport of the English law of marriage at the time, the short of the matter is that after 1886, there appears to have been no legal barrier to a marriage shortly after noon. Surely Norton, as a lawyer, knew this. Why, then, this rushing around to get married before twelve noon? In the words of J. F. Christ, “the ‘informality about their license’ seems to have been in someone’s imagination.”

There are also questions about Holmes’s report of the witnessing of the marriage. The law of the time required at least two witnesses. Witnesses were not required to make responses; rather, they sign the register. Holmes did not report a second witness, although Irene Adler’s coachman was apparently available.

None of these defects would affect the legality of the wedding in the eyes of the Church of England, which required only that the couple intended to be wed. However, these disparities have led some to call Holmes’s whole account of the marriage “phony.”

66 Probably Hyde Park, “one of the most frequented and lively scenes in London,” according to *Baedeker*.

Dickens's *Dictionary of London* calls it "the great fashionable promenade of London." Rotten Row is a road set aside for equestrians, extending originally from Hyde Park Corner to Queen's Gate. There is also a carriage drive alongside, passing the site of the original Great Exhibition of 1851. "For two or three hours every afternoon in the season, except Sunday, the particular section of the drive which happens that year to be 'the fashion' is densely thronged with carriages moving round and round at little more than a walking pace, and every now and then coming to a dead-lock." Only the road from Queen's Gate to Victoria Gate was open to cabs; the remainder of the park to private carriages only.

The first Hyde Park was enclosed by Henry VIII, and the French ambassador hunted there in 1550. In the time of Charles I, the park was opened to the public, but Cromwell sold it, and the new owners charged a toll of a shilling for coaches and sixpence for horse. When the Commonwealth was overthrown, the park was reacquired by the nation. In the late nineteenth century, the park was much used for radical meetings, and on Sundays numerous open-air congregations near the Marble Arch held "revival" meetings.

Adler could also refer to the smaller Regent's Park, on the Outer Circle, close by St. John's Wood. While not as popular as Hyde Park, the grounds served as the site for the world's first glass-constructed aquarium, introduced to the public in 1853. Designed by city planner and architect John Nash in the early part of the nineteenth century, Regent's Park also housed the Royal Botanical Society and the Royal Zoological Society (now known as the London Zoo).

67 Who is this? *The* landlady is identified in the opening chapter of *The Sign of Four* as Mrs. Hudson (curiously, she is unnamed in *A Study in Scarlet*). In every other Canonical tale, when identified, the name of the landlady is Mrs. Hudson. William S. Baring-Gould remarks, "Is this simple absent-mindedness or forgetfulness on the part of Holmes (thinking, perhaps, of the principal in another case he was following at the time ["The Boscombe Valley Mystery"]) or Watson (thinking, perhaps, of a patient waiting in his consulting room)?" Perhaps Watson was writing up his notes of "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," proposes D. Martin Dakin.

There are even more explanations offered: Mrs. Turner was only substituting for Mrs. Hudson, suggests Page Heldenbrand. Could she have been the Martha Turner who became the second victim of Jack the Ripper on the night of August 7, 1888? Russell McLaughlin ingeniously proposes that Mrs. Turner was the mistress of one of Holmes's "five small refuges" mentioned in "Black Peter" and that Holmes and Watson actually lived in Mrs. Hudson's house in Gloucester Place.

All this may be a tempest in a teapot: Notwithstanding her unusual name (maids were usually known by their first name only, and "Mrs." was usually the cook or housekeeper), Mrs. Turner may simply have been a maid. Possibly Irene Adler disguised herself as this maid to investigate Holmes.

Richard Lancelyn Green notes that in the manuscript of "The Empty House," there is a similar reference to "Mrs. Turner," which has been *corrected* to "Mrs. Hudson." This repeated reference would seem to support the more romantic suggestion of Manly Wade Wellman that "Turner" was an alias used by Holmes and Mrs. Hudson while on a tryst at a fashionable hotel or country inn.

68 A smoke-generating device used by plumbers to test for leaky pipes.

69 That is, a percussion cap.

70 To impersonate a minister of the Church of England was a legal offense. Yet to masquerade as a free-church clergyman was not (then) illegal.

71 Actor and manager of the Court Theatre, later the St. James Theatre, and finally the Garrick Theatre, Hare (1844–1921) was knighted in 1907 for his work on and off the stage. Best known as a comic actor, he raised the rôle of the actor-manager to the highest level, nurturing actors and playwrights alike. He was an early supporter of the work of Arthur Wing Pinero and commissioned the dramatisation of Oliver Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* ("discovering" leading lady Ellen Terry, who starred in the production). Although Hare retired from the stage in 1912 after more than forty years on the stage, he went on to appear

in three silent films.

72 Two regiments of Life Guards and one of Royal Horse Guards formed together the Household Brigade of the British Army, the body-guard of the sovereign, furnishing the escorts on all state occasions. They were recruited regimentally and took none but picked men, of “good character,” and over 5 feet 10 inches in height.

73 A penny.

74 A long, loose overcoat of Irish origin.

75 Holmes’s debt to the French private detective M. Dupin, whose work is reported by Edgar Allan Poe in “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “Mystery of Marie Roget,” and “The Purloined Letter,” is evident throughout the Canon. Here, Holmes may have copied a similar device used by Dupin in “The Purloined Letter.” “There was always just a touch of professional jealousy in Holmes’s character,” writes Vincent Starrett, “—entirely natural, no doubt—that even Watson could not gloss away.” But Morris Rosenblum suggests Holmes may have had an older source for the idea: Pausanias told of Phryne, the most beautiful of all Athenian “adventuresses,” using the same trick in 150 A.D.

76 How did Holmes so quickly engage his accomplices? William S. Baring-Gould believes that he may have recruited his troupe from persons known to him from his early days as an actor; Harald Curjel suggests a “grown-up wing” of the Baker Street Irregulars, with Wiggins, the head of the Irregulars (according to *A Study in Scarlet and The Sign of Four*), acting as booking-agent and Mr. Wilson, manager of the District Messenger Office in Regent St., where young Cartwright worked (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*), running this “theatrical agency.”

77 A small town in the county of Durham, known for its school of art. It may be that a forged painting was involved in the “Substitution Scandal.” Holmes demonstrates his interest in contemporary art in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, in which he waxes eloquent on the “modern Belgian masters.”

78 Arnsberg Castle is located in north-central Germany, but there is no known connection to Holmes.

79 The *Strand Magazine* text adds the phrase “in the morning.”

80 This may well also be Irene Adler in disguise, notes Dean Dickensheet.

81 Does this imply that Irene knew of Holmes’s early career on the stage?

82 This suggests to Guy Warrack, in *Sherlock Holmes and Music*, that Irene Adler may have sung male-impersonation or “trouser” contralto rôles in her operatic career, such as Gluck’s Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* (premiered Vienna, October 5, 1762), Arsace in Rossini’s *Semiramide* (premiered Venice, February 3, 1823), Maffo Orsini in Donizetti’s *Lucrezia Borgia* (premiered Milan, December 26, 1833), and the page Urbain in Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* (premiered Paris, February 29, 1836). Holmes may have actually seen Irene Adler perform this rôle in 1886 (see *The Hound of the Baskervilles*). Most commentators, however, date the events of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* well after the date of “A Scandal in Bohemia” (see *Chronological Table*). Other possible rôles are Siébel in Gounod’s *Faust* (premiered Paris, March 19, 1859), Stéphano in his *Romeo et Juliette* (premiered Paris, April 27, 1867), and Pieretto in Donizetti’s *Linda di Chamounix* (premiered Vienna, May 19, 1842).

83 Indeed, it is hard to see from the case why Watson characterises Irene Adler as of “dubious and questionable memory.” D. Martin Dakin points out that although her opera career was short, it was respectable, and although Adler spitefully intended to ruin the king’s marriage, she did nothing illegal. James Edward Holroyd, in *Baker Street By-Ways*, comments, “One may fairly claim that the only dubious and questionable aspect of the adventure was the conduct of the three men principally concerned!”

84 In “A Case of Identity,” Holmes remarked that he had accepted a snuff-box of old gold with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid as a “little souvenir” of the king (“A Case of Identity”). It seems rather inconsistent with the disdain expressed here that Holmes should later accept a rich gift from him.

85 “Those who are sentimentally inclined seize on the fact that Holmes asked the King of Bohemia for the photograph as evidence of [Holmes’s] attachment [to Irene],” writes Dr. Richard Asher. “Is it not patently obvious that Holmes, having been deceived by her skill in disguising herself, may have simply wanted the photograph to add to his records, to make sure that he would recognize her if she ever crossed his path again?”

86 There is no evidence that Holmes and Irene Adler Norton ever met again. William S. Baring-Gould, in his *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*, speculates that Holmes and Irene had an affair in Montenegro, resulting in a son, detective Nero Wolfe (whose exploits were subsequently published by Rex Stout). Kenneth Lanza, in “Scandal in Bensonhurst,” makes the whimsical suggestion that Irene had three sons: William Kramden (baptized Wilhelm von Kramm), the issue of the king of Bohemia; Edward Norton, the son of Godfrey Norton; and Nero Wolfe, Sherlock Holmes’s son. Lanza goes on to speculate that the two eldest sons, “Willie” and Edward, each produced one son—Ralph Kramden and Edward Norton, Junior, half-cousins and stars of the television series *The Honeymooners*.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE 1

“The Red-Headed League” has appeared in dozens of collections of short stories. Best remembered are the buffoonish Jabez Wilson, the bizarre spectacle of Fleet Street crowded with red-headed men, the first of the many night watches to appear in the Canon, and the intricate plan of John Clay, the “fourth smartest man in London.” Almost in the manner of a conjurer, Holmes rattles off a series of quite startling deductions, perhaps matched only by Holmes’s dissection of a hat in “The Blue Carbuncle.” And then, to our delight, Watson records Holmes’s deflation by Wilson: “I thought at first you had done something clever, but I see that there was nothing in it at all.” Watson kindly refrains from comment, but our understanding of the friendship of Holmes and Watson is enriched.

I HAD CALLED UPON my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, one day in the autumn of

last year,² and found him in deep conversation with a very stout, florid-faced, elderly gentleman,³ with fiery red hair. With an apology for my intrusion, I was about to withdraw, when Holmes pulled me abruptly into the room, and closed the door behind me.

“You could not possibly have come at a better time, my dear Watson,” he said, cordially.

“I was afraid that you were engaged.”

“So I am. Very much so.”

“Then I can wait in the next room.”⁴

“Not at all. This gentleman, Mr. Wilson, has been my partner and helper in many of my most successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be of the utmost use to me in yours also.”

The stout gentleman half rose from his chair, and gave a bob of greeting, with a quick little questioning glance from his small, fat-encircled eyes.

“Try the settee,” said Holmes, relapsing into his armchair and putting his finger-tips together, as was his custom when in judicial moods. “I know, my dear Watson, that you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of everyday life. You have shown your relish for it by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures.”

“Your cases have indeed been of the greatest interest to me,” I observed.

“You will remember that I remarked the other day, just before we went into the very simple problem presented by Miss Mary Sutherland,⁵ that for strange effects and extraordinary combinations we must go to life itself, which is always far more daring than any effort of the imagination.”

“A proposition which I took the liberty of doubting.”

“You did, Doctor, but none the less you must come round to my view, for otherwise I shall keep piling fact upon fact on you, until your reason breaks down under them and acknowledges me to be right. Now, Mr. Jabez Wilson here has been good enough to call upon me this morning, and to begin a narrative which promises to be one of the most singular which I have listened to for some time. You have heard me remark that the strangest and most unique things are very often connected not with the larger but with the smaller crimes, and occasionally, indeed, where there is room for doubt whether any positive crime has been committed. As far as I have heard, it is impossible for me to say whether the present case is an instance of crime or not, but the course of events is certainly among the most singular that I have ever listened to. Perhaps, Mr. Wilson, you would have the great kindness to recommence your narrative. I ask

you, not merely because my friend Dr. Watson has not heard the opening part, but also because the peculiar nature of the story makes me anxious to have every possible detail from your lips. As a rule, when I have heard some slight indication of the course of events I am able to guide myself by the thousands of other similar cases which occur to my memory.⁶ In the present instance I am forced to admit that the facts are, to the best of my belief, unique.”

The portly client puffed out his chest with an appearance of some little pride, and pulled a dirty and wrinkled newspaper from the inside pocket of his greatcoat. As he glanced down the advertisement column, with his head thrust forward, and the paper flattened out upon his knee, I took a good look at the man, and endeavoured after the fashion of my companion to read the indications which might be presented by his dress or appearance.

I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow.⁷ He wore rather baggy grey shepherd’s check⁸ trousers, a not over-clean black frockcoat, unbuttoned in the front, and a drab waistcoat with a heavy brassy Albert chain,⁹ and a square pierced bit of metal dangling down as an ornament. A frayed top hat and a faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar lay upon a chair beside him. Altogether, look as I would, there was nothing remarkable about the man save his blazing red head, and the expression of extreme chagrin and discontent upon his features.



Mr. Jabez Wilson.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

Sherlock Holmes’s quick eye took in my occupation, and he shook his head with a smile as he noticed my questioning glances. “Beyond the obvious facts

that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason,¹⁰ that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else.”

Mr. Jabez Wilson started up in his chair, with his forefinger upon the paper, but his eyes upon my companion.

“How, in the name of good fortune, did you know all that, Mr. Holmes?” he asked. “How did you know, for example, that I did manual labour? It’s as true as gospel, and I began as a ship’s carpenter.”

“Your hands, my dear sir. Your right hand is quite a size larger than your left. You have worked with it, and the muscles are more developed.”¹¹

“Well, the snuff, then, and the Freemasonry?”

“I won’t insult your intelligence by telling you how I read that, especially as, rather against the strict rules of your order,¹² you use an arc-and-compass breastpin.”¹³

“Ah, of course, I forgot that. But the writing?”

“What else can be indicated by that right cuff so very shiny for five inches, and the left one with the smooth patch near the elbow where you rest it upon the desk?”

“Well, but China?”

“The fish which you have tattooed immediately above your right wrist¹⁴ could only have been done in China. I have made a small study of tattoo marks, and have even contributed to the literature of the subject. That trick of staining the fishes’ scales of a delicate pink is quite peculiar to China. When, in addition, I see a Chinese coin hanging from your watch-chain, the matter becomes even more simple.”

Mr. Jabez Wilson laughed heavily. “Well, I never!” said he. “I thought at first you had done something clever, but I see that there was nothing in it after all.”

“I begin to think, Watson,” said Holmes, “that I make a mistake in explaining. ‘*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*,’¹⁵ you know, and my poor little reputation, such as it is, will suffer shipwreck if I am so candid. Can you not find the advertisement, Mr. Wilson?”

“Yes, I have got it now,” he answered, with his thick, red finger planted half-way down the column. “Here it is. This is what began it all. You just read it for yourself, sir.”

I took the paper from him and read as follows—



Fleet Street.

The Queen's London (1897)

TO THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE¹⁶

On account of the bequest of the late Ezekiah Hopkins, of Lebanon, Penn., U.S.A., there is now another vacancy open which entitles a member of the League to a salary of four pounds a week for purely nominal services. All red-headed men who are sound in body and mind, and above the age of twenty-one years, are eligible. Apply in person on Monday, at eleven o'clock, to Duncan Ross, at the offices of the League, 7, Pope's Court, Fleet Street.¹⁷

"What on earth does this mean?" I ejaculated, after I had twice read over the extraordinary announcement.

Holmes chuckled and wriggled in his chair, as was his habit when in high spirits. "It is a little off the beaten track, isn't it?" said he. "And now, Mr. Wilson, off you go at scratch,¹⁸ and tell us all about yourself, your household, and the effect which this advertisement had upon your fortunes. You will first make a note, Doctor, of the paper and the date."

"It is *The Morning Chronicle*,¹⁹ of April 27, 1890. Just two months ago."²⁰

"Very good. Now, Mr. Wilson?"

“Well, it is just as I have been telling you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” said Jabez Wilson, mopping his forehead, “I have a small pawnbroker’s business²¹ at Coburg Square,²² near the City.²³ It’s not a very large affair, and of late years it has not done more than just give me a living. I used to be able to keep two assistants, but now I only keep one; and I would have a job to pay him, but that he is willing to come for half wages, so as to learn the business.”



“What on earth does this mean?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“What is the name of this obliging youth?” asked Sherlock Holmes.

“His name is Vincent Spaulding, and he’s not such a youth either. It’s hard to say his age. I should not wish a smarter assistant, Mr. Holmes; and I know very well that he could better himself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But after all, if he is satisfied, why should I put ideas in his head?”

“Why, indeed? You seem most fortunate in having an *employe* who comes under the full market price. It is not a common experience among employers in this age. I don’t know that your assistant is not as remarkable as your advertisement.”

“Oh, he has his faults, too,” said Mr. Wilson. “Never was such a fellow for photography. Snapping away with a camera when he ought to be improving his mind, and then diving down into the cellar like a rabbit into its hole to develop his pictures. That is his main fault; but on the whole he’s a good worker. There’s no vice in him.”

“He is still with you, I presume?”

“Yes, sir. He and a girl of fourteen, who does a bit of simple cooking, and keeps the place clean—that’s all I have in the house, for I am a widower, and never had any family. We live very quietly, sir, the three of us; and we keep a roof over our heads, and pay our debts, if we do nothing more.

“The first thing that put us out was that advertisement. Spaulding, he came down into the office just this day eight weeks with this very paper in his hand, and he says— “ ‘I wish to the Lord, Mr. Wilson, that I was a red-headed man.’

“ ‘Why that?’ I asks.

“ ‘Why,’ says he, ‘here’s another vacancy on the League of the Red-headed Men. It’s worth quite a little fortune to any man who gets it, and I understand that there are more vacancies than there are men, so that the trustees are at their wits’ end what to do with the money. If my hair would only change colour, here’s a nice little crib²⁴ all ready for me to step into.’

“ ‘Why, what is it, then?’ I asked. You see, Mr. Holmes, I am a very stay-at-home man, and, as my business came to me instead of my having to go to it, I was often weeks on end without putting my foot over the door-mat. In that way I didn’t know much of what was going on outside, and I was always glad of a bit of news.

“ ‘Have you never heard of the League of the Red-headed Men?’ he asked, with his eyes open.

“ ‘Never.’

“ ‘Why, I wonder at that, for you are eligible yourself for one of the vacancies.’

“ ‘And what are they worth?’ I asked.

“ ‘Oh, merely a couple of hundred a year, but the work is slight, and it need not interfere very much with one’s other occupations.’



“The League has a vacancy.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Well, you can easily think that that made me prick up my ears, for the business has not been over-good for some years, and an extra couple of hundred would have been very handy.

“ ‘Tell me all about it,’ said I.

“ ‘Well,’ said he, showing me the advertisement, ‘you can see for yourself that the League has a vacancy, and there is the address where you should apply for particulars. As far as I can make out, the League was founded by an American millionaire, Ezekiah Hopkins, who was very peculiar in his ways. He was himself red-headed, and he had a great sympathy for all red-headed men; so, when he died, it was found that he had left his enormous fortune in the hands of trustees, with instructions to apply the interest to the providing of easy berths to men whose hair is of that colour. From all I hear it is splendid pay, and very little to do.’

“ ‘But,’ said I, ‘there would be millions of red-headed men who would apply.’

“ ‘Not so many as you might think,’ he answered. ‘You see it is really confined to Londoners, and to grown men. This American had started from London when he was young, and he wanted to do the old town a good turn. Then, again, I have heard it is no use your applying if your hair is light red, or dark red, or anything but real, bright, blazing, fiery red. Now, if you cared to apply, Mr. Wilson, you would just walk in; but perhaps it would hardly be worth your while to put yourself out of the way for the sake of a few hundred pounds.’

“Now, it is a fact, gentlemen, as you may see for yourselves, that my hair is of a very full and rich tint, so that it seemed to me that if there was to be any competition in the matter, I stood as good a chance as any man that I had ever

met. Vincent Spaulding seemed to know so much about it that I thought he might prove useful, so I just ordered him to put up the shutters for the day, and to come right away with me. He was very willing to have a holiday, so we shut the business up, and started off for the address that was given us in the advertisement.



Men in Fleet Street.

(contemporary photograph)

“I never hope to see such a sight as that again, Mr. Holmes. From north, south, east, and west every man who had a shade of red in his hair had tramped into the City to answer the advertisement. Fleet Street was choked with red-headed folk,²⁵ and Pope’s Court looked like a coster’s²⁶ orange barrow. I should not have thought there were so many in the whole country as were brought together by that single advertisement. Every shade of colour they were—straw, lemon, orange, brick, Irish-setter, liver, clay; but, as Spaulding said, there were not many who had the real vivid flame-coloured tint. When I saw how many were waiting, I would have given it up in despair; but Spaulding would not hear of it. How he did it I could not imagine, but he pushed and pulled and butted until he got me through the crowd, and right up to the steps which led to the office. There was a double stream upon the stair, some going up in hope, and some coming back dejected; but we wedged in as well as we could, and soon found ourselves in the office.”

“Your experience has been a most entertaining one,” remarked Holmes, as his client paused and refreshed his memory with a huge pinch of snuff. “Pray continue your very interesting statement.”

“There was nothing in the office but a couple of wooden chairs and a deal²⁷ table, behind which sat a small man, with a head that was even redder than mine.

He said a few words to each candidate as he came up, and then he always managed to find some fault in them which would disqualify them. Getting a vacancy did not seem to be such a very easy matter, after all. However, when our turn came, the little man was much more favourable to me than to any of the others, and he closed the door as we entered, so that he might have a private word with us.

“ ‘This is Mr. Jabez Wilson,’ said my assistant, ‘and he is willing to fill a vacancy in the League.’

“ ‘And he is admirably suited for it,’ the other answered. ‘He has every requirement. I cannot recall when I have seen anything so fine.’ He took a step backward, cocked his head on one side, and gazed at my hair until I felt quite bashful. Then suddenly he plunged forward, wrung my hand, and congratulated me warmly on my success.

“ ‘It would be injustice to hesitate,’ said he. ‘You will, however, I am sure, excuse me for taking an obvious precaution.’ With that he seized my hair in both his hands, and tugged until I yelled with the pain. ‘There is water in your eyes,’ said he, as he released me. ‘I perceive that all is as it should be. But we have to be careful, for we have twice been deceived by wigs and once by paint. I could tell you tales of cobbler’s wax²⁸ which would disgust you with human nature.’ He stepped over to the window, and shouted through it at the top of his voice that the vacancy was filled. A groan of disappointment came up from below, and the folk all trooped away in different directions, until there was not a red head to be seen except my own and that of the manager.



“He congratulated me warmly.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“ ‘My name,’ said he, ‘is Mr. Duncan Ross, and I am myself one of the pensioners upon the fund left by our noble benefactor. Are you a married man, Mr. Wilson? Have you a family?’

“I answered that I had not.

“His face fell immediately.

“ ‘Dear me!’ he said, gravely, ‘that is very serious indeed! I am sorry to hear you say that. The fund was, of course, for the propagation and spread of the red-heads as well as for their maintenance. It is exceedingly unfortunate that you should be a bachelor.’

“My face lengthened at this, Mr. Holmes, for I thought that I was not to have the vacancy after all; but, after thinking it over for a few minutes, he said that it would be all right.

“ ‘In the case of another,’ said he, ‘the objection might be fatal, but we must stretch a point in favour of a man with such a head of hair as yours. When shall you be able to enter upon your new duties?’

“ ‘Well, it is a little awkward, for I have a business already,’ said I.

“ ‘Oh, never mind about that, Mr. Wilson!’ said Vincent Spaulding. ‘I shall be able to look after that for you.’

“ ‘What would be the hours?’ I asked.

“ ‘Ten to two.’

“Now a pawnbroker’s business is mostly done of an evening, Mr. Holmes, especially Thursday and Friday evening, which is just before pay-day; so it would suit me very well to earn a little in the mornings. Besides, I knew that my assistant was a good man, and that he would see to anything that turned up.

“ ‘That would suit me very well,’ said I. ‘And the pay?’

“ ‘Is four pounds a week.’²⁹

“ ‘And the work?’

“ ‘Is purely nominal.’

“ ‘What do you call purely nominal?’

“ ‘Well, you have to be in the office, or at least in the building, the whole time. If you leave, you forfeit your whole position for ever. The will is very clear upon that point. You don’t comply with the conditions if you budge from the office during that time.’

“ ‘It’s only four hours a day, and I should not think of leaving,’ said I.

“ ‘No excuse will avail,’ said Mr. Duncan Ross, ‘neither sickness nor business, nor anything else. There you must stay, or you lose your billet.’³⁰

“ ‘And the work?’

“ ‘Is to copy out the “Encyclopædia Britannica.”’³¹ There is the first volume of

it in that press.³² You must find your own ink, pens, and blotting-paper,³³ but we provide this table and chair. Will you be ready to-morrow?’

“ ‘Certainly,’ I answered.

“ ‘Then, good-bye, Mr. Jabez Wilson, and let me congratulate you once more on the important position which you have been fortunate enough to gain.’ He bowed me out of the room, and I went home with my assistant, hardly knowing what to say or do, I was so pleased at my own good fortune.

“Well, I thought over the matter all day, and by evening I was in low spirits again; for I had quite persuaded myself that the whole affair must be some great hoax or fraud, though what its object might be I could not imagine. It seemed altogether past belief that any one could make such a will, or that they would pay such a sum for doing anything so simple as copying out the ‘Encyclopædia Britannica.’ Vincent Spaulding did what he could to cheer me up, but by bedtime I had reasoned myself out of the whole thing. However, in the morning I determined to have a look at it anyhow, so I bought a penny bottle of ink, and with a quill pen, and seven sheets of foolscap paper,³⁴ I started off for Pope’s Court.

“Well, to my surprise and delight everything was as right as possible. The table was set out ready for me, and Mr. Duncan Ross was there to see that I got fairly to work. He started me off upon the letter A, and then he left me; but he would drop in from time to time to see that all was right with me. At two o’clock he bade me good-day, complimented me upon the amount that I had written, and locked the door of the office after me.

“This went on day after day, Mr. Holmes, and on Saturday the manager came in and planked down four golden sovereigns for my week’s work. It was the same next week, and the same the week after. Every morning I was there at ten, and every afternoon I left at two. By degrees Mr. Duncan Ross took to coming in only once of a morning, and then, after a time, he did not come in at all. Still, of course, I never dared to leave the room for an instant, for I was not sure when he might come, and the billet was such a good one, and suited me so well, that I would not risk the loss of it.

“Eight weeks passed away like this, and I had written about Abbots, and Archery, and Armour, and Architecture, and Attica, and hoped with diligence that I might get on to the B’s³⁵ before very long. It cost me something in foolscap, and I had pretty nearly filled a shelf with my writings. And then suddenly the whole business came to an end.”

“To an end?”

“Yes, sir. And no later than this morning. I went to my work as usual at ten

o'clock, but the door was shut and locked, with a little square of cardboard hammered on to the middle of the panel with a tack. Here it is, and you can read for yourself."



“The door was shut and locked.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

He held up a piece of white cardboard about the size of a sheet of notepaper. It read in this fashion—

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE
IS
DISSOLVED.
Oct. 9, 1890.³⁶

Sherlock Holmes and I surveyed this curt announcement and the rueful face behind it, until the comical side of the affair so completely overtopped every other consideration that we both burst out into a roar of laughter.

“I cannot see that there is anything very funny,” cried our client, flushing up to the roots of his flaming head. If you can do nothing better than laugh at me, I can go elsewhere.”

“No, no,” cried Holmes, shoving him back into the chair from which he had

half risen. "I really wouldn't miss your case for the world. It is most refreshingly unusual. But there is, if you will excuse my saying so, something just a little funny about it. Pray what steps did you take when you found the card upon the door?"

"I was staggered, sir. I did not know what to do. Then I called at the offices round, but none of them seemed to know anything about it. Finally, I went to the landlord, who is an accountant living on the ground-floor, and I asked him if he could tell me what had become of the Red-headed League. He said that he had never heard of any such body. Then I asked him who Mr. Duncan Ross was. He answered that the name was new to him.

" 'Well,' said I, 'the gentleman at No. 4.'

" 'What, the red-headed man?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Oh,' said he, 'his name was William Morris. He was a solicitor,³⁷ and was using my room as a temporary convenience until his new premises were ready. He moved out yesterday.'

" 'Where could I find him?'

" 'Oh, at his new offices. He did tell me the address. Yes, 17, King Edward Street, near St. Paul's.'

"I started off, Mr. Holmes, but when I got to that address it was a manufactory of artificial knee-caps,³⁸ and no one in it had ever heard of either Mr. William Morris, or Mr. Duncan Ross."

"And what did you do then?" asked Holmes.

"I went home to Saxe-Coburg Square, and I took the advice of my assistant. But he could not help me in any way. He could only say that if I waited I should hear by post. But that was not quite good enough, Mr. Holmes. I did not wish to lose such a place without a struggle, so, as I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it, I came right away to you."

"And you did very wisely," said Holmes. "Your case is an exceedingly remarkable one, and I shall be happy to look into it. From what you have told me I think that it is possible that graver issues hang from it than might at first sight appear."

"Grave enough!" said Mr. Jabez Wilson. "Why, I have lost four pound a week."

"As far as you are personally concerned," remarked Holmes, "I do not see that you have any grievance against this extraordinary league. On the contrary, you are, as I understand, richer by some thirty pounds, to say nothing of the minute

knowledge which you have gained on every subject which comes under the letter A. You have lost nothing by them.”

“No, sir. But I want to find out about them, and who they are, and what their object was in playing this prank—if it was a prank—upon me. It was a pretty expensive joke for them, for it cost them two-and-thirty pounds.”³⁹

“We shall endeavour to clear up these points for you. And, first, one or two questions, Mr. Wilson. This assistant of yours who first called your attention to the advertisement—how long had he been with you?”

“About a month then.”

“How did he come?”

“In answer to an advertisement.”

“Was he the only applicant?”

“No, I had a dozen.”

“Why did you pick him?”

“Because he was handy, and would come cheap.”

“At half-wages, in fact.”

“Yes.”

“What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?”

“Small, stout-built, very quick in his ways, no hair on his face, though he’s not short of thirty. Has a white splash of acid upon his forehead.”

Holmes sat up in his chair in considerable excitement. “I thought as much,” said he. “Have you ever observed that his ears are pierced for earrings?”

“Yes, sir. He told me that a gypsy had done it for him when he was a lad.”

“Hum!” said Holmes, sinking back in deep thought. “He is still with you?”

“Oh, yes, sir; I have only just left him.”

“And has your business been attended to in your absence?”

“Nothing to complain of, sir. There’s never very much to do of a morning.”

“That will do, Mr. Wilson. I shall be happy to give you an opinion upon the subject in the course of a day or two. To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by Monday we may come to a conclusion.”

“Well, Watson,” said Holmes, when our visitor had left us, “what do you make of it all?”

“I make nothing of it,” I answered, frankly. “It is a most mysterious business.”

“As a rule,” said Holmes, “the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be. It is your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify. But I must be prompt over this matter.”

“What are you going to do, then?” I asked.



“He curled himself up in his chair.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“To smoke,” he answered. “It is quite a three pipe problem, and I beg that you won’t speak to me for fifty minutes.”⁴⁰ He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawklike nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird. I had come to the conclusion that he had dropped asleep, and indeed was nodding myself, when he suddenly sprang out of his chair with the gesture of a man who has made up his mind, and put his pipe down upon the mantelpiece.



Arrangement in Black: Pablo de Sarasate.

James Abbot McNeil Whistler, 1884

“Sarasate⁴¹ plays at the St. James’s Hall this afternoon,” he remarked. “What do you think, Watson? Could your patients spare you for a few hours?”

“I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing.”

“Then put on your hat, and come. I am going through the City first, and we can have some lunch on the way. I observe that there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is rather more to my taste than Italian or French. It is introspective, and I want to introspect. Come along!”

We travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate;⁴² and a short walk took us to Saxe-Coburg Square, the scene of the singular story which we had listened to in the morning. It was a poky, little, shabby-genteel place, where four lines of dingy two-storied brick houses looked out into a small railed-in enclosure, where a lawn of weedy grass, and a few clumps of faded laurel bushes made a hard fight against a smoke-laden and uncongenial atmosphere. Three gilt balls⁴³ and a brown board with “JABEZ WILSON” in white letters, upon a corner house, announced the place where our red-headed client carried on his business. Sherlock Holmes stopped in front of it with his head on one side and looked it all over, with his eyes shining brightly between puckered lids. Then he walked slowly up the street and then down again to the corner, still looking keenly at the

houses. Finally he returned to the pawnbroker's, and, having thumped vigorously upon the pavement with his stick⁴⁴ two or three times, he went up to the door and knocked. It was instantly opened by a bright-looking, clean-shaven young fellow, who asked him to step in.

"Thank you," said Holmes, "I only wished to ask you how you would go from here to the Strand."⁴⁵

"Third right, fourth left," answered the assistant promptly, closing the door.

"Smart fellow, that," observed Holmes as we walked away. He is, in my judgment, the fourth smartest man in London,⁴⁶ and for daring I am not sure that he has not a claim to be third. I have known something of him before."⁴⁷

"Evidently," said I, "Mr. Wilson's assistant counts for a good deal in this mystery of the Red-headed League. I am sure that you inquired your way merely in order that you might see him."

"Not him."

"What then?"

"The knees of his trousers."



"The door was instantly opened."

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

"And what did you see?"

"What I expected to see."

"Why did you beat the pavement?"

“My dear doctor, this is a time for observation, not for talk. We are spies in an enemy’s country. We know something of Saxe-Coburg Square. Let us now explore the parts which lie behind it.”

The road in which we found ourselves as we turned round the corner from the retired Saxe-Coburg Square presented as great a contrast to it as the front of a picture does to the back. It was one of the main arteries which conveyed the traffic of the City to the north and west. The roadway was blocked with the immense stream of commerce flowing in a double tide inward and outward, while the foot paths were black with the hurrying swarm of pedestrians. It was difficult to realise as we looked at the line of fine shops and stately business premises that they really abutted on the other side upon the faded and stagnant square which we had just quitted.

“Let me see,” said Holmes, standing at the corner, and glancing along the line, “I should like just to remember the order of the houses here. It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London. There is Mortimer’s, the tobacconist, the little newspaper shop, the Coburg branch of the City and Suburban Bank, the Vegetarian Restaurant, and McFarlane’s carriage-building *depôt*. That carries us right on to the other block. And now, Doctor, we’ve done our work, so it’s time we had some play. A sandwich, and a cup of coffee, and then off to violin-land, where all is sweetness, and delicacy, and harmony, and there are no red-headed clients to vex us with their conundrums.”



The Strand.

Victorian and Edwardian London

My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer but a composer of no ordinary merit.⁴⁸ All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid dreamy eyes

were as unlike those of Holmes, the sleuth-hound, Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself,⁴⁹ and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his armchair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions.⁵⁰ Then it was that the lust of the chase would suddenly come upon him, and that his brilliant reasoning power would rise to the level of intuition, until those who were unacquainted with his methods would look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals. When I saw him that afternoon so enwrapped in the music at St. James's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.



“All afternoon he sat in the stalls.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“You want to go home, no doubt, Doctor,” he remarked, as we emerged.

“Yes, it would be as well.”

“And I have some business to do which will take some hours. This business at Coburg Square is serious.”

“Why serious?”

“A considerable crime is in contemplation. I have every reason to believe that we shall be in time to stop it. But to-day being Saturday rather complicates

matters. I shall want your help to-night.”

“At what time?”

“Ten will be early enough.”

“I shall be at Baker Street at ten.”

“Very well. And, I say, Doctor! There may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket.” He waved his hand, turned on his heel, and disappeared in an instant among the crowd.

I trust that I am not more dense than my neighbours, but I was always oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while to me the whole business was still confused and grotesque. As I drove home to my house in Kensington I thought over it all, from the extraordinary story of the red-headed copier of the “Encyclopædia” down to the visit to Saxe-Coburg Square, and the ominous words with which he had parted from me. What was this nocturnal expedition, and why should I go armed? Where were we going, and what were we to do? I had the hint from Holmes that this smooth-faced pawnbroker’s assistant was a formidable man—a man who might play a deep game. I tried to puzzle it out, but gave it up in despair, and set the matter aside until night should bring an explanation.

It was a quarter past nine when I started from home and made my way across the Park,⁵¹ and so through Oxford Street to Baker Street. Two hansoms were standing at the door, and, as I entered the passage, I heard the sound of voices from above. On entering his room, I found Holmes in animated conversation with two men, one of whom I recognized as Peter Jones,⁵² the official police agent; while the other was a long, thin, sad-faced man, with a very shiny hat and oppressively respectable frock coat.

“Ha! our party is complete,” said Holmes, buttoning up his pea-jacket, and taking his heavy hunting-crop⁵³ from the rack. “Watson, I think you know Mr. Jones, of Scotland Yard?⁵⁴ Let me introduce you to Mr. Merryweather, who is to be our companion in to-night’s adventure.”

“We’re hunting in couples again, Doctor, you see,” said Jones in his consequential way. “Our friend here is a wonderful man for starting a chase. All he wants is an old dog to help him to do the running down.”

“I hope a wild goose may not prove to be the end of our chase,” observed Mr. Merryweather, gloomily.

“You may place considerable confidence in Mr. Holmes, sir,” said the police

agent, loftily. “He has his own little methods, which are, if he won’t mind my saying so, just a little too theoretical and fantastic, but he has the makings of a detective in him. It is not too much to say that once or twice, as in that business of the Sholto murder and the Agra treasure,⁵⁵ he has been more nearly correct than the official force.”



New Scotland Yard.

The Queen’s London (1897) “Oh, if you say so, Mr. Jones, it is all right,” said the stranger with deference. “Still, I confess that I miss my rubber.⁵⁶ It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber.”

“I think you will find,” said Sherlock Holmes, “that you will play for a higher stake to-night than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be more exciting. For you, Mr. Merryweather, the stake will be some thirty thousand pounds, and for you, Jones, it will be the man upon whom you wish to lay your hands.”

“John Clay, the murderer, thief, smasher,⁵⁷ and forger. He is a young man, Mr. Merryweather, but he is at the head of his profession, and I would rather have my bracelets on him than on any criminal in London. He’s a remarkable man, is young John Clay. His grandfather was a Royal Duke, and he himself has been to Eton and Oxford.⁵⁸ His brain is as cunning as his fingers, and though we meet signs of him at every turn, we never know where to find the man himself. He’ll crack a crib⁵⁹ in Scotland one week, and be raising money to build an orphanage in Cornwall the next. I’ve been on his track for years, and have never set eyes on him yet.”

“I hope that I may have the pleasure of introducing you to-night. I’ve had one or two little turns also with Mr. John Clay, and I agree with you that he is at the head of his profession. It is past ten, however, and quite time that we started. If you two will take the first hansom, Watson and I will follow in the second.”

Sherlock Holmes was not very communicative during the long drive, and lay

back in the cab humming the tunes which he had heard in the afternoon. We rattled through an endless labyrinth of gas-lit streets until we emerged into Farrington Street.⁶⁰

“We are close there now,” my friend remarked. “This fellow Merryweather is a bank director, and personally interested in the matter. I thought it as well to have Jones with us also. He is not a bad fellow, though an absolute imbecile in his profession. He has one positive virtue. He is as brave as a bulldog, and as tenacious as a lobster if he gets his claws upon any one. Here we are, and they are waiting for us.”⁶¹

We had reached the same crowded thoroughfare in which we had found ourselves in the morning. Our cabs were dismissed, and, following the guidance of Mr. Merryweather, we passed down a narrow passage, and through a side door, which he opened for us. Within there was a small corridor, which ended in a very massive iron gate. This also was opened, and led down a flight of winding stone steps, which terminated at another formidable gate. Mr. Merryweather stopped to light a lantern, and then conducted us down a dark, earth-smelling passage, and so, after opening a third door, into a huge vault or cellar, which was piled all round with crates and massive boxes.



“Mr. Merryweather stopped to light a lantern.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“You are not very vulnerable from above,” Holmes remarked as he held up the lantern, and gazed about him.

“Nor from below,” said Mr. Merryweather, striking his stick upon the flags⁶² which lined the floor. “Why, dear me, it sounds quite hollow!” he remarked, looking up in surprise.

“I must really ask you to be a little more quiet!” said Holmes severely. “You have already imperilled the whole success of our expedition. Might I beg that you would have the goodness to sit down upon one of those boxes, and not to interfere?”

The solemn Mr. Merryweather perched himself upon a crate, with a very injured expression upon his face, while Holmes fell upon his knees upon the floor and, with the lantern and a magnifying lens, began to examine minutely the cracks between the stones. A few seconds sufficed to satisfy him, for he sprang to his feet again, and put his glass in his pocket.

“We have at least an hour before us,” he remarked, “for they can hardly take any steps until the good pawnbroker is safely in bed. Then they will not lose a minute, for the sooner they do their work the longer time they will have for their escape. We are at present, Doctor—as no doubt you have divined—in the cellar of the City branch of one of the principal London banks. Mr. Merryweather is the chairman of directors, and he will explain to you that there are reasons why the more daring criminals of London should take a considerable interest in this cellar at present.”

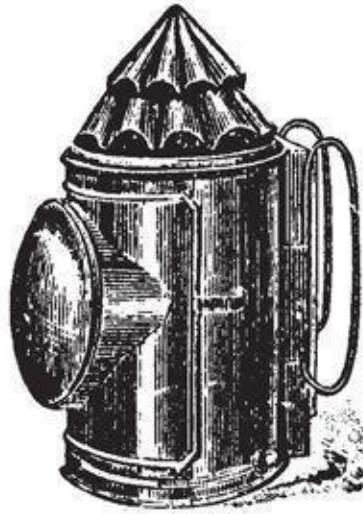
“It is our French gold,” whispered the director. “We have had several warnings that an attempt might be made upon it.”

“Your French gold?”

“Yes. We had occasion some months ago to strengthen our resources, and borrowed, for that purpose, thirty thousand napoleons from the Bank of France. It has become known that we have never had occasion to unpack the money, and that it is still lying in our cellar. The crate upon which I sit contains two thousand napoleons packed between layers of lead foil. Our reserve of bullion is much larger at present than is usually kept in a single branch office, and the directors have had misgivings upon the subject.”

“Which were very well justified,” observed Holmes. “And now it is time that we arranged our little plans. I expect that within an hour matters will come to a head. In the meantime, Mr. Merryweather, we must put the screen over that dark lantern.”⁶³

“And sit in the dark?”



Dark lantern.

“I am afraid so. I had brought a pack of cards in my pocket,⁶⁴ and I thought that, as we were a *partie carrée*,⁶⁵ you might have your rubber after all. But I see that the enemy’s preparations have gone so far that we cannot risk the presence of a light. And, first of all, we must choose our positions. These are daring men, and, though we shall take them at a disadvantage, they may do us some harm unless we are careful. I shall stand behind this crate, and do you conceal yourselves behind those. Then, when I flash a light upon them, close in swiftly. If they fire, Watson, have no compunction about shooting them down.” I placed my revolver, cocked, upon the top of the wooden case behind which I crouched. Holmes shot the slide across the front of his lantern, and left us in pitch darkness—such an absolute darkness as I have never before experienced. The smell of hot metal remained to assure us that the light was still there, ready to flash out at a moment’s notice. To me, with my nerves worked up to a pitch of expectancy, there was something depressing and subduing in the sudden gloom, and in the cold, dank air of the vault.

“They have but one retreat,” whispered Holmes. “That is back through the house into Saxe-Coburg Square. I hope that you have done what I asked you, Jones?”

“I have an inspector and two officers waiting at the front door.”

“Then we have stopped all the holes. And now we must be silent and wait.”

What a time it seemed! From comparing notes afterwards it was but an hour and a quarter, yet it appeared to me that the night must have almost gone, and the dawn be breaking above us. My limbs were weary and stiff, for I feared to change my position; yet my nerves were worked up to the highest pitch of

tension, and my hearing was so acute that I could not only hear the gentle breathing of my companions, but I could distinguish the deeper, heavier in-breath of the bulky Jones from the thin sighing note of the bank director. From my position I could look over the case in the direction of the floor. Suddenly my eyes caught the glint of a light.

At first it was but a lurid spark upon the stone pavement. Then it lengthened out until it became a yellow line, and then, without any warning or sound, a gash seemed to open and a hand appeared, a white, almost womanly hand, which felt about in the centre of the little area of light. For a minute or more the hand, with its writhing fingers, protruded out of the floor. Then it was withdrawn as suddenly as it appeared, and all was dark again save the single lurid spark, which marked a chink between the stones.

Its disappearance, however, was but momentary. With a rending, tearing sound, one of the broad, white stones turned over upon its side and left a square, gaping hole, through which streamed the light of a lantern. Over the edge there peeped a clean-cut, boyish face, which looked keenly about it, and then, with a hand on either side of the aperture, drew itself shoulder high and waist high, until one knee rested upon the edge. In another instant he stood at the side of the hole, and was hauling after him a companion, lithe and small like himself, with a pale face and a shock of very red hair.

“It’s all clear,” he whispered. “Have you the chisel and the bags? Great Scott! Jump, Archie, ⁶⁶ jump, and I’ll swing for it!”⁶⁷

Sherlock Holmes had sprung out and seized the intruder by the collar. The other dived down the hole, and I heard the sound of rending cloth as Jones clutched at his skirts. The light flashed upon the barrel of a revolver, but Holmes’s hunting crop came down on the man’s wrist, and the pistol clinked upon the stone floor.

“It’s no use, John Clay,” said Holmes blandly. “You have no chance at all.”

“So I see,” the other answered, with the utmost coolness. “I fancy that my pal is all right, though I see you have got his coat-tails.”

“There are three men waiting for him at the door,” said Holmes.

“Oh, indeed. You seem to have done the thing very completely. I must compliment you.”



“It’s no use, John Clay.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“And I you,” Holmes answered. “Your red-headed idea was very new and effective.”

“You’ll see your pal again presently,” said Jones. “He’s quicker at climbing down holes than I am. Just hold out while I fix the derbies.”⁶⁸

“I beg that you will not touch me with your filthy hands,” remarked our prisoner as the handcuffs clattered upon his wrists. “You may not be aware that I have royal blood in my veins. Have the goodness, also, when you address me always to say ‘sir’ and ‘please.’ ”

“All right,” said Jones with a stare and a snigger. “Well, would you please, sir, march upstairs, where we can get a cab to carry your Highness to the police-station?”

“That is better,” said John Clay, serenely. He made a sweeping bow to the three of us, and walked quietly off in the custody of the detective.

“Really, Mr. Holmes,” said Mr. Merryweather as we followed them from the cellar, “I do not know how the bank can thank you or repay you. There is no doubt that you have detected and defeated in the most complete manner one of the most determined attempts at bank robbery that have ever come within my experience.”

“I have had one or two little scores of my own to settle with Mr. John Clay,” said Holmes. “I have been at some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to refund, but beyond that I am amply repaid by having had an

experience which is in many ways unique, and by hearing the very remarkable narrative of the Red-headed League.”

“You see, Watson,” he explained in the early hours of the morning, as we sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker Street, “it was perfectly obvious from the first that the only possible object of this rather fantastic business of the advertisement of the League, and the copying of the ‘Encyclopædia,’ must be to get this not over-bright pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours every day. It was a curious way of managing it, but really it would be difficult to suggest a better. The method was no doubt suggested to Clay’s ingenious mind by the colour of his accomplice’s hair. The four pounds a week was a lure which must draw him, and what was it to them, who were playing for thousands? They put in the advertisement; one rogue has the temporary office, the other rogue incites the man to apply for it, and together they manage to secure his absence every morning in the week. From the time that I heard of the assistant having come for half wages, it was obvious to me that he had some strong motive for securing the situation.”

“But how could you guess what the motive was?”

“Had there been women in the house, I should have suspected a mere vulgar intrigue. That, however, was out of the question. The man’s business was a small one, and there was nothing in his house which could account for such elaborate preparations, and such an expenditure as they were at. It must, then, be something out of the house. What could it be? I thought of the assistant’s fondness for photography, and his trick of vanishing into the cellar. The cellar! There was the end of this tangled clue. Then I made inquiries as to this mysterious assistant and found that I had to deal with one of the coolest and most daring criminals in London. He was doing something in the cellar—something which took many hours a day for months on end. What could it be, once more? I could think of nothing save that he was running a tunnel to some other building.

“So far I had got when we went to visit the scene of action. I surprised you by beating upon the pavement with my stick. I was ascertaining whether the cellar stretched out in front or behind. It was not in front. Then I rang the bell, and, as I hoped, the assistant answered it. We have had some skirmishes, but we had never set eyes upon each other before. I hardly looked at his face. His knees were what I wished to see. You must yourself have remarked how worn, wrinkled, and stained they were. They spoke of those hours of burrowing. The only remaining point was what they were burrowing for.⁶⁹ I walked round the corner, saw the City and Suburban Bank abutted on our friend’s premises, and felt that I had solved my problem. When you drove home after the concert I

called upon Scotland Yard and upon the chairman of the bank directors, with the result that you have seen.”

“And how could you tell that they would make their attempt to-night?” I asked.

“Well, when they closed their League offices that was a sign that they cared no longer about Mr. Jabez Wilson’s presence; in other words, that they had completed their tunnel.⁷⁰ But it was essential that they should use it soon, as it might be discovered, or the bullion might be removed. Saturday would suit them better than any other day, as it would give them two days for their escape. For all these reasons I expected them to come to-night.”

“You reasoned it out beautifully,” I exclaimed, in unfeigned admiration. “It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true.”⁷¹

“It saved me from *ennui*,”⁷² he answered, yawning. “Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so.”

“And you are a benefactor of the race,” said I.

He shrugged his shoulders. “Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use,” he remarked. “*‘L’homme c’est rien-l’oeuvre c’est tout,’* as Gustave Flaubert wrote to George Sand.”⁷³

¹ “The Red-Headed League” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in August 1891.

² In 1890, when the events of “The Red-Headed League” occurred (for this consensus, see *Chronological Table*), only *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* had been published.

³ “How old was Mr. Wilson?” Thomas L. Stix asks in “Concerning ‘The Red-Headed League.’” “Watson regarded him as ‘an elderly gentleman’—which would mean sixty, perhaps. At sixty one does not possess fiery red hair. Indeed, at fifty the pigmentation has changed.”

⁴ This presumably means Holmes’s bedroom.

⁵ “A Case of Identity,” the case of Miss Mary Sutherland, was not published in the *Strand Magazine* until September 1891, the month *after* publication of “The Red-Headed League.”

⁶ Holmes’s knowledge of crime reports, which Watson refers to in *A Study in Scarlet* as “sensational literature,” is noted there as “immense.”

⁷ In the nineteenth century, the middle class (loosely defined as employers of servants), burgeoned, separating into various substrata, from factory workers, clerks, bookkeepers, and mail carriers (known in England as the “working class, in Germany as the *Mittelstand*, and in France as *nouvelle couches*) to lawyers and doctors (the “professional class”), each with attitudes and concerns of their own. Its members worked hard to regard those below them with proper disdain, as is evident here, but, as Peter Gay, the eminent Victorian historian, observes, while they may have attended concerts and purchased new furniture,

the apprehensions of the working class “over dropping into the proletariat were very real, one reason why so many of them were almost comically insistent on bourgeois formal manners and bourgeois ethical stands for their children . . . they were respectable people. They were *not* proletarians!”

8 A woollen cloth with a black and white checked pattern.

9 A watch-chain made up of heavy links, named after Albert, prince consort of Queen Victoria, also worn by Enoch Drebber (*A Study in Scarlet*) and Hosmer Angel (“A Case of Identity”). Albert, himself viewed as stolid and pompous by the masses, was not very popular but nonetheless set the style of male society.

10 A member of a secret society, the origin of which, by tradition, has been traced back to the Knights Templar, the old Roman empire, the pharaohs, Hiram of Tyre, the Temple of Solomon, or even to the times of the Tower of Babel and the Ark of Noah. The masons of England date back to 926 A.D., although modern freemasonry arose in the eighteenth century.

11 Cf. “Peculiarities of Workmen,” in *Tit-Bits* (January 10, 1891): “A carpenter’s shoulder is almost invariably higher than his left, in consequence of having to use his right arm all the time in planing and hammering. With every shaving his body rises with a jerk, and it finally becomes natural to him to hold himself in that way.”

12 Freemasons were obliged to keep secret the several words and various signs revealed to them, and the motto of the order was “*Audi Vide Tace*” (“Hear, See, Keep Silent”). It was commonly supposed that Masons would reveal themselves to other members by secret hand grips, signs, and code words.

13 Correctly, the “square and compass,” the emblems of the mason’s craft. The square and compass combined were at one time a fairly common object of personal adornment in the form of watch-chain ornaments or on signet rings.

14 While the wrist may seem to be an unlikely place for a tattoo, *Tit-Bits* for February 14, 1891, reported: “[T]here are a great many women who employ [the art of tattooing]. With women the decoration is usually a bee, a butterfly, a spray of flowers, or a monogram. These ornaments are worn inside the wrist, so that they may be hidden by the glove, if necessary.” Why Wilson’s tattoo was on his wrist is unknown.

15 “Everything unknown passes for something splendid,” an epigram of Tacitus, written about 98 A.D. Tacitus was a Roman historian, whose writings are the most trustworthy sources of knowledge of Roman times. This epigram is from his *Life of Agricola*, regarded as one of the finest biographies ever written, and Holmes, educated as a gentleman, evidently read it in the original Latin.

16 According to *Stoll’s Editorial News* of June 2, 1921, the Stoll Film Company placed a similar advertisement in the *Times* on January 20, 1920, when filming “The Red-Headed League”: “On account of circumstances not unconnected with the bequest of the late Hezekiah [*sic*] Hopkins of Lebanon, Penn. USA, lucrative employment for One Day Only is now available for twenty CURLY, RED-HEADED MEN who are sound in mind and body. Those who have served in HM Forces and have some knowledge of acting preferred.” Forty curly, red-haired ex-servicemen applied to the Cricklewood Studio and the producer decided to engage them all.

17 “Fleet Street [is] one of the busiest streets in London,” according to the 1896 *Baedeker*. Celebrated for its newspaper and other printing and publishing offices, by 1896, it was the headquarters of and synonymous with London’s “penny press,” sensational newspapers of the day that were the ancestors of today’s tabloids.

18 The starting line in a race; therefore, a point at the beginning of a project at which nothing has been done ahead of time.

19 The *Morning Chronicle* went bankrupt around 1860. Watson (or Wilson) thus made an error in the name of the newspaper.

20 The evident impossibility of the newspaper bearing the correct date has been noted by numerous chronologists, who point out that considerably more than two months elapse between the newspaper date and the October 9 date given for dissolution of the League, when Wilson appears in Holmes's sitting-room. See note 36.

21 The pawnbroker was the major financial resource available to much of the Victorian population. Persons in need of cash deposited their valuables with the pawnbroker as security, who lent them a fraction of the value. Items not "redeemed" for the amount lent within twelve months were sold. Customers came from all strata of society, ranging from clerks struggling to rise above their working class background to wealthier members of society who had fallen on hard times. In 1836, Charles Dickens, in his *Sketches by Boz*, wrote: "Of the numerous receptacles for misery and distress with which the streets of London unhappily abound, there are, perhaps, none which present such striking scenes as the pawnbrokers' shops. The very nature and description of these places occasions their being but little known, except to the unfortunate beings whose profligacy or misfortune drives them to seek the temporary relief they offer. . . ."

22 Given later as "Saxe-Coburg Square," no such place exists in London. Albert, Victoria's consort, was "Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha." Watson commonly disguised the locations reported in his tales, evidently out of concern for Holmes's clients, to preserve their confidences and to spare them sightseers.

23 The original "City of London," with its own government. Charles Dickens, Jr., writes, "The Municipality of the City originally exercised jurisdiction over London proper, but the town has so outgrown its original limits that the Corporation is now entirely surrounded by rival powers . . ." The City remains the financial centre of London and is the venue for Hugh Boone's begging ("The Man with the Twisted Lip") and Hall Pycroft's employment ("The Stock-Broker's Clerk").

24 A situation or job.

25 Novelist-scholar Dorothy Sayers, in "The Dates in 'The Red-Headed League,'" deduces that the day was August Bank Holiday Monday. That it was a holiday also explains why so many red-headed men were not at work during normal working hours and perhaps why the newspapers—headquartered on Fleet Street—failed to report this remarkable event.

26 A fruit-seller, who typically sold fruit from a wheelbarrow.

27 A board of sawn fir or pine.

28 Used to make shoemaker's thread more supple. It is not clear why cobbler's wax disgusts Ross—perhaps he implies that it has been used to attach false hair to men's heads.

29 Very substantial pay for a half-time job in Victorian England, with a middle class defined by some as those earning over £300 per year. Compare Hugh Boone ("The Man with the Twisted Lip"), who earned £2 per week for "arduous work" as a reporter (and £2 per day as a beggar). In 1890, £300 had the purchasing power of £19,302 in 2001.

30 Another slang term for a job.

31 The *Britannica* was already well established as *the* encyclopaedia. After its first edition in 1768 (a mere three volumes), it had numerous printings and editions and few competitors. Wilson undoubtedly worked on the Ninth Edition, publication of which was completed in 1889. The Ninth Edition is extensively quoted throughout these volumes as a source with which Holmes himself would have been familiar.

[32](#) An upright case or cupboard.

[33](#) How odd that an employer paying four pounds a week cannot provide pens and paper!

[34](#) Paper varying in size according to the grade, usually 16 x 13 inches for writing and drawing paper, so-called from the watermark formerly applied to it.

[35](#) Thomas L. Stix calculates that based on the average page of the *Britannica*, according to Jabez Wilson, he copied 6,419,616 words in eight weeks, working only four hours a day. This is a rate of 33,435 words per hour, or 557.25 words per minute. What a phenomenon!

[36](#) There is a serious confusion of dates here, observes Stix. The first advertisement appeared on April 27, 1890. Wilson started work on April 29. Eight weeks and thirty-two pounds thereafter brings us to June 23. But the announcement of dissolution of the League is dated October 9, 1890. “In other words, fourteen weeks and four days have been unaccounted for, and 58 pounds, 10 shillings, 2 pence unpaid.”

Ian McQueen, in *Sherlock Holmes Detected: The Problems of the Long Stories*, attempts to reconcile Wilson’s remark of “eight weeks” passing, the October 9 “dissolution” date, and the April 27 date on the newspaper advertising the league. He suggests that the latter date could be correct if the advertisement had been inserted in connection with earlier plans that had failed to materialize. When the plans gelled, Spaulding entered Wilson’s employment about the middle of July, using the same newspaper but concealing the date. However, this ignores Watson’s “just two months ago” remark about the date on the paper.

[37](#) A lawyer who practises law but is not permitted to appear as counsel in the courts, except magistrates’ courts and before Justices of the Peace. William Morris was a name well known to the public; the prominent English painter, designer, poet, manufacturer, and Socialist leader (1834–1896) was one of the founders of England’s Arts and Crafts movement, named for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society founded in the 1880s, which promoted hand-craftsmanship in the decorative arts.

[38](#) Donald Redmond, in *Sherlock Holmes: A Study in Sources*, suggests that Wilson confused the address, which properly was a few doors away at No. 44, Little Britain, the premises of Arnold & Sons, “manufacturers of trusses, elastic stockings, belts, artificial legs, arms, eyes &c.”

[39](#) If he was indeed paid £32, Wilson is incorrect in his statement that “Spaulding . . . came down to the office just this day eight weeks with the advertisement”; it would have been *nine* weeks, because Wilson was not paid on this last Saturday.

[40](#) “Three pipes of shag in fifty minutes!” R. D. Sherbrooke-Walker writes in “Holmes, Watson and Tobacco.” “It was not a feat—it was a monstrous abuse of the membrane of the nose and throat!”

[41](#) Pablo Martin Meliton Sarasate (1844–1908) was a renowned violinist, who began by winning competitions at the Paris Conservatory. At age sixteen, he took up his concert career. In “Portraits of Celebrities at Different Times of Their Lives,” appearing in the *Strand Magazine* (1892), the editors write: “[T]he extreme beauty of his execution, aided doubtless by his singularly striking appearance, ensured his immediate success. . . . It is a disputed point among musicians whether Señor Sarasate or Herr Joachim is to be considered the greatest violinist of the age.”

[42](#) The Aldersgate Street Station is on the Metropolitan line. The “Underground Railways,” more properly the Metropolitan and Metropolitan District Railways, irrevocably changed the fabric of everyday life in London, carrying over 110 million passengers per year by 1896. First opened in 1863, the trains for the most part ran through tunnels or cuttings between high walls. London was the first city to adopt underground railways. The railway figures prominently in “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” and Watson remarks, in *A Study in Scarlet*, that he would like to see Holmes attempt to deduce the lines of work of the

occupants of a third-class Underground carriage. However, this is the only recorded instance of Holmes or Watson actually travelling by Underground.

[43](#) The traditional emblem of a pawnbroker's shop.

[44](#) This is one of the two Canonical adventures in which Holmes carries a walking stick; the other is "The Illustrious Client." Holmes is frequently depicted by Sidney Paget in the dress of an English gentleman, and, in the words of Daniel Pool (*What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*), "no gentleman was ever without one or its doppelgänger, the tightly furled umbrella." In modern London, these took the place of the eighteenth-century sword.

[45](#) So named from skirting the bank of the river Thames, the Strand was the great artery of traffic between the City and the West End. It contained many newspaper offices and theatres and has Canonical associations as the home of "Simpson's" restaurant, a favourite of Holmes ("The Dying Detective" and "The Illustrious Client"), and the namesake of the *Strand Magazine*, headquartered on the corner of the Strand and Southampton Street, as depicted on its cover.

[46](#) D. Martin Dakin, assessing Holmes's adversaries Professor Moriarty as number one and Colonel Sebastian Moran as number two, asks, "[W]ho was the third? . . . Perhaps the most likely of those known to us is Charles Augustus Milverton, whose description as the worst man in London does not prevent him from being the third smartest. But of course it might be Brooks or Woodhouse or any one of the fifty men who wished harm to Holmes ["The Bruce-Partington Plans"] . . ." Banesh Hoffman, in "Red Faces and 'The Red-Headed League,'" nominates Holmes himself, Mycroft, and Professor Moriarty.

[47](#) Robert R. Patrick, in "Moriarty Was There," suggests that the gentleman of this encounter may have been in league with other Holmes rivals: "The 'fourth smartest man in London' would not be a freelance. It is even possible that the scheme of "The Red-Headed League" was originated by Moriarty himself. Certainly it was worthy of him . . ." This conclusion—the involvement of Moriarty—was adopted by Granada Television in its 1985 production of "The Red-Headed League."

[48](#) "In a lifetime of frequenting music shops and libraries," writes William Hyder, in "Sherlock Holmes as Musician," "I have never run across any published works by Sherlock Holmes, and neither, to my knowledge, has any one else. It seems reasonable, then, to assume that Watson inaccurately used the term 'composer' when what he was thinking of was Holmes's way of improvising tunes on his violin."

[49](#) Compare the narrator's observations of the private investigator C. Auguste Dupin in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*: "Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolute." Many have characterised Dupin as Holmes's rôle model, but Holmes himself thought poorly of Dupin, calling him "a very inferior fellow" in *A Study in Scarlet*. Watson might well observe that we are most critical of others in whom we recognise ourselves.

[50](#) Books printed in the type used by the early printers. Holmes remarks in *A Study in Scarlet* on a "queer old book" he picked up in a London bookstall, and Madeleine B. Stern suggests, in *Sherlock Holmes: Rare-Book Collector*, that Holmes devoted many leisure hours to book collecting.

[51](#) If this case can be firmly set in 1890 (see *Chronological Table*), Watson is married to Mary Morstan Watson and living near Paddington Station ("The Engineer's Thumb"). The reference here to "the Park" can only mean Hyde Park, which suggests that Watson's residence and practice were located *south* or *west* of the park. Otherwise, one would not pass through the park to get to Oxford Street, which bounds the park on the north, or Baker Street, which lies to the east of the park.

[52](#) Several scholars identify this police agent as Athelney Jones (*The Sign of Four*), both from the

description of his person and characteristics and reference to the “Sholto murder.” Richard Lancelyn Green further suggests that Watson’s slip of the pen may have resulted because “Peter Jones” was the name of a department store on the west side of Sloane Square that opened in 1877.

53 A straight whipstock with a leather loop. The “loaded” hunting-crop, that is, one with its handle weighted with iron, is Holmes’s “favourite weapon,” according to Dr. Watson (“The Six Napoleons”), although it appears only here, in “The Six Napoleons,” and in “A Case of Identity.”

54 Scotland Yard, originally a place, became the popular name for the detectives of the London Metropolitan Police. The first headquarters of the Metropolitan Police were the back premises of 4 Whitehall Place. The location had been the site of a residence owned by the kings of Scotland before the Union and used and occupied by them and/or their ambassadors when in London, and was known as “Scotland.” The courtyard was later used by Sir Christopher Wren and known as “Scotland Yard.” The residence backs on to three streets incorporating the words “Scotland Yard” in their names, which were also said to have been derived from the Scott family’s ownership during the Middle Ages. In either case, by 1887, the police headquarters embraced numbers 3, 4, 5, 21, and 22 Whitehall Place, numbers 8 and 9 Great Scotland Yard, numbers 1, 2, and 3 Palace Place, and various stables and outbuildings. In 1890, the headquarters were removed to premises on the Victoria Embankment designed by Richard Norman Shaw, which became known as “New Scotland Yard” and was presumably well known to Holmes. In 1967, because of the need for a larger and more modern headquarters, a further move took place to the present site at Broadway, S.W.1, which is also known as “New Scotland Yard.”

55 The events recorded in *The Sign of Four*.

56 Merryweather is presumably referring to the card game whist, the forerunner of modern contract bridge. A “rubber” is a unit in scoring denoting the winning of two games by a side. Although some form of whist existed as far back as the sixteenth century, a formal system for the playing of the game was not created until Henry Jones’s 1862 *Principles of Whist*. Once bridge was introduced to London in 1894, it quickly supplanted whist. Other whist players mentioned in the Canon are the Tregennises (“The Devil’s Foot”) and the Hon. Ronald Adair and Colonel Sebastian Moran and their opponents (“The Empty House”).

57 Slang: One who passes bad coins or forged notes.

58 Jacques Barzun, in “A Note on John Clay’s Education,” speculates that Clay might have attended Cambridge, rather than Oxford, where he could have seen the following footnote in a treatise by Henry Sidgwick, praelector in moral science at the University of Cambridge since 1869: “ ‘It would not be commonly thought unjust in a rich bachelor with no near relatives to leave the bulk of his property in providing pensions exclusively for indigent red-haired men, however unreasonable and capricious the choice might appear . . . ’ ”

59 To break into a building.

60 If Aldersgate Station was only “a short walk” from Saxe-Coburg Square, as Watson previously noted, why would Holmes and party endure a “long drive” through “an endless labyrinth of gas-lit streets”?

61 One notes a certain similarity in Holmes’s metaphorical descriptions of Scotland Yard men, for in “The Cardboard Box,” Holmes describes Inspector Lestrade as “tenacious as a bulldog.” Holmes had little regard for Scotland Yard in his youth—in *A Study in Scarlet*, he calls Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson “the pick of a bad lot”—but by the time of his retirement, while he still decried their want of imaginative intuition, he praised their thoroughness and method (“The Three Garridebs”).

62 That is, flagstones.

63 The “dark lantern” was a modification of an ordinary gas or kerosene hand lantern that could be darkened while lit, by a sliding shield that covered the light without extinguishing the flame. In this way, it was the predecessor of the electric hand torch or flashlight.

64 Holmes’s intense interest in whist is evidenced by his frequent choice of phrase: “At present it must be admitted that the odd trick is in his possession, and, as you are aware, Watson, it is not my habit to leave the game in that condition” (“The Missing Three-Quarter”).

“He will hold a card back for years in order to play it at the moment when the stake is best worth winning” (“Charles Augustus Milverton”).

“We have added one card to our hand, Watson, but it needs careful playing all the same. . . . We are getting some cards in our hands. . . . It’s not an easy one to play . . .” (“Shoscombe Old Place”).

“Now, Count, you are a cardplayer. When the other fellow has all the trumps, it saves time to throw down your hand. . . . That’s the hand I play from, I put it all upon the table. But one card is missing. It’s the king of diamonds” (“The Mazarin Stone”).

“I see the fall of the cards” (“The Bruce-Partington Plans”).

“We must see what further cards we have in our hands, and play them with decision” (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*).

However, notwithstanding a series of pastiches by bridge experts George Gooden and Frank Thomas (commencing with *Sherlock Holmes, Bridge Detective*) and Alfred Sheinwold in numerous bridge columns, this is the only Watsonian record of Holmes’s cardplaying.

65 In French, this means a “square party,” using the feminine adjective, meaning a party consisting of two men and two women. Holmes is being somewhat facetious here, for the party actually consisted of two *male* couples.

66 “Archie” was presumably the real name of “Duncan Ross.” Jerry Neal Williamson, in “The Sad Case of Young Stamford,” speculates that this Archie was the same Archie Stamford, the forger, later taken by Holmes and Watson near Farnham, on the borders of Surrey (“The Solitary Cyclist”) and also the young Stamford who introduced Watson to Holmes (in *A Study in Scarlet*).

67 Clay may have meant that he would swing back through the trapdoor, or he may have anticipated that he would be hanged for his crime. John Camden Hotten’s 1865 *Slang Dictionary* gives “to be hanged” as the contemporary meaning of “swing.” Hanging remained the principal method of British capital punishment until abolition of the death penalty in 1965. By 1861, however, reformers had limited the death penalty to persons convicted of murder, treason, arson in a royal dockyard, and piracy “with violence.” Is it possible that Clay had by this point murdered Jabez Wilson?

68 Slang: Handcuffs.

69 How the excavated earth was to be disposed of is not explained, points out Nathan L. Bengis, in “Sherlock Stays After School.” The large amount of dirt removed from the tunnel could not have been piled up in the cellar, for Wilson would surely have noticed it, nor could it have been deposited in the street without attracting considerable attention.

“Patience Moran” (who claims to have been the “girl of fourteen” employed by Wilson) states (in “Two Canonical Problems Solved”) that the earth was loaded into large empty cardboard boxes that were then taken away by a dray that delivered more cardboard boxes. Charles Scholefield speculates that the excavated earth might have been cast upon the neighbours’ lawns, but finds it unlikely that the neighbours would not mention Spaulding’s mound-building to his employer.

70 The notice to Wilson, which preceded the robbery, has occasioned much comment and speculation. Thomas L. Stix suggests that Clay may have terminated the league early to economize, but if he did so, then although Clay may have been the fourth smartest man in London, “he was doubtless the first most

penurious.” Greg Darak, in “But Why Dissolve the League?,” suggests that Clay’s need to establish his superiority to the fatuous Wilson, not economy, caused Clay to publish the notice. It may be that Clay had so little regard for Wilson that he could not conceive that the sheeplike pawnbroker would complain to anyone of his loss.

71 It is unknown how the criminals hoped to remove the bullion, the weight of which must have been enormous. A. Carson Simpson estimates that each of the cases would weigh almost 60 pounds, and while removal of the boxes from the building, one at a time, would not have been difficult, the story does not disclose any means by which the criminals planned to transport over 900 pounds of loot.

Charles Scholefield suggests that the criminals intended to use carriages from McFarlane’s Depot, noted as nearby. The tunnel may have connected not only Wilson’s but also McFarlane’s with the bank, and the carriages could also have been used to carry earth and broken bricks and other spoil from the tunnel. David H. Galerstein, in “The Real Loot,” proposes a more radical solution: Clay and his confederate were not after the gold but rather currency and gems, with which the vaults were undoubtedly filled. These smaller, lighter items would pose neither transportation nor disposition problems.

72 In Oscar Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry Wotton remarks: “The only horrible thing in the world is *ennui*, Dorian. That is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness.” Holmes confessed in *The Sign of Four*, written almost simultaneously with *Dorian Gray*: “ ‘My mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulation. But I abhor the dull routine of existence.’ ”

73 Correctly, “*L’homme n’est rien, l’oeuvre tout.*” “The man is nothing, the work is everything.”

A CASE OF IDENTITY 1

As in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” no crime is actually committed in “A Case of Identity,” and scholars wonder why Watson chose to include it among the sixty published cases out of the more than 1,000 that Holmes handled. Could the villain be more wicked than the events reveal? While the near-comic Mary Sutherland, the whispering Hosmer Angel, and the strident James Windibank are only minor characters on Watson’s stage, we are reminded that a single woman of Holmes’s era can get along quite nicely on £60 per year. The “gasfitters’ ball,” a grand social event for the plumbing trade at which Mary meets her fate, has inspired many Sherlockian societies to hold similar galas. Here, too, we first see the masterful side of Holmes, as he hands out punishment and withholds information as he alone sees fit.

MY DEAR FELLOW,” said Sherlock Holmes as we sat on either side of the fire in his lodgings at Baker Street, “life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent.² We would not dare to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence. If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outré results, it would make all fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable.”³

“And yet I am not convinced of it,” I answered. “The cases which come to light in the papers are, as a rule, bald enough, and vulgar enough. We have in our police reports realism pushed to its extreme limits, and yet the result is, it must be confessed, neither fascinating nor artistic.”

“A certain selection and discretion must be used in producing a realistic effect,” remarked Holmes. “This is wanting in the police report, where more stress is laid, perhaps, upon the platitudes of the magistrate than upon the details, which to an observer contain the vital essence of the whole matter. Depend upon it, there is nothing so unnatural as the commonplace.”

I smiled and shook my head. “I can quite understand your thinking so,” I said. “Of course, in your position of unofficial adviser and helper to everybody who is absolutely puzzled, throughout three continents,⁴ you are brought in contact with all that is strange and bizarre. But here”—I picked up the morning paper from the ground—“let us put it to a practical test. Here is the first heading upon which I come. ‘A husband’s cruelty to his wife.’ There is half a column of print, but I know without reading it that it is all perfectly familiar to me. There is, of course, the other woman, the drink, the push, the blow, the bruise, the sympathetic sister or landlady. The crudest of writers could invent nothing more crude.”⁵



“Q.E.D.
‘What’s up wi’ Sal?’ ‘Aint yer ’erd? She’s married agin!’
”

Phil May, *Punch Magazine*, September 1, 1894

“Indeed, your example is an unfortunate one for your argument,” said Holmes, taking the paper and glancing his eye down it. “This is the Dundas separation case, and, as it happens, I was engaged in clearing up some small points in connection with it. The husband was a teetotaler, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife,⁶ which, you will allow, is not an action likely to occur to the imagination of the average story-teller. Take a pinch of snuff,⁷ Doctor, and acknowledge that I have scored over you in your example.”

He held out his snuffbox of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid. Its splendour was in such contrast to his homely ways and simple life that I could not help commenting upon it.

“Ah,” said he, “I forgot that I had not seen you for some weeks. It is a little souvenir⁸ from the King of Bohemia in return for my assistance in the case of the Irene Adler papers.”⁹

“And the ring?” I asked, glancing at a remarkable brilliant¹⁰ which sparkled

upon his finger.

“It was from the reigning family of Holland, though the matter in which I served them was of such delicacy that I cannot confide it even to you, who have been good enough to chronicle one or two of my little problems.”

“And have you any on hand just now?” I asked with interest.

“Some ten or twelve, but none which presents any feature of interest.¹¹ They are important, you understand, without being interesting. Indeed, I have found that it is usually in unimportant matters that there is a field for the observation, and for the quick analysis of cause and effect which gives the charm to an investigation. The larger crimes are apt to be the simpler, for the bigger the crime, the more obvious, as a rule, is the motive. In these cases, save for one rather intricate matter which has been referred to me from Marseilles,¹² there is nothing which presents any features of interest. It is possible, however, that I may have something better before very many minutes are over, for this is one of my clients, or I am much mistaken.”

He had risen from his chair, and was standing between the parted blinds, gazing down into the dull, neutral-tinted London street. Looking over his shoulder I saw that on the pavement opposite there stood a large woman with a heavy fur boa round her neck, and a large curling red feather in a broad-brimmed hat which was tilted in a coquettish Duchess-of-Devonshire¹³ fashion over her ear. From under this great panoply she peeped up in a nervous, hesitating fashion at our windows, while her body oscillated backwards and forwards, and her fingers fidgeted with her glove buttons. Suddenly, with a plunge, as of the swimmer who leaves the bank, she hurried across the road, and we heard the sharp clang of the bell.



Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire.

Thomas Gainsborough, 1784

“I have seen those symptoms before,” said Holmes, throwing his cigarette into the fire. “Oscillation upon the pavement always means an *affaire de coeur*.¹⁴ She would like advice, but is not sure that the matter is not too delicate for communication. And yet even here we may discriminate. When a woman has been seriously wronged by a man she no longer oscillates, and the usual symptom is a broken bell wire. Here we may take it that there is a love matter, but that the maiden is not so much angry as perplexed, or grieved. But here she comes in person to resolve our doubts.”

As he spoke there was a tap at the door, and the boy in buttons¹⁵ entered to announce Miss Mary Sutherland, while the lady herself loomed behind his small black figure like a full-sailed merchant-man¹⁶ behind a tiny pilot boat. Sherlock Holmes welcomed her with the easy courtesy for which he was remarkable, and, having closed the door, and bowed her into an arm chair, he looked her over in the minute and yet abstracted fashion which was peculiar to him.

“Do you not find,” he said, “that with your short sight it is a little trying to do so much typewriting?”

“I did at first,” she answered, “but now I know where the letters are without looking.” Then, suddenly realizing the full purport of his words, she gave a violent start, and looked up with fear and astonishment upon her broad, good-humoured face. “You’ve heard about me, Mr. Holmes,” she cried, “else how could you know all that?”



“Sherlock Holmes welcomed her.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Never mind,” said Holmes, laughing; “it is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook. If not, why should you come to consult me?”

“I came to you, sir, because I heard of you from Mrs. Etherege, whose husband you found so easy when the police and every one had given him up for dead. Oh, Mr. Holmes, I wish you would do as much for me. I’m not rich, but still I have a hundred a year¹⁷ in my own right, besides the little that I make by the machine, and I would give it all to know what has become of Mr. Hosmer Angel.”



“Why did you come to consult me in such a hurry?”

Artist unknown, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, September 5, 1891

“Why did you come away to consult me in such a hurry?” asked Sherlock Holmes, with his finger-tips together and his eyes to the ceiling.

Again a startled look came over the somewhat vacuous face of Miss Mary Sutherland. “Yes, I did bang out of the house,” she said, “for it made me angry to see the easy way in which Mr. Windibank—that is, my father—took it all. He would not go to the police, and he would not go to you, and so at last, as he would do nothing and kept on saying that there was no harm done, it made me mad, and I just on with my things and came right away to you.”

“Your father,” said Holmes, “your stepfather, surely, since the name is different.”

“Yes, my stepfather. I call him father, though it sounds funny, too, for he is only five years and two months older than myself.”

“And your mother is alive?”

“Oh, yes, mother is alive and well. I wasn’t best pleased, Mr. Holmes, when she married again so soon after father’s death, and a man who was nearly fifteen years younger than herself. Father was a plumber in the Tottenham Court Road, and he left a tidy business behind him, which mother carried on with Mr. Hardy,¹⁸ the foreman; but when Mr. Windibank came he made her sell the business, for he was very superior, being a traveller in wines. They got £4700 for the goodwill and interest, which wasn’t near as much as father could have got if he had been alive.”

I had expected to see Sherlock Holmes impatient under this rambling and inconsequential narrative, but, on the contrary, he had listened with the greatest concentration of attention.

“Your own little income,” he asked, “does it come out of the business?”

“Oh, no, sir. It is quite separate, and was left me by my uncle Ned in Auckland.¹⁹ It is in New Zealand²⁰ Stock, paying 4½ per cent. Two thousand five hundred pounds was the amount, but I can only touch the interest.”



Tottenham Court Road.

Victorian and Edwardian London

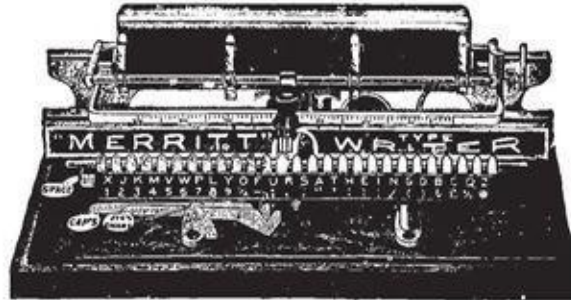
“You interest me extremely,” said Holmes. “And since you draw so large a sum as a hundred a year, with what you earn into the bargain, you no doubt travel a little and indulge yourself in every way. I believe that a single lady can get on very nicely upon an income of about sixty pounds.²¹”

“I could do with much less than that, Mr. Holmes, but you understand that as long as I live at home I don’t wish to be a burden to them, and so they have the use of the money just while I am staying with them. Of course that is only just for the time. Mr. Windibank draws my interest every quarter, and pays it over to mother, and I find that I can do pretty well with what I earn at typewriting. It brings me twopence a sheet, and I can often do from fifteen to twenty sheets in a

day.²²

“You have made your position very clear to me,” said Holmes. “This is my friend, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Kindly tell us now all about your connection with Mr. Hosmer Angel.”

THE “MERRITT.” THE PEOPLE’S TYPE-WRITER.



This is exact copy of The "MERRITT'S" work. It is equal to that of any High Priced Typewriter. Relieves fatigue from steady use of pen. Improves spelling and punctuation. Interests and instructs children. The entire correspondence of a business house can be done with it. Learned in a half hour from directions. Prints capitals, small letters, figures and characters, 78 in all. Price £3.3.0. complete. Address- RICHARDS, TERRY & Co. Limited, 46, Holborn Viaduct, London, E.C.

Contemporary typewriter advertisement.

Victorian Advertisements

A flush stole over Miss Sutherland’s face, and she picked nervously at the fringe of her jacket. “I met him first at the gasfitters’²³ ball,” she said. “They used to send father tickets when he was alive, and then afterwards they remembered us, and sent them to mother. Mr. Windibank did not wish us to go. He never did wish us to go anywhere. He would get quite mad if I wanted so much as to join a Sunday-school treat. But this time I was set on going, and I would go; for what right had he to prevent? He said the folk were not fit for us to know, when all father’s friends were to be there. And he said that I had nothing fit to wear, when I had my purple plush²⁴ that I had never so much as taken out of the drawer. At last when nothing else would do he went off to France upon the business of the firm, but we went, mother and I, with Mr. Hardy, who used to be our foreman, and it was there I met Mr. Hosmer Angel.”



“At the Gasfitter’s Ball.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“I suppose,” said Holmes, “that when Mr. Windibank came back from France, he was very annoyed at your having gone to the ball.”

“Oh, well, he was very good about it. He laughed, I remember, and shrugged his shoulders, and said there was no use denying anything to a woman, for she would have her way.”

“I see. Then at the gasfitters’ ball you met, as I understand, a gentleman called Mr. Hosmer Angel.”

“Yes, sir. I met him that night, and he called next day to ask if we had got home all safe, and after that we met him—that is to say, Mr. Holmes, I met him twice for walks, but after that father came back again, and Mr. Hosmer Angel could not come to the house any more.”

“No?”

“Well, you know, father didn’t like anything of the sort. He wouldn’t have any visitors if he could help it, and he used to say that a woman should be happy in her own family circle. But then, as I used to say to mother, a woman wants her own circle to begin with, and I had not got mine yet.”

“But how about Mr. Hosmer Angel? Did he make no attempt to see you?”

“Well, father was going off to France again in a week, and Hosmer wrote and said that it would be safer and better not to see each other until he had gone. We could write in the meantime, and he used to write every day. I took the letters in

in the morning, so there was no need for father to know.”

“Were you engaged to the gentleman at this time?”

“Oh, yes, Mr. Holmes. We were engaged after the first walk that we took. Hosmer—Mr. Angel—was a cashier in an office in Leadenhall Street²⁵—and—”

“What office?”

“That’s the worst of it, Mr. Holmes, I don’t know.”

“Where did he live, then?”

“He slept on the premises.”

“And you don’t know his address?”

“No—except that it was Leadenhall Street.”

“Where did you address your letters, then?”

“To the Leadenhall Street Post Office, to be left till called for. He said that if they were sent to the office he would be chaffed by all the other clerks about having letters from a lady, so I offered to typewrite them, like he did his, but he wouldn’t have that, for he said that when I wrote them they seemed to come from me, but when they were typewritten he always felt that the machine had come between us.²⁶ That will just show you how fond he was of me, Mr. Holmes, and the little things that he would think of.”

“It was most suggestive,” said Holmes. “It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important. Can you remember any other little things about Mr. Hosmer Angel?”

“He was a very shy man, Mr. Holmes. He would rather walk with me in the evening than in the daylight, for he said that he hated to be conspicuous. Very retiring and gentlemanly he was. Even his voice was gentle. He’d had the quinsy²⁷ and swollen glands when he was young, he told me, and it had left him with a weak throat, and a hesitating, whispering fashion of speech. He was always well dressed, very neat and plain, but his eyes were weak, just as mine are, and he wore tinted glasses against the glare.”

“Well, and what happened when Mr. Windibank, your stepfather, returned to France?”

“Mr. Hosmer Angel came to the house again, and proposed that we should marry before father came back. He was in dreadful earnest, and made me swear, with my hands on the Testament, that whatever happened I would always be true to him. Mother said he was quite right to make me swear, and that it was a sign of his passion. Mother was all in his favour from the first, and was even fonder of him than I was. Then, when they talked of marrying within the week, I began to ask about father; but they both said never to mind about father, but just to tell him afterwards, and mother said she would make it all right with him. I didn’t

quite like that, Mr. Holmes. It seemed funny that I should ask his leave, as he was only a few years older than me; but I didn't want to do anything on the sly, so I wrote to father at Bordeaux,²⁸ where the company has its French offices, but the letter came back to me on the very morning of the wedding."

"It missed him, then?"

"Yes, sir; for he had started to England just before it arrived."

"Ha! that was unfortunate. Your wedding was arranged, then, for the Friday. Was it to be in church?"

"Yes, sir, but very quietly. It was to be at St. Saviour's, near King's Cross, and we were to have breakfast afterwards at the St. Pancras Hotel.²⁹ Hosmer came for us in a hansom, but as there were two of us, he put us both into it, and stepped himself into a four-wheeler,³⁰ which happened to be the only other cab in the street. We got to the church first, and when the four-wheeler drove up we waited for him to step out, but he never did, and when the cabman got down from the box and looked, there was no one there! The cabman said he could not imagine what had become of him, for he had seen him get in with his own eyes. That was last Friday, Mr. Holmes, and I have never seen or heard anything since then to throw any light upon what became of him."

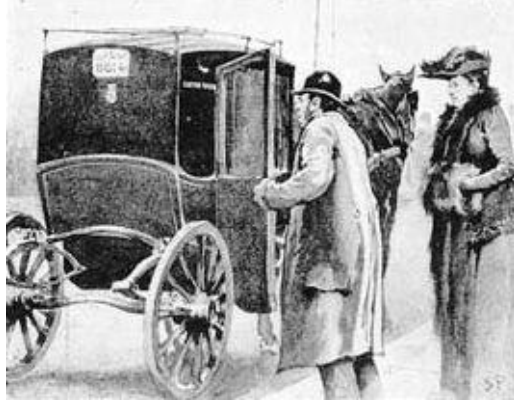
"It seems to me that you have been very shamefully treated," said Holmes.

"Oh, no, sir! He was too good and kind to leave me so. Why, all the morning he was saying to me that, whatever happened, I was to be true; and that even if something quite unforeseen occurred to separate us, I was always to remember that I was pledged to him, and that he would claim his pledge sooner or later. It seemed strange talk for a wedding morning, but what has happened since gives a meaning to it."



Midland Grand Hotel.

The Queen's London (1897) "Most certainly it does. Your own opinion is, then, that some unforeseen catastrophe has occurred to him?"



“There was no one there.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Yes, sir. I believe that he foresaw some danger, or else he would not have talked so. And then I think that what he foresaw happened.”

“But you have no notion as to what it could have been?”

“None.”

“One more question. How did your mother take the matter?”

“She was angry, and said that I was never to speak of the matter again.”

“And your father? Did you tell him?”

“Yes, and he seemed to think, with me, that something had happened, and that I should hear of Hosmer again. As he said, what interest could any one have in bringing me to the doors of the church, and then leaving me? Now, if he had borrowed my money, or if he had married me and got my money settled on him, there might be some reason; but Hosmer was very independent about money and never would look at a shilling of mine. And yet, what could have happened? And why could he not write? Oh, it drives me half-mad to think of it! and I can’t sleep a wink at night.” She pulled a little handkerchief out of her muff, and began to sob heavily into it.

“I shall glance into the case for you,” said Holmes, rising, “and I have no doubt that we shall reach some definite result. Let the weight of the matter rest upon me now, and do not let your mind dwell upon it further. Above all, try to let Mr. Hosmer Angel vanish from your memory, as he has done from your life.”

“Then you don’t think I’ll see him again?”

“I fear not.”

“Then what has happened to him?”

“You will leave that question in my hands. I should like an accurate description of him, and any letters of his which you can spare.”

“I advertised for him in last Saturday’s Chronicle,”³¹ said she. “Here is the

slip, and here are four letters from him.”

“Thank you. And your address?”

“31, Lyon Place, Camberwell.”

“Mr. Angel’s address you never had, I understand. Where is your father’s place of business?”

“He travels for Westhouse & Marbank, the great claret importers³² of Fenchurch Street.”

“Thank you. You have made your statement very clearly. You will leave the papers here, and remember the advice which I have given you. Let the whole incident be a sealed book, and do not allow it to affect your life.”

“You are very kind, Mr. Holmes, but I cannot do that. I shall be true to Hosmer. He shall find me ready when he comes back.”

For all the preposterous hat and the vacuous face, there was something noble in the simple faith of our visitor which compelled our respect. She laid her little bundle of papers upon the table, and went her way, with a promise to come again whenever she might be summoned.

Sherlock Holmes sat silent for a few minutes with his finger tips still pressed together, his legs stretched out in front of him, and his gaze directed upwards to the ceiling. Then he took down from the rack the old and oily clay pipe,³³ which was to him as a counsellor, and, having lit it, he leaned back in his chair, with the thick blue cloud-wreaths spinning up from him, and a look of infinite languor in his face.



“She laid a little bundle upon the table.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Quite an interesting study, that maiden,” he observed. “I found her more interesting than her little problem, which, by the way, is rather a trite one. You will find parallel cases, if you consult my index,³⁴ in Andover³⁵ in '77, and there was something of the sort at The Hague³⁶ last year. Old as is the idea, however, there were one or two details which were new to me. But the maiden herself was most instructive.”

“You appeared to read a good deal upon her which was quite invisible to me,” I remarked.

“Not invisible, but unnoticed, Watson. You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important. I can never bring you to realise the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumb-nails, or the great issues that may hang from a boot-lace.³⁷ Now, what did you gather from that woman's appearance? Describe it.”

“Well, she had a slate-coloured, broad-brimmed straw hat, with a feather of a brickish red. Her jacket was black, with black beads sewn upon it, and a fringe of little black jet³⁸ ornaments. Her dress was brown, rather darker than coffee colour, with a little purple plush at the neck and sleeves. Her gloves were greyish, and were worn through at the right forefinger. Her boots I didn't observe. She had small round, hanging gold earrings, and a general air of being fairly well-to-do in a vulgar, comfortable, easy-going way.”

Sherlock Holmes clapped his hands softly together and chuckled.

“Upon my word, Watson, you are coming along wonderfully. You have really done very well indeed. It is true that you have missed everything of importance, but you have hit upon the method, and you have a quick eye for colour. Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details. My first glance is always at a woman's sleeve. In a man it is perhaps better first to take the knee of the trouser. As you observe, this woman had plush upon her sleeves, which is a most useful material for showing traces. The double line a little above the wrist, where the typewritist presses against the table, was beautifully defined. The sewing-machine, of the hand type, leaves a similar mark, but only on the left arm, and on the side of it farthest from the thumb, instead of being right across the broadest part, as this was.³⁹ I then glanced at her face, and, observing the dint of a *pince-nez*⁴⁰ at either side of her nose, I ventured a remark upon short sight and typewriting, which seemed to surprise her.”

“It surprised me.”

“But, surely, it was obvious. I was then much surprised and interested on glancing down to observe that, though the boots which she was wearing were not

unlike each other, they were really odd ones, the one having a slightly decorated toe-cap, and the other a plain one. One was buttoned only in the two lower buttons out of five, and the other at the first, third, and fifth. Now, when you see that a young lady, otherwise neatly dressed, has come away from home with odd boots, half-buttoned, it is no great deduction to say that she came away in a hurry.”

“And what else?” I asked, keenly interested, as I always was, by my friend’s incisive reasoning.

“I noted, in passing, that she had written a note before leaving home, but after being fully dressed. You observed that her right glove was torn at the forefinger, but you did not apparently see that both glove and finger were stained with violet ink. She had written in a hurry and dipped her pen too deep. It must have been this morning, or the mark would not remain clear upon the finger. All this is amusing, though rather elementary, but I must go back to business, Watson. Would you mind reading me the advertised description of Mr. Hosmer Angel?”

I held the little printed slip to the light. “Missing,” it said,

on the morning of the fourteenth, a gentleman named Hosmer Angel. About five ft. seven in. in height; strongly built, sallow complexion, black hair, a little bald in the centre, bushy, black side whiskers and moustache; tinted glasses, slight infirmity of speech. Was dressed, when last seen, in black frock coat⁴¹ faced with silk, black waistcoat, gold Albert chain, and grey Harris tweed⁴² trousers, with brown gaiters⁴³ over elastic-sided boots. Known to have been employed in an office in Leadenhall Street. Anybody bringing, &c., &c.

“That will do,” said Holmes. “As to the letters,” he continued, glancing over them, “they are very commonplace. Absolutely no clue in them to Mr. Angel, save that he quotes Balzac⁴⁴ once. There is one remarkable point, however, which will no doubt strike you.”

“They are typewritten,” I remarked.

“Not only that, but the signature is typewritten. Look at the neat little ‘Hosmer Angel’ at the bottom. There is a date, you see, but no superscription, except Leadenhall Street, which is rather vague. The point about the signature is very suggestive—in fact, we may call it conclusive.”

“Of what?”

“My dear fellow, is it possible you do not see how strongly it bears upon the case?”

“I cannot say that I do unless it were that he wished to be able to deny his

signature if an action for breach of promise were instituted.”

“No, that was not the point. However, I shall write two letters which should settle the matter. One is to a firm in the City, the other is to the young lady’s stepfather, Mr. Windibank, asking him whether he could meet us here at six o’clock to-morrow evening. It is just as well that we should do business with the male relatives. And now, Doctor, we can do nothing until the answers to those letters come, so we may put our little problem upon the shelf for the interim.”

I had had so many reasons to believe in my friend’s subtle powers of reasoning, and extraordinary energy in action, that I felt that he must have some solid grounds for the assured and easy demeanour with which he treated the singular mystery which he had been called upon to fathom. Once only had I known him to fail, in the case of the King of Bohemia and of the Irene Adler photograph, but when I looked back to the weird business of ‘The Sign of Four,’ and the extraordinary circumstances connected with ‘A Study in Scarlet,’ I felt that it would be a strange tangle indeed which he could not unravel.

I left him then, still puffing at his black clay pipe, with the conviction that when I came again on the next evening I would find that he held in his hands all the clues which would lead up to the identity of the disappearing bridegroom of Miss Mary Sutherland.

A professional case of great gravity was engaging my own attention at the time, and the whole of next day I was busy at the bedside of the sufferer. It was not until close upon six o’clock that I found myself free, and was able to spring into a hansom and drive to Baker Street, half afraid that I might be too late to assist at the *dénouement* of the little mystery. I found Sherlock Holmes alone, however, half asleep, with his long, thin form curled up in the recesses of his armchair. A formidable array of bottles and test-tubes, with the pungent cleanly smell of hydrochloric acid, told me that he had spent his day in the chemical work which was so dear to him.⁴⁵

“Well, have you solved it?” I asked as I entered.

“Yes. It was the bisulphate of baryta.”⁴⁶

“No, no, the mystery!” I cried.

“Oh, that! I thought of the salt that I have been working upon. There was never any mystery in the matter, though, as I said yesterday, some of the details are of interest. The only drawback is that there is no law, I fear, that can touch the scoundrel.”



“I found Sherlock Holmes half asleep.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Who was he, then, and what was his object in deserting Miss Sutherland?”

The question was hardly out of my mouth, and Holmes had not yet opened his lips to reply, when we heard a heavy footfall in the passage, and a tap at the door.

“This is the girl’s stepfather, Mr. James Windibank,” said Holmes. “He has written to me to say that he would be here at six. Come in!”

The man who entered was a sturdy, middle-sized fellow, some thirty years of age, clean shaven, and sallow skinned, with a bland, insinuating manner, and a pair of wonderfully sharp and penetrating grey eyes. He shot a questioning glance at each of us, placed his shiny top hat upon the sideboard,⁴⁷ and with a slight bow sidled down into the nearest chair.

“Good evening, Mr. James Windibank,” said Holmes. “I think that this typewritten letter is from you, in which you made an appointment with me for six o’clock?”

“Yes, sir. I am afraid that I am a little late, but I am not quite my own master, you know. I am sorry that Miss Sutherland has troubled you about this little matter, for I think it is far better not to wash linen of the sort in public. It was quite against my wishes that she came, but she is a very excitable, impulsive girl, as you may have noticed, and she is not easily controlled when she has made up her mind on a point. Of course, I did not mind you so much, as you are not connected with the official police, but it is not pleasant to have a family misfortune like this noised abroad. Besides it is a useless expense, for how could

you possibly find this Hosmer Angel?”

“On the contrary,” said Holmes quietly; “I have every reason to believe that I will succeed in discovering Mr. Hosmer Angel.”

Mr. Windibank gave a violent start, and dropped his gloves. “I am delighted to hear it,” he said.

“It is a curious thing,” remarked Holmes, “that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man’s handwriting. Unless they are quite new, no two of them write exactly alike. Some letters get more worn than others, and some wear only on one side. Now, you remark in this note of yours, Mr. Windibank, that in every case there is some little slurring over of the ‘e,’ and a slight defect in the tail of the ‘r.’ There are fourteen other characteristics, but those are the more obvious.”

“We do all our correspondence with this machine at the office, and no doubt it is a little worn,” our visitor answered, glancing keenly at Holmes with his bright little eyes.

“And now I will show you what is really a very interesting study, Mr. Windibank,” Holmes continued. “I think of writing another little monograph some of these days on the typewriter and its relation to crime. It is a subject to which I have devoted some little attention. I have here four letters which purport to come from the missing man. They are all typewritten. In each case, not only are the ‘e’s’ slurred and the ‘r’s’ tailless, but you will observe, if you care to use my magnifying lens, that the fourteen other characteristics to which I have alluded are there as well.”

Mr. Windibank sprang out of his chair and picked up his hat. “I cannot waste time over this sort of fantastic talk, Mr. Holmes,” he said. “If you can catch the man, catch him, and let me know when you have done it.”

“Certainly,” said Holmes, stepping over and turning the key in the door. “I let you know, then, that I have caught him!”

“What! where?” shouted Mr. Windibank, turning white to his lips and glancing about him like a rat in a trap.

“Oh, it won’t do—really it won’t,” said Holmes, suavely. “There is no possible getting out of it, Mr. Windibank. It is quite too transparent, and it was a very bad compliment when you said that it was impossible for me to solve so simple a question. That’s right! Sit down and let us talk it over.”



“Glancing about him like a rat in a trap.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

Our visitor collapsed into a chair, with a ghastly face and a glitter of moisture on his brow. “It—it’s not actionable,” he stammered.

“I am very much afraid that it is not. But between ourselves, Windibank, it was as cruel and selfish and heartless a trick in a petty way as ever came before me. Now, let me just run over the course of events, and you will contradict me, if I go wrong.”

The man sat huddled up in his chair, with his head sunk upon his breast, like one who is utterly crushed. Holmes stuck his feet up on the corner of the mantelpiece and, leaning back with his hands in his pockets, began talking, rather to himself, as it seemed, than to us.

“The man married a woman very much older than himself for her money,” said he, “and he enjoyed the use of the money of the daughter as long as she lived with them. It was a considerable sum for people in their position, and the loss of it would have made a serious difference. It was worth an effort to preserve it. The daughter was of a good, amiable disposition, but affectionate and warm-hearted in her ways, so that it was evident that with her fair personal advantages, and her little income, she would not be allowed to remain single long. Now her marriage would mean, of course, the loss of a hundred a year, so what does her stepfather do to prevent it? He takes the obvious course of keeping her at home, and forbidding her to seek the company of people of her own age. But soon he found that that would not answer for ever. She became restive, insisted upon her rights, and finally announced her positive intention of going to

a certain ball. What does her clever stepfather do then? He conceives an idea more creditable to his head than to his heart. With the connivance and assistance of his wife he disguised himself, covered those keen eyes with tinted glasses, masked the face with a moustache and a pair of bushy whiskers, sunk that clear voice into an insinuating whisper, and doubly secure on account of the girl's short sight, he appears as Mr. Hosmer Angel, and keeps off other lovers by making love himself."

"It was only a joke at first," groaned our visitor. "We never thought that she would have been so carried away."

"Very likely not. However that may be, the young lady was very decidedly carried away, and, having quite made up her mind that her stepfather was in France, the suspicion of treachery never for an instant entered her mind. She was flattered by the gentleman's attentions, and the effect was increased by the loudly expressed admiration of her mother. Then Mr. Angel began to call, for it was obvious that the matter should be pushed as far as it would go, if a real effect were to be produced. There were meetings, and an engagement, which would finally secure the girl's affections from turning towards any one else. But the deception could not be kept up for ever. These pretended journeys to France were rather cumbrous. The thing to do was clearly to bring the business to an end in such a dramatic manner that it would leave a permanent impression upon the young lady's mind and prevent her from looking upon any other suitor for some time to come. Hence those vows of fidelity exacted upon a Testament, and hence also the allusions to a possibility of something happening on the very morning of the wedding. James Windibank wished Miss Sutherland to be so bound to Hosmer Angel, and so uncertain as to his fate, that for ten years to come, at any rate, she would not listen to another man. As far as the church door he brought her, and then, as he could go no farther, he conveniently vanished away by the old trick of stepping in at one door of a four-wheeler, and out at the other. I think that that was the chain of events, Mr. Windibank!"

Our visitor had recovered something of his assurance while Holmes had been talking, and he rose from his chair now with a cold sneer upon his pale face.

"It may be so, or it may not, Mr. Holmes," said he, "but if you are so very sharp you ought to be sharp enough to know that it is you who are breaking the law now, and not me. I have done nothing actionable from the first, but as long as you keep that door locked you lay yourself open to an action for assault and illegal constraint."



A Victorian four-wheeler.

“The law cannot, as you say, touch you,” said Holmes, unlocking and throwing open the door, “yet there never was a man who deserved punishment more. If the young lady has a brother or a friend, he ought to lay a whip across your shoulders. By Jove!” he continued, flushing up at the sight of the bitter sneer upon the man’s face, “it is not part of my duties to my client, but here’s a hunting crop handy, and I think I shall just treat myself to—” He took two swift steps to the whip, but before he could grasp it there was a wild clatter of steps upon the stairs, the heavy hall door banged, and from the window we could see Mr. James Windibank running at the top of his speed down the road.



“He took two swift steps to the whip.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“There’s a cold-blooded scoundrel!” said Holmes, laughing, as he threw himself down into his chair once more. “That fellow will rise from crime to crime until he does something very bad, and ends on a gallows.⁴⁸ The case has, in some respects, been not entirely devoid of interest.”

“I cannot now entirely see all the steps of your reasoning,” I remarked.

“Well, of course it was obvious from the first that this Mr. Hosmer Angel

must have some strong object for his curious conduct, and it was equally clear that the only man who really profited by the incident, as far as we could see, was the stepfather. Then the fact that the two men were never together, but that the one always appeared when the other was away, was suggestive. So were the tinted spectacles and the curious voice, which both hinted at a disguise, as did the bushy whiskers. My suspicions were all confirmed by his peculiar action in typewriting his signature, which, of course, inferred that his handwriting was so familiar to her that she would recognize even the smallest sample of it. You see all these isolated facts, together with many minor ones, all pointed in the same direction.”

“And how did you verify them?”

“Having once spotted my man, it was easy to get corroboration. I knew the firm for which this man worked. Having taken the printed description, I eliminated everything from it which could be the result of a disguise—the whiskers, the glasses, the voice, and I sent it to the firm, with a request that they would inform me whether it answered to the description of any of their travellers. I had already noticed the peculiarities of the typewriter, and I wrote to the man himself at his business address, asking him if he would come here. As I expected, his reply was typewritten and revealed the same trivial but characteristic defects. The same post brought me a letter from Westhouse & Marbank, of Fenchurch Street, to say that the description tallied in every respect with that of their *employé* James Windibank. *Voilà tout!*”⁴⁹



He reached for the hunting crop.

Sherlock Holmes in America

“And Miss Sutherland?”

“If I tell her she will not believe me. You may remember the old Persian saying, ‘There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for whoso snatches a delusion from a woman.’ There is as much sense in Hafiz as in Horace,⁵⁰ and as much knowledge of the world.”

1 “A Case of Identity” was published in the September 1891 issue of the *Strand Magazine*. It appeared simultaneously in the September-October copy of the New York edition of the *Strand Magazine* and was widely printed in newspapers in America that month.

2 Holmes here paraphrases Byron’s *Don Juan*: “ ’Tis strange—but true; for truth is always stranger; / Stranger than fiction” (Canto XIV, ci.). George Gordon, Lord Byron, had died in 1824, but it is not surprising to find that Holmes is familiar with the great Romantic individualist. While Holmes would also have known Carlyle’s warning against Romantic self-preoccupation in *Sartor Resartus* (1833–1834/1836) to “Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe” (in *A Study in Scarlet*, he paraphrases Carlyle’s famous aphorism about genius being an infinite capacity for taking pains), Holmes was the consummate individualist who administered his own justice (see “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” for an example).

3 In another literary fillip, Holmes paraphrases Shakespeare: “How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world” (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene ii). Catherine Bell, in her annotation of *Hamlet*, calls this ejaculation “immediately recognizable as a sign of what we’d now call clinical depression.” Another scholar labelled the statement “dangerously self-dramatising melancholy.” Watson has already commented (in “The Red-Headed League”) on Holmes’s alternating fits of energy and melancholy, and Holmes seems here to be preparing himself to be depressed.

William S. Baring-Gould, in *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World’s First Consulting Detective*, speculates that Holmes spent some of his post-collegiate years acting in a Shakespearean company touring America.

4 Which continents? In “A Scandal in Bohemia,” we learned of Holmes’s involvements in cases in or involving Russia, Ceylon, Scandinavia, Holland, and Bohemia. In *The Sign of Four*, Watson boasts of a knowledge of women extending over “many nations and three separate continents,” which most commentators conclude refers to Europe, Asia (India), and Australia. While Holmes plainly had American contacts (see, for example, “The Dancing Men”) and was often engaged in matters relating to Indian affairs (for example, *The Sign of Four*, “The Speckled Band,” “The Crooked Man”), there is no evidence of him advising or helping anyone outside Europe or Asia.

5 In an age in which married women were considered little more than chattel, the property of their husbands, domestic abuse of Victorian women was a significant concern. In his feminist tract *The Subjection of Women* (1869), economist John Stuart Mill laments that a wife was “the personal bond-servant of a despot,” who “vows a lifelong obedience to him at the altar, and is held to it all through her life by law.” Eighteen Married Women’s Property bills were introduced into Parliament between 1857 and 1882, of which five were passed, granting married women some of the same rights accorded to those who were unmarried, but the divorce laws continued to shackle women to their husbands. Conan Doyle was

deeply involved in divorce reform, and the restricted divorce laws are central to Holmes's investigation in "The Abbey Grange."

Numerous students of London testify to the plague of wife-beating. For example, Montagu Williams, Q.C., in *Round London: Down East and Up West* (1894), writes: "If any one has any doubts as to the brutalities practised on women by men, let him visit the London Hospital on a Saturday night. Very terrible sights will meet his eye. Sometimes as many as twelve or fourteen women may be seen seated in the receiving-room, waiting for their bruised and bleeding faces and bodies to be attended to. In nine cases out of ten the injuries have been inflicted by brutal and perhaps drunken husbands. The nurses tell me, however, that any remarks they may make reflecting on the aggressors are received with great indignation by the wretched sufferers. They positively will not hear a single word against the cowardly ruffians." The Phil May sketch reproduced here from *Punch* (September 1, 1894) bears witness to the common understanding of domestic relations.

6 "This interesting case . . . involved a bit of leg-pulling, I'm afraid, for . . . even today, with all the skill of modern dental science, we cannot construct a set of artificial teeth that would withstand such violent and frequent abuse," Dr. Charles Goodman writes in "The Dental Holmes." Michael Ramos, D.D.S., a prominent collector of dentures, opines, however, that the "vulcanized" rubber dentures of the last century might well have stood up to such abuse where modern porcelain or even plastic dentures would not. "The rubber dentures often had a horrible smell, but they were hard as stone," states Ramos in a letter to this editor.

7 A powdered preparation of tobacco, used by inhalation or by dipping—that is, by rubbing on the teeth and gums. Holmes's use of snuff is never mentioned again. Note, however, that Mycroft Holmes took snuff ("The Greek Interpreter"), as did Jabez Wilson ("The Red-Headed League").

8 The snuffbox, on display at the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition for the Festival of Britain, is now in the collection of the Sherlock Holmes Tavern in the Northumberland Hotel in London. This reference seems to make evident that "A Scandal in Bohemia" took place before "A Case of Identity." However, Dr. Richard Asher, in "Holmes and the Fair Sex," argues that the snuffbox was sent to Holmes not by the King of Bohemia but by Violet Hunter (of "The Copper Beeches") as a part of a campaign to capture his affections.

9 It is unclear to which "papers" Holmes refers. There were no legal papers or certificates involved in "A Scandal in Bohemia," although the king himself refers to "the papers" when Irene Adler has fled. Holmes makes a similar reference in "The Blue Carbuncle."

10 A diamond or other gem cut to display its brilliance.

11 William S. Baring-Gould points to this as evidence of the financial situation in which Holmes still finds himself, needing to handle small cases.

12 France's main seaport and oldest city, Marseilles prospered greatly in the nineteenth century with the conquest of Algeria by France and the opening of the Suez Canal. Could this "intricate matter . . . from Marseilles" have involved the "great claret importers Westhouse & Marbank" and their employee Mr. James Windibank? See note 32. This might explain Holmes's harsh judgment of the unscrupulous wine traveller. See note 48.

13 Georgiana Spencer, fifth Duchess of Devonshire (1757–1806), was a great beauty and leader of fashion, as well as a novelist and political activist. An intimate of Marie Antoinette, her portrait by Thomas Gainsborough illustrates her captivating charm. An award-winning 2000 biography of her by Amanda Foreman was an international best-seller.

14 French: literally, an "affair of the heart," a love affair.

15 A uniformed pageboy who was employed to clean boots and run errands—a jack of all trades in a Victorian household. The pageboy appears in ten of the tales of the Canon but is identified by name (as Billy) only three times. In “The Greek Interpreter,” “A Case of Identity,” “The Naval Treaty,” “The Noble Bachelor,” “Shoscombe Old Place,” “Wisteria Lodge,” and “The Yellow Face,” anonymous pages appear; Billy is named in “The Mazarin Stone,” “Thor Bridge,” and *The Valley of Fear*, although this may be two different boys.

16 A vessel of the mercantile (or merchant) marine.

17 A hundred pounds was worth about \$500 U.S. at the time.

18 Donald Redmond notes that *Kelly’s London Directory* of 1903 lists a Henry Albert Hardy, plumber, of 109, Southwark Bridge Road, and a William Allan Hardy, gas engineer, of Bale & Hardy, 181, Queen Victoria Street. “Mary Sutherland’s quondam foreman seems to have prospered, whichever he was.”

19 Both the name of the northern province of New Zealand and the first provincial capital, Auckland was not founded until 1840, coincident with the Anglo-New Zealand treaty. The history of Auckland is largely the history of New Zealand.

20 New Zealand was then a British colony, with a population of 815,862, actively engaged in the export of locally grown agricultural products and the import of manufactured goods. Although it signed a treaty with England in 1840, New Zealand went through long periods of economic instability in the late 1800s. During the 1870s, the government spent freely on public policies, but the country suffered a severe depression in the 1880s. Uncle Ned was clearly a shrewd investor to find profit in such times.

21 “A highly revealing statement on the cost of living in Britain in the 1880’s,” notes William S. Baring-Gould.

22 In 1873, the first commercial typewriter was produced by Philo Remington from the designs of Christopher Latham Sholes and Carlos Glidden. When typewriters were first introduced, shorthand was in common use, but there were few trained operators of the new machines. In 1881, the American YWCA foresaw the advantages of training women to use the typewriter and began classes. By 1886, it was estimated that there were some 60,000 young women typing in offices in the United States. Rudyard Kipling, in letters from America, referred at this time to the “Typewriter Maiden” who earned her living rather than remain dependent on her parents. It was not uncommon for manufacturers to train women to type and to “sell” the trained typists to businesses along with their machines. Before he died in 1890, Sholes himself was quoted as saying, “I do feel I have done something for the women who have always had to work so hard. This will enable them more easily to earn a living.”

23 One who fits up the pipes for gas appliances.

24 A thick velvety cotton or silk.

25 Named after a fourteenth-century mansion with a great hall roofed entirely with lead. The mansion was purchased by “Dick” Whittington, legendary mayor of London, for the city and in 1445, the structure was opened as a market hall.

26 Mary does not seem to have objected to *his* typewritten letters. Why did Angel insist that Mary handwrite hers?

27 An acute inflammation of the tissue surrounding the tonsils—that is, acute tonsillitis.

28 A major city and port of southwestern France, located on the Garonne River, the city of Bordeaux has long been the commercial centre of the eponymous wine region, regarded as the greatest in the world.

Bordeaux had a unique relationship with England. Part of Britain's Aquitaine properties, in 1224 the town declared itself ready to defend itself for "our lord the King of England." In return, the king of England bought its wine. By the middle of the thirteenth century, it is estimated, three-quarters of England's royal supply of wine—including wine for his armies—was coming from Bordeaux. By the first half of the fourteenth century, the British Isles bought almost half of Bordeaux's output, enough to provide six bottles of "claret," the English generic term for the red wine of Bordeaux, for each man, woman, and child.

The rivalry between England and France made trade between Bordeaux and England turbulent over the ensuing years. In the seventeenth century, French wine was subjected to severe tariffs, and the English turned to port, a product of Portugal, to satisfy their cravings for red wine. In 1860, however, the Anglo-French trade treaty ended the discriminatory tariffs, and between 1860 and 1873, the British increased their importation of French wine eightfold. "Gladstone claret" (named after the British prime minister) was the affectionate term used for affordable red wines from Bordeaux. Bordeaux's exports in 1875 exceeded 650 million bottles.

29 William S. Baring-Gould calls St. Saviour's, or Southwark Cathedral, "a most unlikely place for Miss Sutherland's wedding," because of its distance from King's Cross. Jack Tracy proposes that the church was St. Saviour's, Fitzroy Square, in a parish near King's Cross, the eastern boundary of which was the Tottenham Court Road, where Mary Sutherland's father's business had been located. The "St. Pancras Hotel" is properly the Midland Grand Hotel, at St. Pancras Station, a building that now serves as offices for BritRail.

30 That is, a four-wheeled cab, as contrasted to the two-wheeled hansom cab.

31 Mary Sutherland undoubtedly refers to the *Daily Chronicle*, which began in 1855, under the name of the *Clerkenwell News*. It captured a large and important reading public from the monopoly of *The Times* and became the great organ of the middle classes.

32 Earlier, Holmes mentioned an "intricate matter" referred to him from Marseilles. It is intriguing to speculate that, based on the questionable character of its employee Mr. Windibank, the matter involved this firm. In the 1880s, the "*fraudeurs*" flooded England with bogus first-growth wine. Raisins were used extensively to produce wine that was substituted for the crops of Bordeaux devastated by *phylloxera* for over forty years. Marseilles and Sète, another prominent French port, became bywords for fraud and fabrication, their vintners importing raisins from Greece and mysteriously exporting first-growth claret.

33 Watson complains later that he became an institution in Holmes's life like the "old black pipe" ("The Creeping Man"), mentioned also in "The Blue Carbuncle," "The Copper Beeches," *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and "The Red-Headed League," probably also identifiable as his "meditative" pipe ("The Solitary Cyclist") and as "the unsavoury pipe which was the companion of his deepest meditations" (*The Valley of Fear*).

34 Holmes possessed a number of commonplace books, or scrapbooks, which needed an index. He also appears to have filed the "agony columns" of the daily newspapers. Holmes appears to use the terms "index" and "commonplace book" interchangeably.

35 A borough and market town of Hampshire, lying in the Anton Valley.

36 Called "the handsomest, the most fashionable, and the most modern-looking" town in the Netherlands by a contemporary guidebook, this city in the province of South Holland was the seat of government and the residence of the court of Holland. Ever since the first "Hague Conference" in 1899, The Hague has been a centre of international law.

37 Holmes's scrupulous methods of observation and the results he obtained were adopted by some official detectives. According to "A Night with the Thames Police," an article appearing in the *Strand Magazine* in

1891, “The river police could tell of many a remarkable clue to identification—a piece of lace, or the button of a man’s trousers.” For budding detectives, *Tit-Bits* magazine published in 1893 the results of a “Holmes Examination Paper” providing over a dozen examples of how boot-laces provide “a tolerably reliable index both to the character of the wearer and the extent of his worldly possessions.”

38 Jet is a velvet-black coal-like mineral, usually highly polished and used for ornaments.

39 The marks could also have been caused by pressure against some hard edge of furniture, such as a dining table, a dressing table, or the front panel of a piano, argues Lenore Glen Offord.

40 The earliest use of “pince-nez” in print was in the *Saturday Review* in 1880. Widely popular in Victorian times and still in use in the 1940s, they have generally been associated in literature and film as worn by weak or effeminate men (but compare the character of Morpheus, played by Lawrence Fishburne, in the popular film *The Matrix*). See also “The Golden Pince-Nez,” in which a woman’s glasses are found clenched in the hand of a murder victim.

41 A double-breasted men’s coat with long tails that are of the same length in front as behind, reaching to about the knees.

42 “Harris tweed” is manufactured in Harris, the name of the southern portion of Lewis, the largest and most northerly island of the Outer Hebrides, off the western coast of Scotland.

43 A cloth or leather leg-protector, covering the top of the shoe—more commonly known, in the twentieth century, as “spats.”

44 This is, of course, Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), the great French novelist and author of eighty-five novels, including *Le Père Goriot* and the multi-volume *La Comédie humaine*. Why Holmes found Windibank’s quotation of Balzac interesting is unknown. Early in the nineteenth century, British critics attacked Balzac as exemplary of the shockingly immoral fiction imported from France. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, his reputation was secure, and English translations abounded. Perhaps Holmes sensed a hidden “French connection” in Angel’s life.

45 In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes cautioned Watson, before agreeing to be his flat-mate, that he generally had chemicals around and occasionally did experiments. Watson characterised Holmes’s knowledge of chemistry as “profound.”

46 In chemistry, a “sulfate” or “sulphate” is a salt or ester of sulfuric acid. “Baryta” or barite is barium sulfate occurring as a mineral. Barium hydrogen sulphate, as the editors of the Catalogue of the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition in London refer to it, was first prepared by J. J. Berzelius in 1843. These editors dismiss the compound as a decidedly non-commercial “curiosity,” concluding, “The only source of such a compound would be from a private collection. It seems probable that a sealed tube of the substance which had lost its label was found by one of Holmes’s friends in a university laboratory; and the finder, knowing that Holmes made something of a hobby of routine chemical analysis, asked him to identify it.”

More recently, Donald A. Redmond, in “Some Chemical Problems in the Canon,” notes that a compound of barium known as hexasulphide of barium may be precipitated by acetone. Holmes had long been interested in investigating the acetones (see “The Copper Beeches”), and this analysis may be an offshoot of that work.

47 A piece of dining-room furniture having compartments and shelves for holding articles of table service. The Baker Street sideboard is also mentioned in “The Beryl Coronet,” “The Blue Carbuncle,” “The Five Orange Pips,” “The Noble Bachelor,” and “The Veiled Lodger.”

48 D. Martin Dakin comments, “[This] remark [seems] more worthy of a hell-fire preacher than of a

practical detective. If all minor sins led straight to the gallows, the hangman would have been an even busier man than he was in the last century.” But this judgement may be justified if Holmes had knowledge of Windibank’s involvement in other crimes. See note 12.

49 French: That’s it—that’s everything.

50 “Hafiz” is also spelled “Hafez.” His more complete name is Mohammed Shams Od-Diān Haāfez (b. 1325/26, Shīāraāz, Iran–d. 1389/90, Shīāraāz), and he was one of the finest lyric poets of Persia. The *Diwan* (Collected Poems) of the poet was not translated in its entirety into English prose until 1891. However, scholars have been unable to trace the proverb to any published works of Hafiz.

“Horace” is Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65–8 B.C.), the greatest of the Latin lyric poets.

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY 1

Australia, particularly as the movement for independence grew, fascinated the Victorians in the late nineteenth century. Because of Australia's history as a penal colony for British convicts and political dissidents, it held a position not unlike the Wild West in America. The Victorian public readily believed that Australians in England were frequently involved in violent crime, and so they would have preconceptions about the characters of the McCarthys and the Turners, the key players in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery." It is the first of the short stories in the Canon to involve murder and the first short-story appearance of Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard. In Lestrade's earlier case with Holmes, recorded by Watson as A Study in Scarlet, Holmes called him and his partner Inspector Gregson "the pick of a bad lot." Lestrade is treated little better here: Holmes calls him an "imbecile." As in "A Case of Identity," Holmes has little use for the "regulars" and

takes it upon himself to be both jury and judge.

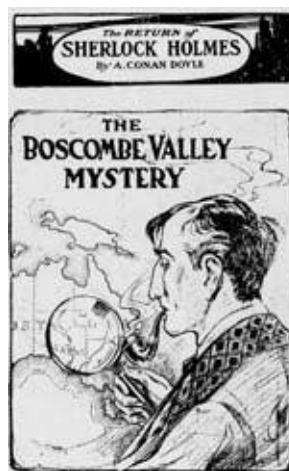
WE WERE SEATED at breakfast one morning, my wife² and I, when the maid brought in a telegram.³ It was from Sherlock Holmes, and ran in this way:

Have you a couple of days to spare? Have just been wired for from the west of England in connection with Boscombe Valley⁴ tragedy. Shall be glad if you will come with me. Air and scenery perfect. Leave Paddington by the 11:15.

“What do you say, dear?” said my wife, looking across at me. “Will you go?”

“I really don’t know what to say. I have a fairly long list at present.”⁵

“Oh, Anstruther would do your work for you.”⁶ You have been looking a little pale lately. I think that the change would do you good, and you are always so interested in Mr. Sherlock Holmes’s cases.”



“The Boscombe Valley Mystery.”

Staff artists “Cargs” and E. S. Morris, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 29, 1911

“I should be ungrateful if I were not, seeing what I gained through one of them,” I answered.⁷ “But if I am to go I must pack at once, for I have only half an hour.”



The telegraph instrument galleries, General Post Office.

The Queen's London (1897) My experience of camp life in Afghanistan had at least had the effect of making me a prompt and ready traveller.⁸ My wants were few and simple, so that in less than the time stated I was in a cab with my valise, rattling away to Paddington Station.⁹ Sherlock Holmes was pacing up and down the platform, his tall, gaunt figure made even gaunter and taller by his long grey traveling cloak and close-fitting cloth cap.¹⁰

“It is really very good of you to come, Watson,” said he. “It makes a considerable difference to me, having some one with me on whom I can thoroughly rely. Local aid is always either worthless or else biased. If you will keep the two corner seats I shall get the tickets.”

We had the carriage to ourselves save for an immense litter of papers which Holmes had brought with him. Among these he rummaged and read, with intervals of note-taking and of meditation, until we were past Reading.¹¹ Then he suddenly rolled them all into a gigantic ball, and tossed them up onto the rack.

“Have you heard anything of the case?” he asked.

“Not a word. I have not seen a paper for some days.”



Paddington Station.

The Queen's London (1897) "The London press has not had very full accounts. I have just been looking through all the recent papers in order to master the particulars.

It seems, from what I gather, to be one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult."

"That sounds a little paradoxical."

"But it is profoundly true. Singularity is almost invariably a clue. The more featureless and commonplace a crime is, the more difficult it is to bring it home. In this case, however, they have established a very serious case against the son of the murdered man."

"It is a murder, then?"

"Well, it is conjectured to be so. I shall take nothing for granted until I have the opportunity of looking personally into it. I will explain the state of things to you, as far as I have been able to understand it, in a very few words.

"Boscombe Valley is a country district not very far from Ross, in Herefordshire.¹² The largest landed proprietor in that part is a Mr. John Turner, who made his money in Australia and returned some years ago to the old country. One of the farms which he held, that of Hatherley,¹³ was let to Mr. Charles McCarthy, who was also an ex-Australian. The men had known each other in the Colonies,¹⁴ so that it was not unnatural that when they came to settle down they should do so as near each other as possible. Turner was apparently the richer man, so McCarthy became his tenant, but still remained, it seems, upon terms of perfect equality, as they were frequently together. McCarthy had one son, a lad of eighteen, and Turner had an only daughter of the same age, but neither of them had wives living. They appear to have avoided the society of the neighbouring English families, and to have led retired lives, though both the McCarthys were fond of sport, and were frequently seen at the race meetings¹⁵ of the neighbourhood. McCarthy kept two servants—a man and a girl. Turner had a considerable household, some half-dozen at the least. That is as much as I have been able to gather about the families. Now for the facts.



“We had the carriage to ourselves.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“On June 3, that is, on Monday last, McCarthy left his house at Hatherley about three in the afternoon, and walked down to the Boscombe Pool, which is a small lake formed by the spreading out of the stream which runs down the Boscombe Valley. He had been out with his serving-man in the morning at Ross, and he had told the man that he must hurry, as he had an appointment of importance to keep at three. From that appointment he never came back alive.

“From Hatherley Farmhouse to the Boscombe Pool is a quarter of a mile, and two people saw him as he passed over this ground. One was an old woman, whose name is not mentioned, and the other was William Crowder, a gamekeeper in the employ of Mr. Turner. Both these witnesses depose that Mr. McCarthy was walking alone. The gamekeeper adds that within a few minutes of his seeing Mr. McCarthy pass he had seen his son, Mr. James McCarthy, going the same way with a gun under his arm. To the best of his belief, the father was actually in sight at the time, and the son was following him. He thought no more of the matter until he heard in the evening of the tragedy that had occurred.

“The two McCarthys were seen after the time when William Crowder, the gamekeeper, lost sight of them. The Boscombe Pool is thickly wooded round, with just a fringe of grass and of reeds round the edge. A girl of fourteen, Patience Moran,¹⁶ who is the daughter of the lodge-keeper of the Boscombe Valley Estate, was in one of the woods picking flowers. She states that while she was there she saw, at the border of the wood and close by the lake, Mr. McCarthy and his son, and that they appeared to be having a violent quarrel. She

heard Mr. McCarthy the elder using very strong language to his son, and she saw the latter raise up his hand as if to strike his father. She was so frightened by their violence that she ran away and told her mother when she reached home that she had left the two McCarthys quarrelling near Boscombe Pool, and that she was afraid that they were going to fight. She had hardly said the words when young Mr. McCarthy came running up to the lodge to say that he had found his father dead in the wood, and to ask for the help of the lodge-keeper. He was much excited, without either his gun or his hat, and his right hand and sleeve were observed to be stained with fresh blood. On following him they found the dead body stretched out upon the grass beside the Pool. The head had been beaten in by repeated blows of some heavy and blunt weapon. The injuries were such as might very well have been inflicted by the butt-end of his son's gun, which was found lying on the grass within a few paces of the body.¹⁷ Under these circumstances the young man was instantly arrested, and a verdict of 'wilful murder' having been returned at the inquest on Tuesday, he was on Wednesday brought before the magistrates at Ross, who have referred the case to the next Assizes.¹⁸ Those are the main facts of the case as they came out before the coroner and the police-court."



“They found the body.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“I could hardly imagine a more damning case,” I remarked. “If ever circumstantial evidence pointed to a criminal it does so here.”

“Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing,” answered Holmes, thoughtfully. “It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different.¹⁹ It must be confessed, however, that the case looks exceedingly grave against the young man, and it is very possible that he is indeed the culprit. There are several people in the neighbourhood, however, and among them Miss Turner, the daughter of the neighbouring land owner, who believe in his innocence, and who have retained Lestrade,²⁰ whom you may remember in connection with the ‘Study in Scarlet,’ to work out the case in his interest.²¹ Lestrade, being rather puzzled, has referred the case to me, and hence it is that two middle-aged gentlemen are flying westward at fifty miles an hour, instead of quietly digesting their breakfasts at home.”

“I am afraid,” said I, “that the facts are so obvious that you will find little credit to be gained out of this case.”

“There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact,” he answered, laughing. “Besides, we may chance to hit upon some other obvious facts which may have been by no means obvious to Mr. Lestrade. You know me too well to think that I am boasting when I say that I shall either confirm or destroy his theory by means which he is quite incapable of employing, or even of understanding. To take the first example to hand, I very clearly perceive that in your bedroom the window is upon the right-hand side, and yet I question whether Mr. Lestrade would have noted even so self-evident a thing as that.”

“How on earth—!”

“My dear fellow, I know you well. I know the military neatness which characterises you. You shave every morning, and in this season you shave by the sunlight, but since your shaving is less and less complete as we get farther back on the left side, until it becomes positively slovenly as we get round the angle of the jaw, it is surely very clear that that side is less illuminated than the other.²² I could not imagine a man of your habits looking at himself in an equal light and being satisfied with such a result. I only quote this as a trivial example of observation and inference. Therein lies my *métier*, and it is just possible that it may be of some service in the investigation which lies before us. There are one or two minor points which were brought out in the inquest, and which are worth considering.”

“What are they?”

“It appears that his arrest did not take place at once, but after the return to Hatherley Farm. On the inspector of constabulary informing him that he was a

prisoner, he remarked that he was not surprised to hear it, and that it was no more than his deserts. This observation of his had the natural effect of removing any traces of doubt which might have remained in the minds of the coroner's jury."

"It was a confession," I ejaculated.

"No, for it was followed by a protestation of innocence."

"Coming on the top of such a damning series of events, it was at least a most suspicious remark."

"On the contrary," said Holmes, "it is the brightest rift which I can at present see in the clouds. However innocent he might be, he could not be such an absolute imbecile as not to see that the circumstances were very black against him. Had he appeared surprised at his own arrest, or feigned indignation at it, I should have looked upon it as highly suspicious, because such surprise or anger would not be natural under the circumstances, and yet might appear to be the best policy to a scheming man. His frank acceptance of the situation marks him as either an innocent man, or else as a man of considerable self-restraint and firmness. As to his remark about his deserts, it was also not unnatural if you consider that he stood beside the dead body of his father, and that there is no doubt that he had that very day so far forgotten his filial duty as to bandy words with him, and even, according to the little girl whose evidence is so important, to raise his hand as if to strike him. The self-reproach and contrition which are displayed in his remark appear to me to be the signs of a healthy mind, rather than of a guilty one."

I shook my head. "Many men have been hanged on far slighter evidence," I remarked.

"So they have. And many men have been wrongfully hanged."

"What is the young man's own account of the matter?"

"It is, I am afraid, not very encouraging to his supporters, though there are one or two points in it which are suggestive. You will find it here, and may read it for yourself."

He picked out from his bundle a copy of the local Herefordshire paper,²³ and having turned down the sheet he pointed out the paragraph in which the unfortunate young man had given his own statement of what had occurred. I settled myself down in the corner of the carriage, and read it very carefully. It ran in this way—

Mr. James McCarthy, the only son of the

deceased, was then called and gave evidence as follows: "I had been away from home for three days at Bristol, and had only just returned upon the morning of last Monday, the 3rd. My father was absent from home at the time of my arrival, and I was informed by the maid that he had driven over to Ross with John Cobb, the groom. Shortly after my return I heard the wheels of his trap in the yard, and, looking out of my window, I saw him get out and walk rapidly out of the yard, though I was not aware in which direction he was going. I then took my gun and strolled out in the direction of the Boscombe Pool, with the intention of visiting the rabbit warren which is upon the other side. On my way I saw William Crowder, the gamekeeper, as he had stated in his evidence; but he is mistaken in thinking that I was following my father. I had no idea that he was in front of me. When about a hundred yards from the Pool I heard a cry of 'Cooee!' which was a usual signal between my father and myself. I then hurried forward, and found him standing by the Pool. He appeared to be much surprised at seeing me and asked me rather roughly what I was doing there. A conversation ensued which led to high words and almost to blows, for my father was a man of a very violent temper. Seeing that his passion was

becoming ungovernable, I left him, and returned towards Hatherley Farm. I had not gone more than 150 yards, however, when I heard a hideous outcry behind me, which caused me to run back again. I found my father expiring on the ground, with his head terribly injured. I dropped my gun, and held him in my arms, but he almost instantly expired. I knelt beside him for some minutes, and then made my way to Mr. Turner's lodge-keeper, his house being the nearest, to ask for assistance. I saw no one near my father when I returned, and I have no idea how he came by his injuries. He was not a popular man, being somewhat cold and forbidding in his manners; but he had, as far as I know, no active enemies. I know nothing further of the matter."



“I held him in my arms.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

The Coroner: "Did your father make any statement to you before he died?"²⁴

Witness: "He mumbled a few words, but I could only catch some allusion to a rat."

The Coroner: "What did you understand by that?"

Witness: "It conveyed no meaning to me. I thought that he was delirious."

The Coroner: "What was the point upon which you and your father had this final quarrel?"

Witness: "I should prefer not to answer."

The Coroner: "I am afraid that I must press it."

Witness: "It is really impossible for me to tell you. I can assure you that it has nothing to do with the sad tragedy which followed."

The Coroner: "That is for the Court to decide. I need not point out to you that your refusal to answer will prejudice your case considerably in any future proceedings which may arise."

Witness: "I must still refuse."

The Coroner: "I understand that the cry of 'Cooee' was a common signal between you and your father?"

Witness: "It was."

The Coroner: "How was it, then, that he uttered it before he saw you, and before he even knew that you had returned from Bristol?"

Witness (with considerable confusion): “I do not know.”

A Juryman: “Did you see nothing which aroused your suspicions when you returned on hearing the cry, and found your father fatally injured?”

Witness: “Nothing definite.”

The Coroner: “What do you mean?”

Witness: “I was so disturbed and excited as I rushed out into the open, that I could think of nothing except of my father. Yet I have a vague impression that as I ran forward something lay upon the ground to the left of me. It seemed to me to be something grey in colour, a coat of some sort, or a plaid perhaps. When I rose from my father I looked round for it, but it was gone.”

“Do you mean that it disappeared before you went for help?”

“Yes, it was gone.”

“You cannot say what it was?”

“No, I had a feeling something was there.”

“How far from the body?”

“A dozen yards or so.”

“And how far from the edge of the wood?”

“About the same.”

“Then if it was removed it was while you were within a dozen yards of it?”

“Yes, but with my back towards it.”

This concluded the examination of the witness.



The Severn.

“I see,” said I, as I glanced down the column, “that the coroner in his concluding remarks was rather severe upon young McCarthy. He calls attention, and with reason, to the discrepancy about his father having signalled to him before seeing him, also to his refusal to give details of his conversation with his father, and his singular account of his father’s dying words. They are all, as he remarks, very much against the son.”

Holmes laughed softly to himself and stretched himself out upon the cushioned seat. “Both you and the coroner have been at some pains,” said he, “to single out the very strongest points in the young man’s favour. Don’t you see that you alternately give him credit for having too much imagination and too little? Too little, if he could not invent a cause of quarrel which would give him the sympathy of the jury; too much, if he evolved from his own inner consciousness anything so *outré* as a dying reference to a rat, and the incident of the vanishing cloth. No, sir, I shall approach this case from the point of view that what this young man says is true, and we shall see whither that hypothesis will lead us. And now here is my pocket Petrarch,²⁵ and not another word shall I say of this case until we are on the scene of action. We lunch at Swindon,²⁶ and I see that we shall be there in twenty minutes.”

It was nearly four o’clock when we at last, after passing through the beautiful Stroud Valley, and over the broad gleaming Severn,²⁷ found ourselves at the pretty little country-town of Ross. A lean, ferret-like man, furtive and sly-looking, was waiting for us upon the platform.²⁸ In spite of the light brown dustcoat and leather leggings which he wore in deference to his rustic surroundings, I had no difficulty in recognizing Lestrade, of Scotland Yard. With him we drove to the Hereford Arms²⁹ where a room had already been engaged for us.

“I have ordered a carriage,” said Lestrade, as we sat over a cup of tea. “I knew

your energetic nature, and that you would not be happy until you had been on the scene of the crime.”

“It was very nice and complimentary of you,” Holmes answered. “It is entirely a question of barometric pressure.”

Lestrade looked startled. “I do not quite follow,” he said.

“How is the glass? Twenty-nine, I see. No wind, and not a cloud in the sky.³⁰ I have a caseful of cigarettes here which need smoking, and the sofa is very much superior to the usual country hotel abomination. I do not think that it is probable that I shall use the carriage to-night.”

Lestrade laughed indulgently. “You have, no doubt, already formed your conclusions from the newspapers,” he said. “The case is as plain as a pikestaff, and the more one goes into it the plainer it becomes. Still, of course, one can’t refuse a lady, and such a very positive one, too. She had heard of you, and would have your opinion, though I repeatedly told her that there was nothing which you could do which I had not already done. Why, bless my soul! here is her carriage at the door.”

He had hardly spoken before there rushed into the room one of the most lovely young women that I have ever seen in my life. Her violet eyes shining, her lips parted, a pink flush upon her cheeks, all thought of her natural reserve lost in her overpowering excitement and concern.

“Oh, Mr. Sherlock Holmes!” she cried, glancing from one to the other of us, and finally, with a woman’s quick intuition, fastening upon my companion, “I am so glad that you have come, I have driven down to tell you so. I know that James didn’t do it. I know it, and I want you to start upon your work knowing it, too. Never let yourself doubt upon that point. We have known each other since we were little children, and I know his faults as no one else does; but he is too tender-hearted to hurt a fly. Such a charge is absurd to any one who really knows him.”

“I hope we may clear him, Miss Turner,” said Sherlock Holmes. “You may rely upon my doing all that I can.”

“But you have read the evidence. You have formed some conclusion? Do you not see some loophole, some flaw? Do you not yourself think that he is innocent?”

“I think that it is very probable.”

“There, now!” she cried, throwing back her head and looking defiantly at Lestrade. “You hear! He gives me hopes.”

Lestrade shrugged his shoulders. “I am afraid that my colleague has been a little quick in forming his conclusions,” he said.

“But he is right. Oh! I know that he is right. James never did it. And about his

quarrel with his father, I am sure that the reason why he would not speak about it to the coroner was because I was concerned in it.”



“Lestrade shrugged his shoulders.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“In what way?” asked Holmes.

“It is no time for me to hide anything. James and his father had many disagreements about me. Mr. McCarthy was very anxious that there should be a marriage between us. James and I have always loved each other as brother and sister, but of course he is young, and has seen very little of life yet, and—and—well, he naturally did not wish to do anything like that yet. So there were quarrels, and this, I am sure, was one of them.”

“And your father?” asked Holmes. “Was he in favour of such a union?”

“No, he was averse to it also. No one but Mr. McCarthy was in favour of it.” A quick blush passed over her fresh young face as Holmes shot one of his keen, questioning glances at her.

“Thank you for this information,” said he. “May I see your father if I call tomorrow?”

“I am afraid the doctor won’t allow it.”

“The doctor?”

“Yes, have you not heard? Poor father has never been strong for years back, but this has broken him down completely. He has taken to his bed, and Dr. Willows says that he is a wreck, and that his nervous system is shattered. Mr. McCarthy was the only man alive who had known dad in the old days in Victoria.”³¹

“Ha! In Victoria! That is important.”

“Yes, at the mines.”

“Quite so; at the gold mines, where, as I understand, Mr. Turner made his money.”³²

“Yes, certainly.”

“Thank you, Miss Turner. You have been of material assistance to me.”

“You will tell me if you have any news to-morrow. No doubt you will go to the prison to see James. Oh, if you do, Mr. Holmes, do tell him that I know him to be innocent.”

“I will, Miss Turner.”

“I must go home now, for dad is very ill, and he misses me so if I leave him. Good-bye, and God help you in your undertaking.” She hurried from the room as impulsively as she had entered, and we heard the wheels of her carriage rattle off down the street.

“I am ashamed of you, Holmes,” said Lestrade with dignity after a few minutes’ silence. “Why should you raise up hopes which you are bound to disappoint? I am not over-tender of heart, but I call it cruel.”

“I think that I see my way to clearing James McCarthy,” said Holmes. “Have you an order to see him in prison?”

“Yes, but only for you and me.”

“Then I shall re-consider my resolution about going out. We have still time to take a train to Hereford and see him to-night?”

“Ample.”

“Then let us do so. Watson, I fear that you will find it very slow, but I shall only be away a couple of hours.”



“I tried to interest myself in a yellow-backed novel.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

I walked down to the station with them, and then wandered through the streets of the little town, finally returning to the hotel, where I lay upon the sofa and tried to interest myself in a yellow-backed novel.³³ The puny plot of the story was so thin, however, when compared to the deep mystery through which we were groping, and I found my attention wander so continually from the fiction to the fact, that I at last flung it across the room and gave myself up entirely to a

consideration of the events of the day. Supposing that this unhappy young man's story were absolutely true, then what hellish thing, what absolutely unforeseen and extraordinary calamity could have occurred between the time when he parted from his father, and the moment when, drawn back by his screams, he rushed into the glade? It was something terrible and deadly. What could it be? Might not the nature of the injuries reveal something to my medical instincts? I rang the bell and called for the weekly county paper, which contained a verbatim account of the inquest. In the surgeon's deposition it was stated that the posterior third of the left parietal bone and the left half of the occipital bone had been shattered by a heavy blow from a blunt weapon. I marked the spot upon my own head. Clearly such a blow must have been struck from behind. That was to some extent in favour of the accused, as when seen quarrelling he was face to face with his father. Still, it did not go for very much, for the older man might have turned his back before the blow fell. Still, it might be worth while to call Holmes's attention to it. Then there was the peculiar dying reference to a rat. What could that mean? It could not be delirium. A man dying from a sudden blow does not commonly become delirious. No, it was more likely to be an attempt to explain how he met his fate. But what could it indicate? I cudgelled my brains to find some possible explanation. And then the incident of the grey cloth, seen by young McCarthy. If that were true, the murderer must have dropped some part of his dress, presumably his overcoat, in his flight, and must have had the hardihood to return and to carry it away at the instant when the son was kneeling with his back turned not a dozen paces off. What a tissue of mysteries and improbabilities the whole thing was! I did not wonder at Lestrade's opinion, and yet I had so much faith in Sherlock Holmes's insight that I could not lose hope as long as every fresh fact seemed to strengthen his conviction of young McCarthy's innocence.

It was late before Sherlock Holmes returned. He came back alone, for Lestrade was staying in lodgings in the town.

"The glass still keeps very high," he remarked as he sat down. "It is of importance that it should not rain before we are able to go over the ground. On the other hand, a man should be at his very best and keenest for such nice work as that, and I did not wish to do it when fagged by a long journey. I have seen young McCarthy."

"And what did you learn from him?"

"Nothing."

"Could he throw no light?"

"None at all. I was inclined to think at one time that he knew who had done it and was screening him or her, but I am convinced now that he is as puzzled as

every one else. He is not a very quick-witted youth, though comely to look at and, I should think, sound at heart.”

“I cannot admire his taste,” I remarked, “if it is indeed a fact that he was averse to a marriage with so charming a young lady as this Miss Turner.”

“Ah, thereby hangs a rather painful tale. This fellow is madly, insanely, in love with her, but some two years ago, when he was only a lad, and before he really knew her, for she had been away five years at a boarding-school, what does the idiot do but get into the clutches of a barmaid in Bristol, and marry her at a registry office?³⁴ No one knows a word of the matter, but you can imagine how maddening it must be to him to be upbraided for not doing what he would give his very eyes to do, but what he knows to be absolutely impossible. It was sheer frenzy of this sort which made him throw his hands up into the air when his father, at their last interview, was goading him on to propose to Miss Turner. On the other hand, he had no means of supporting himself, and his father, who was by all accounts a very hard man, would have thrown him over utterly had he known the truth. It was with his barmaid wife that he had spent the last three days in Bristol, and his father did not know where he was. Mark that point. It is of importance. Good has come out of evil, however, for the barmaid, finding from the papers that he is in serious trouble and likely to be hanged, has thrown him over utterly and has written to him to say that she has a husband already in the Bermuda Dockyard, so that there is really no tie between them. I think that that bit of news has consoled young McCarthy for all that he has suffered.”

“But if he is innocent, who has done it?”

“Ah! who? I would call your attention very particularly to two points. One is that the murdered man had an appointment with some one at the Pool, and that the some one could not have been his son, for his son was away, and he did not know when he would return. The second is that the murdered man was heard to cry ‘Cooee!’ before he knew that his son had returned. Those are the crucial points upon which the case depends. And now let us talk about George Meredith,³⁵ if you please, and we shall leave all minor matters until to-morrow.”

There was no rain, as Holmes had foretold, and the morning broke bright and cloudless. At nine o’clock Lestrade called for us with the carriage, and we set off for Hatherley Farm and the Boscombe Pool.

“There is serious news this morning,” Lestrade observed. “It is said that Mr. Turner, of the Hall, is so ill that his life is despaired of.”

“An elderly man, I presume?” said Holmes.

“About sixty; but his constitution has been shattered by his life abroad, and he has been in failing health for some time. This business has had a very bad effect

upon him. He was an old friend of McCarthy's, and, I may add, a great benefactor to him, for I have learned that he gave him Hatherley Farm rent free."

"Indeed! That is interesting," said Holmes.

"Oh, yes! In a hundred other ways he has helped him. Everybody about here speaks of his kindness to him."

"Really! Does it not strike you as a little singular that this McCarthy, who appears to have had little of his own, and to have been under such obligations to Turner, should still talk of marrying his son to Turner's daughter, who is, presumably, heiress to the estate, and that in such a very cocksure manner, as if it were merely a case of a proposal and all else would follow? It is the more strange, since we know that Turner himself was averse to the idea. The daughter told us as much. Do you not deduce something from that?"

"We have got to the deductions and the inferences," said Lestrade, winking at me. "I find it hard enough to tackle facts, Holmes, without flying away after theories and fancies."

"You are right," said Holmes demurely; "you do find it very hard to tackle the facts."

"Anyhow, I have grasped one fact which you seem to find it difficult to get hold of," replied Lestrade with some warmth.

"And that is—"

"That McCarthy senior met his death from McCarthy junior and that all theories to the contrary are the merest moonshine."

"Well, moonshine is a brighter thing than fog," said Holmes, laughing. "But I am very much mistaken if this is not Hatherley Farm upon the left."

"Yes, that is it." It was a widespread, comfortable-looking building, two-storied, slate roofed, with great yellow blotches of lichen upon the grey walls. The drawn blinds and the smokeless chimneys, however, gave it a stricken look, as though the weight of this horror still lay heavy upon it. We called at the door, when the maid, at Holmes's request, showed us the boots which her master wore at the time of his death, and also a pair of the son's, though not the pair which he had then had. Having measured these very carefully from seven or eight different points, Holmes desired to be led to the courtyard, from which we all followed the winding track which led to Boscombe Pool.



“The maid showed us the boots.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

Sherlock Holmes was transformed when he was hot upon such a scent as this. Men who had only known the quiet thinker and logician of Baker Street would have failed to recognize him. His face flushed and darkened. His brows were drawn into two hard black lines, while his eyes shone out from beneath them with a steely glitter. His face was bent downward, his shoulders bowed, his lips compressed, and the veins stood out like whipcord in his long, sinewy neck. His nostrils seemed to dilate with a purely animal lust for the chase, and his mind was so absolutely concentrated upon the matter before him that a question or remark fell unheeded upon his ears, or, at the most, only provoked a quick, impatient snarl in reply. Swiftly and silently he made his way along the track which ran through the meadows, and so by way of the woods to the Boscombe Pool. It was damp, marshy ground, as is all that district, and there were marks of many feet, both upon the path and amid the short grass which bounded it on either side. Sometimes Holmes would hurry on, sometimes stop dead, and once he made quite a little *détour* into the meadow. Lestrade and I walked behind him, the detective indifferent and contemptuous, while I watched my friend with the interest which sprang from the conviction that every one of his actions was directed towards a definite end.

The Boscombe Pool, which is a little reed-girt sheet of water some fifty yards across, is situated at the boundary between the Hatherley Farm and the private park of the wealthy Mr. Turner. Above the woods which lined it upon the farther side we could see the red, jutting pinnacles which marked the site of the rich landowner's dwelling. On the Hatherley side of the Pool the woods grew very thick, and there was a narrow belt of sodden grass twenty paces across between the edge of the trees and the reeds which lined the lake. Lestrade showed us the

exact spot at which the body had been found, and, indeed, so moist was the ground, that I could plainly see the traces which had been left by the fall of the stricken man. To Holmes, as I could see by his eager face and peering eyes, very many other things were to be read upon the trampled grass. He ran round, like a dog who is picking up a scent, and then turned upon my companion.

“What did you go into the Pool for?” he asked.

“I fished about with a rake. I thought there might be some weapon or other trace. But how on earth—?”

“Oh, tut, tut! I have no time! That left foot of yours with its inward twist is all over the place. A mole could trace it, and there it vanishes among the reeds. Oh, how simple it would all have been had I been here before they came like a herd of buffalo, and wallowed all over it. Here is where the party with the lodge-keeper came, and they have covered all tracks for six or eight feet round the body. But here are three separate tracks of the same feet.” He drew out a lens and lay down upon his waterproof to have a better view, talking all the time rather to himself than to us. “These are young McCarthy’s feet. Twice he was walking, and once he ran swiftly, so that the soles are deeply marked and the heels hardly visible. That bears out his story. He ran when he saw his father on the ground. Then here are the father’s feet as he paced up and down. What is this, then? It is the butt-end of the gun as the son stood listening. And this? Ha, ha! What have we here? Tip-toes! tip-toes! Square, too, quite unusual boots! They come, they go, they come again—of course that was for the cloak. Now where did they come from?” He ran up and down, sometimes losing, sometimes finding the track until we were well within the edge of the wood and under the shadow of a great beech, the largest tree in the neighbourhood. Holmes traced his way to the further side of this and lay down once more upon his face with a little cry of satisfaction. For a long time he remained there, turning over the leaves and dried sticks, gathering up what seemed to me to be dust into an envelope, and examining with his lens not only the ground, but even the bark of the tree as far as he could reach. A jagged stone was lying among the moss, and this also he carefully examined and retained. Then he followed a pathway through the wood until he came to the highroad, where all traces were lost.

“It has been a case of considerable interest,” he remarked, returning to his natural manner. “I fancy that this grey house on the right must be the lodge. I think that I will go in and have a word with Moran, and perhaps write a little note. Having done that, we may drive back to our luncheon. You may walk to the cab, and I shall be with you presently.”



“For a long time he remained there.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

It was about ten minutes before we regained our cab, and drove back into Ross, Holmes still carrying with him the stone which he had picked up in the wood.

“This may interest you, Lestrade,” he remarked, holding it out. “The murder was done with it.”

“I see no marks.”

“There are none.”

“How do you know, then?”

“The grass was growing under it. It had only lain there a few days. There was no sign of a place whence it had been taken. It corresponds with the injuries. There is no sign of any other weapon.”

“And the murderer?”

“Is a tall man, left-handed, limps with the right leg, wears thick-soled shooting boots and a grey cloak, smokes Indian cigars, uses a cigar-holder, and carries a blunt penknife in his pocket. There are several other indications, but these may be enough to aid us in our search.”

Lestrade laughed. “I am afraid that I am still a skeptic,” he said. “Theories are all very well, but we have to deal with a hard-headed British jury.”

“*Nous verrons*,”³⁶ answered Holmes calmly. “You work your own method, and I shall work mine. I shall be busy this afternoon, and shall probably return to London by the evening train.”

“And leave your case unfinished?”

“No, finished.”

“But the mystery?”

“It is solved.”

“Who was the criminal, then?”

“The gentleman I describe.”

“But who is he?”

“Surely it would not be difficult to find out. This is not such a populous

neighbourhood.”

Lestrade shrugged his shoulders. “I am a practical man,” he said, “and I really cannot undertake to go about the country looking for a left-handed gentleman with a game leg. I should become the laughing-stock of Scotland Yard.”

“All right,” said Holmes quietly. “I have given you the chance. Here are your lodgings. Good-bye. I shall drop you a line before I leave.”

Having left Lestrade at his rooms we drove to our hotel, where we found lunch upon the table. Holmes was silent and buried in thought with a pained expression upon his face, as one who finds himself in a perplexing position.

“Look here, Watson,” he said when the cloth was cleared; “just sit down in this chair and let me preach to you for a little. I don’t know quite what to do, and I should value your advice. Light a cigar, and let me expound.”

“Pray do so.”

“Well, now, in considering this case there are two points about young McCarthy’s narrative which struck us both instantly, although they impressed me in his favour and you against him. One was the fact that his father should, according to his account, cry ‘Cooee!’ before seeing him. The other was his singular dying reference to a rat. He mumbled several words, you understand, but that was all that caught the son’s ear. Now from this double point our research must commence, and we will begin it by presuming that what the lad says is absolutely true.”

“What of this ‘Cooee!’ then?”

“Well, obviously it could not have been meant for the son. The son, as far as he knew, was in Bristol. It was mere chance that he was within earshot. The ‘Cooee!’ was meant to attract the attention of whoever it was that he had the appointment with. But ‘Cooee’ is a distinctly Australian cry, and one which is used between Australians.³⁷ There is a strong presumption that the person whom McCarthy expected to meet him at Boscombe Pool was some one who had been in Australia.”

“What of the rat, then?”

Sherlock Holmes took a folded paper from his pocket and flattened it out on the table. “This is a map of the Colony of Victoria,” he said. “I wired to Bristol for it last night.” He put his hand over part of the map. “What do you read?”

“ARAT,” I read.

“And now?” He raised his hand.

“BALLARAT.”³⁸

“Quite so. That was the word the man uttered, and of which his son only caught the last two syllables. He was trying to utter the name of his murderer.

So-and-so of Ballarat.”

“It is wonderful!” I exclaimed.³⁹

“It is obvious. And now, you see, I had narrowed the field down considerably. The possession of a grey garment was a third point which, granting the son’s statement to be correct, was a certainty. We have come now out of mere vagueness to the definite conception of an Australian from Ballarat with a grey cloak.”

“Certainly.”

“And one who was at home in the district, for the Pool can only be approached by the farm or by the estate, where strangers could hardly wander.”

“Quite so.”

“Then comes our expedition of to-day. By an examination of the ground I gained the trifling details which I gave to that imbecile Lestrade, as to the personality of the criminal.”

“But how did you gain them?”

“You know my method. It is founded upon the observance of trifles.”

“His height I know that you might roughly judge from the length of his stride. His boots, too, might be told from their traces.”

“Yes, they were peculiar boots.”

“But his lameness?”

“The impression of his right foot was always less distinct than his left. He put less weight upon it. Why? Because he limped—he was lame.”

“But his left-handedness.”

“You were yourself struck by the nature of the injury as recorded by the surgeon at the inquest. The blow was struck from immediately behind, and yet was upon the left side. Now, how can that be unless it were by a left-handed man? He had stood behind that tree during the interview between the father and son. He had even smoked there. I found the ash of a cigar, which my special knowledge of tobacco ashes enabled me to pronounce as an Indian cigar. I have, as you know, devoted some attention to this, and written a little monograph on the ashes of 140 different varieties of pipe, cigar, and cigarette tobacco.⁴⁰ Having found the ash, I then looked round and discovered the stump among the moss where he had tossed it. It was an Indian cigar, of the variety which are rolled in Rotterdam.”



“He had stood behind that tree.”

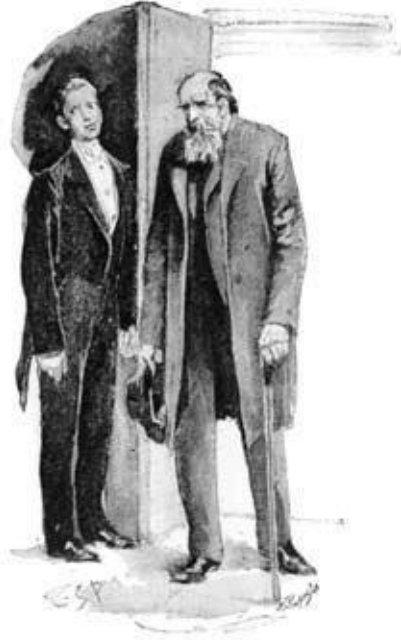
Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“And the cigar-holder?”

“I could see that the end had not been in his mouth. Therefore he used a holder. The tip had been cut off, not bitten off, but the cut was not a clean one, so I deduced a blunt penknife.”

“Holmes,” I said, “you have drawn a net round this man from which he cannot escape, and you have saved an innocent human life as truly as if you had cut the cord which was hanging him. I see the direction in which all this points. The culprit is—”

“Mr. John Turner,” cried the hotel waiter, opening the door of our sitting-room, and ushering in a visitor.



“ ‘Mr. John Turner,’ said the waiter.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

The man who entered was a strange and impressive figure. His slow, limping step and bowed shoulders gave the appearance of decrepitude, and yet his hard, deep-lined, craggy features, and his enormous limbs showed that he was possessed of unusual strength of body and of character. His tangled beard, grizzled hair, and outstanding, drooping eyebrows combined to give an air of dignity and power to his appearance, but his face was of an ashen white, while his lips and the corners of his nostrils were tinged with a shade of blue. It was clear to me at a glance that he was in the grip of some deadly and chronic disease.

“Pray sit down on the sofa,” said Holmes gently. “You had my note?”

“Yes, the lodge-keeper brought it up. You said that you wished to see me here to avoid scandal.”

“I thought people would talk if I went to the Hall.”

“And why did you wish to see me?” He looked across at my companion with despair in his weary eyes, as though his question was already answered.

“Yes,” said Holmes, answering the look rather than the words. “It is so. I know all about McCarthy.”

The old man sank his face in his hands. “God help me!” he cried. “But I would not have let the young man come to harm. I give you my word that I would have spoken out if it went against him at the Assizes.”

“I am glad to hear you say so,” said Holmes gravely.

“I would have spoken now had it not been for my dear girl. It would break her heart—it will break her heart when she hears that I am arrested.”

“It may not come to that,” said Holmes.

“What?”

“I am no official agent. I understand that it was your daughter who required my presence here, and I am acting in her interests. Young McCarthy must be got off, however.”

“I am a dying man,” said old Turner. “I have had diabetes⁴¹ for years. My doctor says it is a question whether I shall live a month. Yet I would rather die under my own roof than in a gaol.”⁴²

Holmes rose and sat down at the table with his pen in his hand and a bundle of paper before him. “Just tell us the truth,” he said. “I shall jot down the facts. You will sign it, and Watson here can witness it. Then I could produce your confession at the last extremity to save young McCarthy. I promise you that I shall not use it unless it is absolutely needed.”

“It’s as well,” said the old man; “it’s a question whether I shall live to the Assizes, so it matters little to me, but I should wish to spare Alice the shock. And now I will make the thing clear to you; it has been a long time in the acting, but will not take me long to tell.

“You didn’t know this dead man, McCarthy. He was a devil incarnate. I tell you that. God keep you out of the clutches of such a man as he. His grip has been upon me these twenty years, and he has blasted my life. I’d tell you first how I came to be in his power.

“It was in the early ’60’s at the diggings. I was a young chap then, hot-blooded and reckless, ready to turn my hand at anything; I got among bad companions, took to drink, had no luck with my claim, took to the bush, and in a word became what you would call over here a highway robber. There were six of us, and we had a wild, free life of it, sticking up a station⁴³ from time to time, or stopping the wagons on the road to the diggings. Black Jack of Ballarat was the name I went under, and our party is still remembered in the colony as the Ballarat Gang.

“One day a gold convoy came down from Ballarat to Melbourne,⁴⁴ and we lay in wait for it and attacked it. There were six troopers⁴⁵ and six of us, so it was a close thing, but we emptied four of their saddles at the first volley. Three of our boys were killed, however, before we got the swag. I put my pistol to the head of the wagon-driver, who was this very man McCarthy. I wish to the Lord that I had shot him then, but I spared him, though I saw his wicked little eyes fixed on my face, as though to remember every feature. We got away with the gold,

became wealthy men, and made our way over to England⁴⁶ without being suspected. There I parted from my old pals, and determined to settle down to a quiet and respectable life. I bought this estate, which chanced to be in the market, and I set myself to do a little good with my money, to make up for the way in which I had earned it. I married, too, and though my wife died young, she left me my dear little Alice. Even when she was just a baby her wee hand seemed to lead me down the right path as nothing else had ever done. In a word, I turned over a new leaf and did my best to make up for the past. All was going well when McCarthy laid his grip upon me.

“I had gone up to town about an investment, and I met him in Regent Street with hardly a coat to his back or a boot to his foot.

“ ‘Here we are, Jack,’ says he, touching me on the arm; ‘we’ll be as good as a family to you. There’s two of us, me and my son, and you can have the keeping of us. If you don’t—it’s a fine, law-abiding country is England, and there’s always a policeman within hail.’

“Well, down⁴⁷ they came to the West country, there was no shaking them off, and there they have lived rent free on my best land ever since. There was no rest for me, no peace, no forgetfulness; turn where I would, there was his cunning, grinning face at my elbow. It grew worse as Alice grew up, for he soon saw I was more afraid of her knowing my past than of the police. Whatever he wanted he must have, and whatever it was I gave him without question, land, money, houses, until at last he asked a thing which I could not give. He asked for Alice.

“His son, you see, had grown up, and so had my girl, and as I was known to be in weak health, it seemed a fine stroke to him that his lad should step into the whole property. But there I was firm, I would not have his cursed stock mixed with mine; not that I had any dislike to the lad, but his blood was in him, and that was enough. I stood firm. McCarthy threatened. I braved him to do his worst. We were to meet at the Pool midway between our houses to talk it over.

“When I went down there I found him talking with his son, so I smoked a cigar, and waited behind a tree until he should be alone. But as I listened to his talk all that was black and bitter in me seemed to come uppermost. He was urging his son to marry my daughter with as little regard for what she might think as if she were a slut from off the streets. It drove me mad to think that I and all that I held most dear should be in the power of such a man as this. Could I not snap the bond? I was already a dying and a desperate man. Though clear of mind and fairly strong of limb, I knew that my own fate was sealed. But my memory and my girl! Both could be saved, if I could but silence that foul tongue. I did it, Mr. Holmes. I would do it again. Deeply as I have sinned, I have led a life of

Martyrdom to atone for it. But that my girl should be entangled in the same meshes which held me was more than I could suffer. I struck him down with no more compunction than if he had been some foul and venomous beast. His cry brought back his son; but I had gained the cover of the wood, though I was forced to go back to fetch the cloak which I had dropped in my flight. That is the true story, gentlemen, of all that occurred.”

“Well, it is not for me to judge you,” said Holmes as the old man signed the statement which had been drawn out. “I pray that we may never be exposed to such a temptation.”

“I pray not, sir. And what do you intend to do?”

“In view of your health, nothing.⁴⁸ You are yourself aware that you will soon have to answer for your deed at a higher court than the Assizes.⁴⁹ I will keep your confession, and if McCarthy is condemned I shall be forced to use it. If not, it shall never be seen by mortal eye; and your secret, whether you be alive or dead, shall be safe with us.”

“Farewell! then,” said the old man solemnly. “Your own death-beds, when they come, will be the easier for the thought of the peace which you have given to mine.” Tottering and shaking in all his giant frame, he stumbled slowly from the room.

“God help us!” said Holmes after a long silence. “Why does fate play such tricks with poor, helpless worms? I never hear of such a case as this that I do not think of Baxter’s words, and say, “There, but for the grace of God, goes Sherlock Holmes.⁵⁰

James McCarthy was acquitted at the Assizes on the strength of a number of objections which had been drawn out by Holmes and submitted to the defending counsel. Old Turner lived for seven months after our interview, but he is now dead; and there is every prospect that the son and daughter may come to live happily together, in ignorance of the black cloud which rests upon their past.⁵¹



“ ‘Farewell, then,’ said the old man.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

1 “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in October 1891.

2 While almost all chronologists agree that this wife was Mary Morstan, the proposed dates of the wedding range from the spring of 1887 to 1902. See *Chronological Table* for further issues of dating “The Boscombe Valley Mystery.”

3 Watson said of Holmes: “[H]e was never known to write where a telegram would serve” (“The Devil’s Foot”). By the end of the nineteenth century—despite the invention of the telephone in 1876—sending telegrams was still an immensely popular way to communicate personal messages quickly. England’s first electromagnetic telegraph, which used a battery, copper wires, and a magnetic needle to tap out messages, had been patented in 1837 by physicists Sir William Cooke and Charles Wheatstone. That year, the first practical telegraph was constructed in London with the purpose of enabling railway stations to relay simple emergency signals to each other. Meanwhile, in America, Samuel Morse had invented his own telegraph and alphabetic code (his first message, sent in 1844 on a wire between Washington and Baltimore, was “What hath God wrought!”). The Morse telegraph would eventually become the most commonly used telegraph in the world.

An important factor in the public’s acceptance of the telegram as a powerful means of communication was the sensational 1845 Tawell murder case. Tawell was hunted for the murder of a woman near Windsor. When he was spotted at the Slough railway station boarding a train to London’s Paddington Station, a telegram was dispatched to London officials with his description, and he was apprehended on his arrival. After his conviction and execution, the telegraph was dubbed “the wires that hanged Tawell” (described in Robert N. Brodie’s “ ‘Take a Wire, Like a Good Fellow’: The Telegraph in the Canon”). By 1869, 80,000 miles of telegraph wire had been erected throughout the United Kingdom. Designed along the low-cost lines of the postal system, an ordinary telegram from 1885 to 1915 cost 6*d.* for twelve words or less, plus ½*d.* for every excess word. As late as 1903, Holmes was sending his customary terse telegraphic messages to Watson: “Come at once if convenient—if inconvenient come all the same.” (“The Creeping Man”)

4 “Boscombe Valley” is a disguised name. See note 12 for a discussion of possible identification of locations.

5 Contrast this with Watson's description of his medical practice in "The Red-Headed League," as "never very absorbing." Most chronologists place this tale in 1889, a year before "The Red-Headed League" (see *Chronological Table*). 1889 was so filled with cases for Holmes and Watson that evidently Watson grew bored with his medical practice.

6 In "The Stock-Broker's Clerk," Watson says to Holmes: "I do my neighbour's [practice] when he goes. He is always ready to work off the debt." In "The Final Problem," Watson refers to his "accommodating neighbour," and in "The Crooked Man," the neighbour is named "Jackson." Presumably Anstruther moved or sold his practice and was replaced by Jackson. Both "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" and "The Crooked Man" likely took place in 1889, with the former occurring in June and the latter in August. See *Chronological Table*.

7 Watson is referring to his introduction to and courtship of Mary Morstan, which occurred in *The Sign of Four*.

8 D. Martin Dakin accuses Watson of slight exaggeration here, for his military service could not have been more than a year and ended in July 1880. In 1878 Watson received his medical degree and took the course prescribed for surgeons in the army. He was attached to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers, a regiment that was stationed in India at the time, as assistant surgeon. However, before he could join his company, the Second Afghan War had broken out, and his corps was posted to Candahar. Travelling there, he was removed from his brigade and attached to the Berkshires, with whom he served at the "fatal" battle of Maiwand. Wounded by a Jezail bullet but saved by his orderly, Murray, Watson was sent to the base hospital at Peshawar. Enteric fever compounded Watson's ailments, and only after months of convalescence was he sent back to England, returning in late 1880.

9 Rail travel was invented in England in the early nineteenth century. The first passenger train, the *Rocket*, was inaugurated in 1825, marred by the world's first railway fatality, when William Huskisson, a member of Parliament, was struck and killed. By 1848, about 5,000 miles of rail track spanned England; by 1900, the tracks had expanded to more than 15,000 miles.

The social and economic impact of the railways was immense. As travel times shrunk, railroads helped to increase the pace and possibilities of Victorian life, as workers and holiday-goers found it easy to travel long distances. The railroads consumed large amounts of natural resources and employed vast numbers of people.

London's growth was affected by the railroads as well, with the marked expansion of its suburbs. The "Commissioners on Railway Termini within or in the immediate vicinity of the Metropolis" (1846), however, saw no need for a single central terminus, and under their guidance, termini sprung up around the city, financed by seemingly limitless private capital.

The first Paddington Station was built in 1838, by engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, as the London terminus of the Great Western Railway, serving the rural heartlands, the West Country, industrial Bristol, and the South Wales coalfields. It was at this station that Queen Victoria arrived on completing her first railway journey in 1842, on the *Phlegethon*, which travelled at 44 mph. Reportedly, the Prince Consort asked afterward that future trains carrying the queen travel more slowly. In 1853, Brunel began construction on the permanent terminus, working with eminent architect Matthew Digby Wyatt. Completed in 1855, its ironwork and Art Nouveau-like cement work created a light, elegant, and graceful structure. In 1854, the Great Western Hotel was opened adjacent to the station. Since its original construction, the station has been expanded and rebuilt numerous times.

10 This, and a reference in "Silver Blaze" to an "ear-flapped travelling-cap," are the only references to the "deerstalker" hat in which Sidney Paget depicted Holmes and which became his trademark.

11 A municipal and parliamentary borough and market and post town, in Berkshire, situated on the river Kennet, thirty-eight miles west from London. Reading houses the ruins of the Benedictine Abbey, founded

by Henry I in 1121 and containing his grave.

12 Despite the fictional name “Boscombe Valley,” Ross is a real town in Herefordshire, on the Wye (which also flows past Tintern Abbey, memorialised by Wordsworth), about eleven miles southeast from Hereford.

13 In the quest to identify the locations of Hatherley Farm and the other “Boscombe Valley” sites, both Philip Weller (in “Boscombe Byways”) and David L. Hammer (in *For the Sake of the Game*) have identified Goodrich Court as the Turner house. Hammer suggests Homme Farm as the story’s “Hatherley Farm,” while Weller favours the Flannesford Priory as the real site.

14 At that time, Australia was still a British territory; the Australian Colonies Government Act (known formally as the Act for the Better Government of Her Majesty’s Australian Colonies), adopted in August 1850, had designated New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania as self-governing colonies.

Ever since the establishment of the first British settlement—a penal colony at Port Jackson, founded in 1788—the transportation of criminals to Australia had been a common practice. But the occasional depiction of Australia as a land of lawless ruffians was markedly exaggerated. According to popular historian Robert Hughes’s monumental book *The Fatal Shore*, most of the men and women sent to Australia spent only a few years doing government labour or working for settlers and upon liberation chose to stay and integrate themselves into colonial society. After extended efforts by various anti-transportation efforts to persuade the British government, early in 1865, Lord Palmerston’s cabinet announced that transportation would cease within three years. The last convict ship to Australia unloaded its human cargo on January 10, 1868.

By the late nineteenth century, fear of foreign influences and a desire to restrict Asian immigration helped unify Australia, and in 1901, the disparate colonies became the Commonwealth of Australia. Nonetheless, Australia retained the popular image of the wild “frontier.”

15 That is, horse racing.

16 She does not appear again in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery.” But S. Tupper Bigelow, in “Two Canonical Problems Solved,” fancifully suggests that when she had gained a few years, she went into “service,” working first for her mother’s brother, Jabez Wilson, and doing “a bit of simple cooking and keep[ing] the place clean” (“The Red-Headed League”). Bigelow also suggests that her *father’s* brother was none other than Colonel Sebastian Moran, the lieutenant of the Moriarty gang (“The Empty House”).

17 Robert C. Burr points out that no one seems to have examined the gun for blood, which would certainly be present if it had been used for “repeated” blows. Furthermore, there is no sign of blood on the stone identified by Holmes as the murder weapon. Burr hypothesises that the murder weapon was instead the cane shown as carried by John Turner in Sidney Paget’s illustrations for the *Strand Magazine*, which were “no doubt drawn based on information provided by Watson.”

18 The assize courts were the superior courts in each county, which held sessions to determine civil and criminal cases twice a year. Established by Henry II in the 1100s to restore order to a country long embroiled in civil war, the first assize courts were meant to reinstate property that had been wrongfully seized. In the thirteenth century, the Statute of Westminster dictated that justices travel on a circuit to rule on these and other matters of law. The assize courts were abolished in 1972, and their jurisdiction was transferred to the Royal Court.

19 By contrast, in “The Noble Bachelor,” Holmes calls circumstantial evidence “occasionally very convincing, as when you find a trout in the milk, to quote Thoreau’s example.” More in line with his general wariness of circumstantial evidence is his comment in “Thor Bridge”: “When once your point of view is changed, the very thing which was so damning becomes a clue to the truth.” In fact, Holmes’s

general method seems to be to form a provisional theory based on the preliminary evidence and then to wait for time or further evidence to support or discredit his theory.

Seeking to use these teachings of the Master Detective in support of his client, Michael Tigar, defense attorney for Oklahoma City bomber Terry L. Nichols, attempted to reference Holmes on the subject of evidence. Tigar is quoted in the *New York Times* of May 19, 1995, as saying: “I kind of believe what Sherlock Holmes said to Watson. It’s like a stick on the ground. It does point in one direction till you turn it around and look at it from the other side and it points just as equally in the other direction.” Tigar wrongly attributes to Holmes a statement actually made by Father Brown in G. K. Chesterton’s “The Mistake of the Machine” (*Wisdom of Father Brown*, 1914).

[20](#) It was not uncommon for Scotland Yarders to aid the provincial police, and Holmes’s use of the word “retained” was probably purely conversational. Although the Police Act of 1840 allowed for applications to be made to the chief constable of a county for extra constables to be appointed at an individual’s expense, it is more probable that, as Herefordshire at that time had no Criminal Investigation Department, the neighbours approached the chief constable to ask for the assistance of the Metropolitan Police.

[21](#) David H. Galerstein argues that Miss Turner must have known that her father was a likely suspect and insisted that Holmes be brought into the case, “in the hope that an outsider would be able to clear McCarthy Junior without implicating her father.”

[22](#) J. B. Mackenzie, in “Sherlock Holmes’ Plots and Strategy” (1904), points out that the validity of Holmes’s conclusion depends on Watson’s facing north, with the light striking on his right cheek, a fact “not in evidence,” as attorneys say.

[23](#) There was one local daily paper, the *Hereford Mercury and Independent* (established 1832). The “weekly county paper” referred to later could have been the *Hereford Journal* (1713), the *Hereford Times* (1832), or the *Hereford Weekly Marvel* (1869).

[24](#) Under English law, the coroner held inquests, that is, enquired into violent or unexplained deaths. The coroner supervised a jury of twelve persons, took evidence on oath, and hence directly questioned witnesses. Upon conclusion of the inquest, if a person were found guilty of murder or manslaughter, the person was jailed and held for trial.

[25](#) Holmes here announces to Watson that he is “taking a break,” intending to read a book carried in his pocket. Petrarch, or Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374), was an Italian poet. Howard B. Williams notes that in the sonnets of Petrarch is to be found the portrayal of perfect love, which can never be consummated, and suggests that Holmes made Petrarch his pocket companion because the sonnets “mirrored that torture for ever burning within the core of his [own] being”—his love “for a woman who never could be possessed,” Irene Adler. Jane Sayle takes a contrary view, arguing that Holmes would have been more interested in the humanist writings of Petrarch, pondering the potential of mankind for good and evil, than in the lyricism of his poems. Debra McWilliams suggests that Holmes would have rather “noted with approval Petrarch’s admonition that there ‘are three poisons to sound judgment: love, hate, and envy.’ ”

[26](#) By contractual restriction, withdrawn in 1895, trains on the Great Western were obligated to pause ten minutes at Swindon.

[27](#) The Severn is Britain’s longest river, about 180 miles, rising near the Wye on the north-eastern slopes of the upland mass of Plynlimon, Wales, and following a semicircular course to the Bristol Channel and the Atlantic Ocean. William Wordsworth, in his 1842 poem “When Severn’s Sweeping Flood Had Overthrown,” wrote about one occasion of the phenomenon known as the “Severn Bore,” a wave rushing upstream from the estuary of the Severn on a spring tide which can be more than 8 feet high and attain speeds over 25 m.p.h.

28 This is the *Strand Magazine* reader's first glimpse of Inspector G. Lestrade of Scotland Yard, introduced earlier in *A Study in Scarlet*, who appears in fourteen of Watson's published accounts. While Holmes upheld a friendly attitude toward Lestrade and his brethren, he disdained their methods. Holmes called Lestrade the best of the professionals (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*), the "pick of a bad lot" (*A Study in Scarlet*), lacking in imagination ("The Norwood Builder"), and normally out of his depth (*The Sign of Four*).

Lestrade frequently patronised Holmes's methods yet evidently bore a secret respect for Holmes. At the conclusion of "The Six Napoleons," Lestrade, congratulating Holmes on his successful investigation, remarks, "We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

29 After considering the three contemporary hotels in Ross, Philip Weller identifies the hotel as the Rosswyn, based on its proximity to the station and the presence of a communal sitting-room.

30 William P. Schweickert, in "A Question of Barometric Pressure," points out that a barometer reading of 29 is extremely low and indicates storm. "A person of Holmes's scientific knowledge normally would never interpret a reading of 29 as indicative of fair weather. . . . Actually, at that reading, if it were not already raining it was extremely probable that precipitation would soon start."

31 Although "Victoria" was omnipresent as the name of various capitals, provinces, peaks, and bodies of water throughout the British Empire, the earlier mention of Australia must have instantly called to mind the British colony in the south-eastern part of Australia.

32 The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 created a huge rush of prospectors hoping to make their fortune. By 1854, the population of Victoria had quadrupled; the lucky claimed some portion of the £80 million worth of gold taken in that decade. See note 38.

33 A novel usually bound in vividly illustrated yellow boards, intended for railway travellers. Also known as "sensation novels," books of this genre revelled in stories of adultery, bigamy, murder, and illegitimacy. For example, in Mary Elizabeth (M. E.) Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), the heroine abandons her child, murders her husband, and considers poisoning her second husband. Other very popular works were Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and Ellen (Mrs. Henry) Wood's *East Lynne* (1861). Sensation novels were in many ways precursors to thriller and even detective fiction.

34 Victorian law authorised marriage under four circumstances: (1) Publication of "banns" from the pulpit of a Church of England for three consecutive weeks (the least expensive but most public method); (2) an "ordinary" licence, obtainable for a few pounds from Doctors' Commons in London or the local clergyman; (3) a "special" licence, obtained from the Archbishop of Canterbury at great expense, permitting marriage anywhere at any time; and (4) an inexpensive "civil" licence, issued by the superintendent registrar of a district. The last permitted marriage in a church or in the registrar's office with no religious service. Young McCarthy undoubtedly chose this alternative for its low cost and the lack of publicity.

35 Intellectual English novelist and poet, 1828–1909, whose writings focus on psychological effects, the relationship between the individual and social events, and the idea of life as an evolutionary process. His works of poetry include *Modern Love* (1862) and *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883); among his many novels are *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859), banned by libraries as prurient, and *The Egoist* (1879) and *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). It should be noted that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had a long-lasting friendship with Meredith and often went to see him.

36 French: "We shall see."

37 According to *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, the word was a call originally used as a

long-distance signal by Australian aborigines. Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* states that this was the Australian native's signal cry, which was eventually adopted by the colonists and has (since 1840) been the general hailing or signalling cry. That Watson did not know this suggests that in fact, he did not visit Australia, as he states in *The Sign of Four*. See note 38.

38 In September 1851, a rich gold field was discovered by John Dunlop at Ballarat, seventy-five miles west of Melbourne. Robert Hughes writes in *The Fatal Shore*: "The word ran back to Melbourne that gold was everywhere. It lay scattered on the rocks and between the wiry tussocks, glistening as it had done for unregarded thousands of years; now the deepest obsessions of a frontier society would clamp themselves to it, and it would transform that society beyond recognition." Hughes records that as early as November 1851 "a cataract of gold was pouring from Ballarat" and by mid-1852, near 50,000 people were on the site.

In conversation with Mary Morstan (*The Sign of Four*) Watson stated he had seen excavations at Ballarat similar to those in the earth at Pondicherry Lodge. Did Watson actually visit Australia? His behaviour in this case leaves some room for doubt. John Hall suggests, in "And Now?—Ballarat," that Watson added the reference to Ballarat in *The Sign of Four* after Holmes's exposition here (which may have taken place while Watson was writing up his notes of *The Sign of Four*), and that Watson may have seen not the mines themselves but a sketch or photograph in a book. Christopher Redmond, in "Art in the Blood: Two Canonical Relatives. II. 'The History of My Unhappy Brother,'" speculates that Watson did in fact go to Australia between the events of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*, to look after his older brother, whose history is obscure and whose death of alcohol abuse is reported in the latter work. Both of these views are thoughtfully rejected by William Hyder, in "Watson's Education and Medical Career," who adopts the orthodox view that Watson spent at least part of his boyhood in Australia.

39 William S. Baring-Gould points out that there are many other towns in Australia—Ararat, for example—to which "ARAT" would equally apply.

40 Holmes first mentioned his monograph, without disclosing the actual title, in *A Study in Scarlet*. He refers to it again in *The Sign of Four*, giving the full title of his monograph as "Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos: An Enumeration of 140 Forms of Cigar, Cigarette, and Pipe Tobacco, with Coloured Plates Illustrating the Difference in the Ash," and remarks that François le Villard of the French detective service was translating the work into his native language.

41 Diabetes mellitus was, before the discovery of insulin in 1921, an extremely malignant disease. Foot ulcerations, which may become infected, are still frequent among diabetics (compare John Turner's limp), as is coronary artery disease and gangrene of the lower extremities. Turner's symptoms could well have fit other diseases, such as emphysema, with the limp disassociated from the principal illness, but his symptoms certainly do not rule out a correct diagnosis of diabetes mellitus.

42 British spelling of "jail," pronounced in the same manner as the American word.

43 A stock farm or ranch, especially of Australia or New Zealand. Australia's stations were often hundreds of miles apart and had to be self-sustaining sheep or cattle-producing industries.

44 Robert Hughes writes, "By the middle of 1852 . . . the average weekly shipment on the gold-escorts from Ballarat and Bendigo was more than 20,000 ounces—half a ton a week."

45 Richard Lancelyn Green identifies these as the mounted infantry, established in 1824, who originally dealt with escaped convicts. They were typically armed with sabres, carbines, and horse-pistols. The government frequently used the troopers to maintain order in Ballarat and other populous areas and included aboriginal troopers to supplement its regular forces.

46 In "Some Diggings Down Under," Jennifer Chorley notes that Turner's account bears marked similarities to "two famous bushranging exploits," the McIvor Gold Robbery of 1853 and the Eugowra

Escort Robbery of 1862, both involving battles between six troopers and six bushrangers. In one incident, the driver sustained wounds; in the other, the driver was killed. In both exploits, the criminals escaped, and though some were later caught and executed, others were never captured. In neither case was any gold recovered. Chorley observes, “The raids . . . seem to bear the mark of the same gang and a few weeks after Eugowra ‘a man named Turner was arrested at Yass.’ No doubt he later escaped as his name is not among those executed later. All the bushrangers used a multitude of aliases.”

[47](#) Philip Weller suggests, in “Ramble Round Ross: Some Geographical Considerations,” that although Ross is actually well to the north of London, this reference is likely “a reflection of the popular usage of railway terminology, whereby all lines leading away from London are ‘down’ lines and all those leading towards London are ‘up’ lines.”

[48](#) John Ball, Jr., author of the popular *In the Heat of the Night* and other mysteries, in his essay “Early Days in Baker Street,” marks this case as another confirmation of Holmes’s “high official position” in the British government. Even though Holmes gave Lestrade a unique description of the murderer, Lestrade made no arrest. “It is inconceivable that a Scotland Yard inspector would let a known murderer off scot free unless he was under direct orders to do so.”

[49](#) Indeed, it would seem that Turner would be called upon to stand trial for *numerous* crimes. By his own admission, Turner was a multiple murderer and thief, and Holmes’s sympathy seems sadly misplaced.

[50](#) William S. Baring-Gould calls this “[a] paraphrase of the words uttered by John Bradford, 1510–1555, whenever he saw a criminal go by; wrongly credited by Holmes to the great English divine Richard Baxter, 1615–1691.”

[51](#) After publication of Turner’s confession in Watson’s 1891 account of “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” it is inconceivable how James and Alice could “live happily together in ignorance of the black cloud which rests upon their past.”

THE FIVE ORANGE PIPS¹

In “The Five Orange Pips,” which takes place in 1887, Sherlock Holmes tells his client that he has been beaten only four times in his career. When Holmes fails to take immediate steps to protect his client, however, we must conclude that Holmes has been beaten again. Yet the case is a favourite among readers, not least for its tantalising mention of cases that Watson never records, including those of the Paradol Chamber, the Grice Patersons “in the island of Uffa,” the Camberwell poisoning, the loss of the barque “Sophy Anderson,” and the Amateur Mendicant Society. Repeating his formula from A Study in Scarlet, Watson shrewdly selects an adventure with an American setting featuring vengeance by a secret society. In the former case, Holmes tracks down a killer who took revenge on the avengers. Here, Holmes himself seeks revenge on the wrongdoers. We are left to wonder whether Holmes truly seeks justice or is merely trying to soothe his bruised ego.

WHEN I GLANCE over my notes and records of the Sherlock Holmes cases between the years '82 and '90,² I am faced by so many which present strange and interesting features, that it is no easy matter to know which to choose and which to leave. Some, however, have already gained publicity through the papers, and others have not offered a field for those peculiar qualities which my friend possessed in so high a degree, and which it is the object of these papers to illustrate. Some, too, have baffled his analytical skill, and would be, as narratives, beginnings without an ending, while others have been but partially cleared up, and have their explanations founded rather upon conjecture and surmise than on that absolute logical proof which was so dear to him. There is, however, one of these last which was so remarkable in its details and so startling in its results that I am tempted to give some account of it in spite of the fact that there are points in connection with it which never have been, and probably never will be, entirely cleared up.



“The Five Orange Pips.”

Staff artists “Carg” and E. S. Morris,
Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, November 5, 1911

The year '87 furnished us with a long series of cases of greater or less interest, of which I retain the records. Among my headings under this one twelve months, I find an account of the adventure of the Paradol Chamber,³ of the Amateur Mendicant Society, who held a luxurious club in the lower vault of a furniture warehouse, of the facts connected with the loss of the British barque *Sophy Anderson*, of the singular adventures of the Grice Patersons in the island of Uffa, and finally of the Camberwell poisoning case.⁴ In the latter, as may be remembered, Sherlock Holmes was able, by winding up the dead man's watch,

to prove that it had been wound up two hours ago,⁵ and that therefore the deceased had gone to bed within that time—a deduction which was of the greatest importance in clearing up the case. All these I may sketch out at some future date, but none of them present such singular features as the strange train of circumstances which I have now taken up my pen to describe.

It was in the latter days of September, and the equinoctial gales⁶ had set in with exceptional violence. All day the wind had screamed and the rain had beaten against the windows, so that even here in the heart of great, hand-made London we were forced to raise our minds for the instant from the routine of life, and to recognize the presence of those great elemental forces which shriek at mankind through the bars of his civilization, like untamed beasts in a cage. As evening drew in the storm grew higher and louder, and the wind cried and sobbed like a child in the chimney. Sherlock Holmes sat moodily at one side of the fireplace cross-indexing his records of crime, whilst I at the other was deep in one of Clark Russell's fine sea-stories,⁷ until the howl of the gale from without seemed to blend with the text, and the splash of the rain to lengthen out into the long swash of the sea waves. My wife was on a visit to her mother's,⁸ and for a few days I was a dweller once more in my old quarters at Baker Street.

"Why," said I, glancing up at my companion, "that was surely the bell. Who could come to-night? Some friend of yours, perhaps?"

"Except yourself I have none," he answered.⁹ "I do not encourage visitors."

"A client, then?"

"If so, it is a serious case. Nothing less would bring a man out on such a day and at such an hour. But I take it that it is more likely to be some crony of the landlady's."

Sherlock Holmes was wrong in his conjecture, however, for there came a step in the passage, and a tapping at the door. He stretched out his long arm to turn the lamp away from himself and towards the vacant chair upon which a newcomer must sit. "Come in!" said he.

The man who entered was young, some two-and-twenty at the outside, well-groomed and trimly clad, with something of refinement and delicacy in his bearing. The streaming umbrella which he held in his hand, and his long shining waterproof told of the fierce weather through which he had come. He looked about him anxiously in the glare of the lamp, and I could see that his face was pale and his eyes heavy, like those of a man who is weighed down with some great anxiety.

"I owe you an apology," he said, raising his golden pince-nez to his eyes. "I trust that I am not intruding. I fear that I have brought some traces of the storm

and rain into your snug chamber.”



“He looked about himself anxiously.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Give me your coat and umbrella,” said Holmes. “They may rest here on the hook, and will be dry presently. You have come up from the south-west, I see.”

“Yes, from Horsham.”¹⁰

“That clay and chalk mixture which I see upon your toe-caps is quite distinctive.”¹¹

“I have come for advice.”

“That is easily got.”

“And help.”

“That is not always so easy.”

“I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes. I heard from Major Prendergast how you saved him in the Tankerville Club Scandal.”

“Ah, of course. He was wrongfully accused of cheating at cards.”

“He said that you could solve anything.”

“He said too much.”

“That you are never beaten.”

“I have been beaten four times—three times by men, and once by a woman.”¹²

“But what is that compared with the number of your successes?”

“It is true that I have been generally successful.”

“Then you may be so with me.”

“I beg that you will draw your chair up to the fire, and favour me with some details as to your case.”

“It is no ordinary one.”

“None of those which come to me are. I am the last court of appeal.”

“And yet I question, sir, whether, in all your experience, you have ever listened to a more mysterious and inexplicable chain of events than those which have happened in my own family.”

“You fill me with interest,” said Holmes. “Pray give us the essential facts from the commencement, and I can afterwards question you as to those details which seem to me to be most important.”

The young man pulled his chair up and pushed his wet feet out towards the blaze.

“My name,” said he, “is John Openshaw, but my own affairs have, as far as I can understand it, little to do with this awful business. It is a hereditary matter, so in order to give you an idea of the facts, I must go back to the commencement of the affair.

“You must know that my grandfather had two sons—my uncle Elias and my father Joseph. My father had a small factory at Coventry,¹³ which he enlarged at the time of the invention of bicycling. He was a patentee of the Openshaw unbreakable tire, and his business met with such success that he was able to sell it and to retire upon a handsome competence.

“My uncle Elias emigrated to America when he was a young man, and became a planter in Florida, where he was reported to have done very well. At the time of the war he fought in Jackson’s army, and afterwards under Hood, where he rose to be a colonel.¹⁴ When Lee laid down his arms my uncle returned to his plantation, where he remained for three or four years. About 1869 or 1870 he came back to Europe, and took a small estate in Sussex, near Horsham. He had made a very considerable fortune in the States, and his reason for leaving them was his aversion to the negroes, and his dislike of the Republican¹⁵ policy in extending the franchise to them. He was a singular man, fierce and quick-tempered, very foul-mouthed when he was angry, and of a most retiring disposition. During all the years that he lived at Horsham, I doubt if ever he set foot in the town. He had a garden and two or three fields round his house, and there he would take his exercise, though very often for weeks on end he would never leave his room. He drank a great deal of brandy, and smoked very heavily, but he would see no society and did not want any friends, not even his own brother.

“He didn’t mind me; in fact, he took a fancy to me, for at the time when he saw me first I was a youngster of twelve or so. That would be in the year 1878, after he had been eight or nine years in England. He begged my father to let me live with him, and he was very kind to me in his way. When he was sober he used to be fond of playing backgammon and draughts¹⁶ with me, and he would make me his representative both with the servants and with the tradespeople, so that by the time that I was sixteen I was quite master of the house. I kept all the keys, and could go where I liked and do what I liked, so long as I did not disturb him in his privacy. There was one singular exception, however, for he had a single room, a lumber room up among the attics, which was invariably locked, and which he would never permit either me or any one else to enter. With a boy’s curiosity I have peeped through the keyhole, but I was never able to see more than such a collection of old trunks and bundles as would be expected in such a room.

“One day—it was in March, 1883—a letter with a foreign stamp lay upon the table in front of the colonel’s plate. It was not a common thing for him to receive letters, for his bills were all paid in ready money, and he had no friends of any sort. ‘From India!’ said he, as he took it up, ‘Pondicherry¹⁷ postmark! What can this be?’ Opening it hurriedly, out there jumped five little dried orange pips,¹⁸ which pattered down upon his plate. I began to laugh at this, but the laugh was struck from my lips at the sight of his face. His lip had fallen, his eyes were protruding, his skin the colour of putty, and he glared at the envelope which he still held in his trembling hand. ‘K.K.K.!’ he shrieked, and then, ‘My God, my God, my sins have overtaken me!’

“ ‘What is it, uncle?’ I cried.

“ ‘Death,’ said he, and rising from the table he retired to his room, leaving me palpitating with horror. I took up the envelope, and saw scrawled in red ink upon the inner flap, just above the gum, the letter K three times repeated. There was nothing else save the five dried pips. What could be the reason of his overpowering terror? I left the breakfast table, and as I ascended the stair I met him coming down with an old rusty key, which must have belonged to the attic, in one hand, and a small brass box, like a cashbox, in the other.

“ ‘They may do what they like, but I’ll checkmate them still,’ said he with an oath. ‘Tell Mary that I shall want a fire in my room to-day, and send down to Fordham, the Horsham lawyer.’



“Death!” said he.

Artist unknown, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, November 7, 1891

“I did as he ordered, and when the lawyer arrived I was asked to step up to the room. The fire was burning brightly, and in the grate there was a mass of black, fluffy ashes, as of burned paper, while the brass box stood open and empty beside it. As I glanced at the box I noticed, with a start, that upon the lid were printed the treble K which I had read in the morning upon the envelope.

“ ‘I wish you, John,’ said my uncle, ‘to witness my will. I leave my estate, with all its advantages and all its disadvantages to my brother, your father, whence it will, no doubt, descend to you. If you can enjoy it in peace, well and good! If you find you cannot, take my advice, my boy, and leave it to your deadliest enemy. I am sorry to give you such a two-edged thing, but I can’t say what turn things are going to take. Kindly sign the paper where Mr. Fordham shows you.’

“I signed the paper as directed, and the lawyer took it away with him.¹⁹ The singular incident made, as you may think, the deepest impression upon me, and I pondered over it, and turned it every way in my mind without being able to make anything of it. Yet I could not shake off the vague feeling of dread which it left behind it, though the sensation grew less keen as the weeks passed, and nothing happened to disturb the usual routine of our lives. I could see a change in my uncle, however. He drank more than ever, and he was less inclined for any sort of society. Most of his time he would spend in his room, with the door locked upon the inside, but sometimes he would emerge in a sort of drunken frenzy, and would burst out of the house and tear about the garden with a revolver in his hand, screaming out that he was afraid of no man, and that he was not to be cooped up, like a sheep in a pen, by man or devil. When these hot fits were over,

however, he would rush tumultuously in at the door, and lock and bar it behind him, like a man who can brazen it out no longer against the terror which lies at the roots of his soul. At such times I have seen his face, even on a cold day, glisten with moisture as though it were new raised from a basin.

“Well, to come to an end of the matter, Mr. Holmes, and not to abuse your patience, there came a night when he made one of those drunken sallies from which he never came back. We found him, when we went to search for him, face downwards in a little green-scummed pool, which lay at the foot of the garden. There was no sign of any violence, and the water was but two feet deep, so that the jury, having regard to his known eccentricity, brought in a verdict of suicide.²⁰ But I, who knew how he winced from the very thought of death, had much ado to persuade myself that he had gone out of his way to meet it. The matter passed, however, and my father entered into possession of the estate, and of some fourteen thousand pounds which lay to his credit at the bank.”

“One moment,” Holmes interposed, “your statement is, I foresee, one of the most remarkable to which I have ever listened. Let me have the date of the reception by your uncle of the letter, and the date of his supposed suicide.”

“The letter arrived on March the 10th, 1883. His death was seven weeks later, upon the night of the 2nd of May.”

“Thank you. Pray proceed.”



“We found him face downwards in a little green-scummed pool.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“When my father took over the Horsham property, he, at my request, made a careful examination of the attic, which had been always locked up. We found the brass box there, although its contents had been destroyed. On the inside of the

cover was a paper label, with the initials of K.K.K. repeated upon it, and 'Letters, memoranda, receipts, and a register' written beneath. These, we presume, indicated the nature of the papers which had been destroyed by Colonel Openshaw.²¹ For the rest, there was nothing of much importance in the attic, save a great many scattered papers and note-books bearing upon my uncle's life in America. Some of them were of the war time, and showed that he had done his duty well, and had borne the repute of a brave soldier. Others were of a date during the reconstruction of the Southern States, and were mostly concerned with politics, for he had evidently taken a strong part in opposing the carpet-bag politicians who had been sent down from the North.

"Well, it was the beginning of '84 when my father came to live at Horsham, and all went as well as possible with us until the January of '85. On the fourth day after the New Year I heard my father give a sharp cry of surprise as we sat together at the breakfast table. There he was, sitting with a newly-opened envelope in one hand and five dried orange pips in the outstretched palm of the other one. He had always laughed at what he called my cock-and-bull story about the colonel, but he looked very puzzled and scared now that the same thing had come upon himself.

" 'Why, what on earth does this mean, John?' he stammered.

"My heart had turned to lead. 'It is K.K.K.,' said I.

"He looked inside the envelope. 'So it is,' he cried. 'Here are the very letters. But what is this written above them?'

" 'Put the papers on the sundial,' I read, peeping over his shoulder.

" 'What papers? What sundial?' he asked.

" 'The sundial in the garden. There is no other,' said I; 'but the papers must be those that are destroyed.'

" 'Pooh!' said he, gripping hard at his courage. 'We are in a civilized land here, and we can't have tomfoolery of this kind. Where does the thing come from?'

" 'From Dundee,'²² I answered, glancing at the postmark.

" 'Some preposterous practical joke,' said he. 'What have I to do with sundials and papers? I shall take no notice of such nonsense.'



“What on earth does this mean?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“ ‘I should certainly speak to the police,’ I said.

“ ‘And be laughed at for my pains. Nothing of the sort.’

“ ‘Then let me do so?’

“ ‘No, I forbid you, I won’t have a fuss made about such nonsense.’

“It was in vain to argue with him, for he was a very obstinate man. I went about, however, with a heart which was full of forebodings.

“On the third day after the coming of the letter my father went from home to visit an old friend of his, Major Freebody, who is in command of one of the forts upon Portsdown Hill.²³ I was glad that he should go, for it seemed to me that he was further from danger when he was away from home. In that, however, I was in error. Upon the second day of his absence I received a telegram from the Major, imploring me to come at once. My father had fallen over one of the deep chalk-pits which abound in the neighbourhood, and was lying senseless, with a shattered skull. I hurried to him, but he passed away without having ever recovered his consciousness. He had, as it appears, been returning from Fareham²⁴ in the twilight, and as the country was unknown to him, and the chalk-pit unfenced, the jury had no hesitation in bringing in a verdict of ‘death from accidental causes.’ Carefully as I examined every fact connected with his death, I was unable to find anything which could suggest the idea of murder. There were no signs of violence, no footmarks, no robbery, no record of strangers having been seen upon the roads. And yet I need not tell you that my mind was far from at ease, and that I was well-nigh certain that some foul plot had been woven round him.

“In this sinister way I came into my inheritance. You will ask me why I did not dispose of it? I answer because I was well convinced that our troubles were in some way dependent upon an incident in my uncle’s life, and that the danger

would be as pressing in one house as in another.

“It was in January, '85, that my poor father met his end, and two years and eight months have elapsed since then. During that time I have lived happily at Horsham, and I had begun to hope that this curse had passed away from the family, and that it had ended with the last generation. I had begun to take comfort too soon, however; yesterday morning the blow fell in the very shape in which it had come upon my father.”

The young man took from his waistcoat a crumpled envelope, and, turning to the table he shook out upon it five little dried orange pips.



“Shook out five little dried orange pips.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“This is the envelope,” he continued. “The postmark, is London—eastern division.²⁵ Within are the very words which were upon my father’s last message: ‘K.K.K.’; and then ‘Put the papers on the sundial.’ ”



“This is the envelope.”

Sherlock Holmes in America

“What have you done?” asked Holmes.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?”

“To tell the truth”—he sank his face into his thin, white hands—“I have felt helpless. I have felt like one of those poor rabbits when the snake is writhing towards it. I seem to be in the grasp of some resistless, inexorable evil, which no foresight and no precautions can guard against.”

“Tut! tut!” cried Sherlock Holmes. “You must act, man, or you are lost. Nothing but energy can save you. This is no time for despair.”

“I have seen the police.”

“Ah?”

“But they listened to my story with a smile. I am convinced that the inspector has formed the opinion that the letters are all practical jokes, and that the deaths of my relations were really accidents, as the jury stated, and were not to be connected with the warnings.”

Holmes shook his clenched hands in the air. “Incredible imbecility!” he cried.

“They have, however, allowed me a policeman, who may remain in the house with me.”

“Has he come with you to-night?”

“No. His orders were to stay in the house.”

Again Holmes raved in the air.

“Why did you come to me,”²⁶ he said; “and, above all, why did you not come at once?”

“I did not know. It was only to-day that I spoke to Major Prendergast about my trouble, and was advised by him to come to you.”

“It is really two days since you had the letter. We should have acted before this. You have no further evidence, I suppose, than that which you have placed before us—no suggestive detail which might help us?”

“There is one thing,” said John Openshaw. He rummaged in his coat pocket, and, drawing out a piece of discoloured, blue-tinted paper, he laid it out upon the table. “I have some remembrance,” said he, “that on the day when my uncle burned the papers I observed that the small, unburned margins which lay amid the ashes were of this particular colour. I found this single sheet upon the floor of his room, and I am inclined to think that it may be one of the papers which has, perhaps, fluttered out from among the others, and in that way have escaped destruction. Beyond the mention of pips, I do not see that it helps us much. I think myself that it is a page from some private diary. The writing is undoubtedly my uncle’s.”

Holmes moved the lamp, and we both bent over the sheet of paper, which showed by its ragged edge that it had indeed been torn from a book. It was headed, “March, 1869,” and beneath were the following enigmatical notices:

4th. Hudson came. Same old platform.²⁷

7th. Set the pips on McCauley, Paramore, and John Swain of St. Augustine.

9th. McCauley cleared.

10th. John Swain cleared.

12th. Visited Paramore. All well.

“Thank you!” said Holmes, folding up the paper, and returning it to our visitor. “And now you must on no account lose another instant. We cannot spare time even to discuss what you have told me. You must get home instantly, and act.”

“What shall I do?”

“There is but one thing to do. It must be done at once. You must put this piece of paper which you have shown us into the brass box which you have described. You must also put in a note to say that all the other papers were burned by your uncle, and that this is the only one which remains. You must assert that in such words as will carry conviction with them. Having done this, you must at once put the box out upon the sundial, as directed. Do you understand?”

“Entirely.”

“Do not think of revenge, or anything of the sort, at present. I think that we may gain that by means of the law; but we have our web to weave, while theirs is already woven. The first consideration is to remove the pressing danger which threatens you. The second is to clear up the mystery, and to punish the guilty parties.”

“I thank you,” said the young man, rising, and pulling on his overcoat. “You have given me fresh life and hope. I shall certainly do as you advise.”

“Do not lose an instant. And, above all, take care of yourself in the meanwhile, for I do not think that there can be a doubt that you are threatened by a very real and imminent danger. How do you go back?”

“By train from Waterloo.”²⁸

“It is not yet nine. The streets will be crowded, so I trust that you may be in safety. And yet you cannot guard yourself too closely.”

“I am armed.”

“That is well. To-morrow I shall set to work upon your case.”

“I shall see you at Horsham, then?”

“No, your secret lies in London. It is there that I shall seek it.”

“Then I shall call upon you in a day, or in two days, with news as to the box and the papers. I shall take your advice in every particular.” He shook hands with us, and took his leave. Outside the wind still screamed, and the rain splashed and pattered against the windows. This strange, wild story seemed to have come to us from amid the mad elements—blown in upon us like a sheet of seaweed in a gale—and now to have been reabsorbed by them once more.

Sherlock Holmes sat for some time in silence with his head sunk forward, and his eyes bent upon the red glow of the fire. Then he lit his pipe, and leaning back in his chair he watched the blue smoke rings as they chased each other up to the ceiling.

“I think, Watson,” he remarked at last, “that of all our cases we have had none more fantastic than this.”



“His eyes bent upon the glow of the fire.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Save, perhaps, the Sign of Four.”

“Well, yes. Save, perhaps, that. And yet this John Openshaw seems to me to be walking amid even greater perils than did the Sholtos.”²⁹

“But have you,” I asked, “formed any definite conception as to what these perils are?”

“There can be no question as to their nature,” he answered.

“Then what are they? Who is this K.K.K., and why does he pursue this unhappy family?”

Sherlock Holmes closed his eyes, and placed his elbows upon the arms of his chair, with his finger-tips together. “The ideal reasoner,” he remarked, “would, when he has once been shown a single fact in all its bearings, deduce from it not only all the chain of events which led up to it, but also all the results which would follow from it. As Cuvier³⁰ could correctly describe a whole animal by the contemplation of a single bone, so the observer who has thoroughly understood one link in a series of incidents, should be able to accurately state all the other ones, both before and after. We have not yet grasped the results which the reason alone can attain to. Problems may be solved in the study which have baffled all those who have sought a solution by the aid of their senses. To carry the art, however, to its highest pitch, it is necessary that the reasoner should be able to utilize all the facts which have come to his knowledge, and this in itself implies, as you will readily see, a possession of all knowledge, which, even in these days of free education and encyclopaedias, is a somewhat rare

accomplishment. It is not so impossible, however, that a man should possess all knowledge which is likely to be useful to him in his work, and this I have endeavoured in my case to do. If I remember rightly, you on one occasion, in the early days of our friendship, defined my limits in a very precise fashion.”³¹

“Yes,” I answered, laughing. “It was a singular document. Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero, I remember. Botany variable, geology profound as regards the mud stains from any region within fifty miles of town, chemistry eccentric,³² anatomy unsystematic, sensational literature and crime records unique, violin player, boxer, swordsman, lawyer, and self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco.³³ Those, I think, were the main points of my analysis.”

Holmes grinned at the last item. “Well,” he said, “I say now, as I said then, that a man should keep his little brain attic stocked with all the furniture that he is likely to use, and the rest he can put away in the lumber room of his library, where he can get it if he wants it. Now, for such a case as the one which has been submitted to us to-night, we need certainly to muster all our resources. Kindly hand me down the letter K of the American Encyclopædia which stands upon the shelf beside you. Thank you. Now let us consider the situation and see what may be deduced from it. In the first place, we may start with a strong presumption that Colonel Openshaw had some very strong reason for leaving America. Men at his time of life do not change all their habits, and exchange willingly the charming climate of Florida for the lonely life of an English provincial town. His extreme love of solitude in England suggests the idea that he was in fear of some one or something, so we may assume as a working hypothesis that it was fear of some one or something which drove him from America. As to what it was he feared, we can only deduce that by considering the formidable letters which were received by himself and his successors. Did you remark the postmarks of those letters?”

“The first was from Pondicherry, the second from Dundee, and the third from London.”

“From East London. What do you deduce from that?”

“They are all seaports. That the writer was on board of a ship.”

“Excellent. We have already a clue. There can be no doubt that the probability—the strong probability—is that the writer was on board of a ship. And now let us consider another point. In the case of Pondicherry, seven weeks elapsed between the threat and its fulfillment, in Dundee it was only some three or four days. Does that suggest anything?”

“A greater distance to travel.”

“But the letter had also a greater distance to come.”

“Then I do not see the point.”

“There is at least a presumption that the vessel in which the man or men are in is a sailing ship. It looks as if they always sent their singular warning or token before them when starting upon their mission. You see how quickly the deed followed the sign when it came from Dundee. If they had come from Pondicherry in a steamer they would have arrived almost as soon as their letter. But as a matter of fact, seven weeks elapsed. I think that those seven weeks represented the difference between the mail boat which brought the letter, and the sailing vessel which brought the writer.”

“It is possible.”

“More than that. It is probable. And now you see the deadly urgency of this new case, and why I urged young Openshaw to caution. The blow has always fallen at the end of the time which it would take the senders to travel the distance. But this one comes from London, and therefore we cannot count upon delay.”

“Good God!” I cried. “What can it mean, this relentless persecution?”

“The papers which Openshaw carried are obviously of vital importance to the person or persons in the sailing ship. I think that it is quite clear that there must be more than one of them. A single man could not have carried out two deaths in such a way as to deceive a coroner’s jury. There must have been several in it, and they must have been men of resource and determination. Their papers they mean to have, be the holder of them who it may.³⁴ In this way you see K.K.K. ceases to be the initials of an individual, and becomes the badge of a society.”

“But of what society?”

“Have you never—” said Sherlock Holmes, bending forward and sinking his voice—“have you never heard of the Ku Klux Klan?”³⁵

“I never have.”

Holmes turned over the leaves of the book upon his knee. “Here it is,” said he presently:

Ku Klux Klan. A name derived from a fanciful resemblance to the sound produced by cocking a rifle. This terrible secret society was formed by some ex-Confederate soldiers in the Southern States after the Civil War, and it rapidly formed

local branches in different parts of the country, notably in Tennessee, Louisiana, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. Its power was used for political purposes, principally for the terrorizing of the negro voters, and the murdering and driving from the country of those who were opposed to its views. Its outrages were usually preceded by a warning sent to the marked man in some fantastic but generally recognized shape—a sprig of oak-leaves in some parts, melon seeds or orange pips in others. On receiving this the victim might either openly abjure his former ways, or might fly from the country. If he braved the matter out, death would unfailingly come upon him, and usually in some strange and unforeseen manner. So perfect was the organization of the society, and so systematic its methods, that there is hardly a case upon record where any man succeeded in braving it with impunity, or in which any of its outrages were traced home to the perpetrators. For some years the organization flourished, in spite of the efforts of the United States Government and of the better classes of the community in the South. Eventually, in the year 1869, the movement rather suddenly collapsed, although there have been sporadic outbreaks of the same sort since that date.

“You will observe,” said Holmes, laying down the volume, “that the sudden

breaking up of the society was coincident with the disappearance of Openshaw from America with their papers. It may well have been cause and effect. It is no wonder that he and his family have some of the more implacable spirits upon their track. You can understand that this register and diary may implicate some of the first men in the South, and that there may be many who will not sleep easy at night until it is recovered.”³⁶

“Then the page we have seen—”

“Is such as we might expect. It ran, if I remember right, ‘sent the pips to A, B, and C’—that is, sent the society’s warning to them. Then there are successive entries that A and B cleared, or left the country, and finally that C was visited, with, I fear, a sinister result for C. Well, I think, Doctor, that we may let some light into this dark place, and I believe that the only chance young Openshaw has in the meantime is to do what I have told him. There is nothing more to be said or to be done to-night, so hand me over my violin and let us try to forget for half an hour the miserable weather, and the still more miserable ways of our fellowmen.”



It had cleared in the morning, and the sun was shining with a subdued brightness through the dim veil which hangs over the great city. Sherlock Holmes was already at breakfast when I came down.

“You will excuse me for not waiting for you,” said he; “I have, I foresee, a very busy day before me in looking into this case of young Openshaw’s.”

“What steps will you take?” I asked.

“It will very much depend upon the results of my first inquiries. I may have to go down to Horsham after all.”

“You will not go there first?”

“No, I shall commence with the City. Just ring the bell, and the maid will bring up your coffee.”

As I waited, I lifted the unopened newspaper from the table and glanced my eye over it. It rested upon a heading which sent a chill to my heart.

“Holmes,” I cried, “you are too late.”

“Ah!” said he, laying down his cup, “I feared as much. How was it done?” He spoke calmly, but I could see that he was deeply moved.

“My eye caught the name of Openshaw, and the heading ‘Tragedy Near



Waterloo Bridge.’ Here is the account:

“Holmes,” I cried, “you are too late.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

Between nine and ten last night Police-Constable Cook, of the H Division,³⁷ on duty near Waterloo Bridge,³⁸ heard a cry for help and a splash in the water. The night, however, was extremely dark and stormy, so that, in spite of the help of several passers-by, it was quite impossible to effect a rescue. The alarm, however, was given, and, by the aid of the water police,³⁹ the body was eventually recovered. It proved to be that of a young gentleman whose name, as it appears from an envelope which was found in his pocket, was John Openshaw, and whose residence is near Horsham. It is conjectured that he may have been hurrying down to catch the last train from Waterloo Station, and that in his haste and the extreme darkness, he missed his path, and walked over the edge of one of the small landing-places for river steamboats. The body exhibited no traces of violence, and there can be no doubt that the deceased had been the victim of an unfortunate accident, which should have the effect of calling the attention of the authorities to the condition of the riverside landing stages.”

We sat in silence for some minutes, Holmes more depressed and shaken than I had ever seen him.

“That hurts my pride, Watson,” he said at last. “It is a petty feeling, no doubt, but it hurts my pride. It becomes a personal matter with me now, and, if God sends me health, I shall set my hand upon this gang. That he should come to me for help, and that I should send him away to his death—!” He sprang from his chair, and paced about the room in uncontrollable agitation, with a flush upon his sallow cheeks, and a nervous clasp and unclasp of his long, thin hands.

“They must be cunning devils,” he exclaimed, at last. “How could they have

decoyed him down there? The Embankment⁴⁰ is not on the direct line to the station. The bridge, no doubt, was too crowded, even on such a night, for their purpose. Well, Watson, we shall see who will win in the long run. I am going out now!”

“To the police?”

“No; I shall be my own police. When I have spun the web they may take the flies, but not before.”

All day I was engaged in my professional work, and it was late in the evening before I returned to Baker Street. Sherlock Holmes had not come back yet. It was nearly ten o’clock before he entered, looking pale and worn. He walked up to the sideboard, and, tearing a piece from the loaf he devoured it voraciously, washing it down with a long draught of water.



The Embankment.

The Queen’s London (1897) “You are hungry,” I remarked.⁴¹

“Starving. It had escaped my memory. I have had nothing since breakfast.”

“Nothing?”

“Not a bite. I had no time to think of it.”

“And how have you succeeded?”

“Well.”

“You have a clue?”

“I have them in the hollow of my hand. Young Openshaw shall not long remain unavenged. Why, Watson, let us put their own devilish trade-mark upon them. It is well thought of!”

“What do you mean?”

He took an orange from the cupboard, and, tearing it to pieces, he squeezed out the pips upon the table. Of these he took five, and thrust them into an envelope. On the inside of the flap he wrote “S.H. for J.O.” Then he sealed it and addressed it to “Captain James Calhoun,⁴² Barque *Lone Star*, Savannah,

Georgia.”

“That will await him when he enters port,” said he, chuckling. “It may give him a sleepless night. He will find it as sure a precursor of his fate as Openshaw did before him.”

“And who is this Captain Calhoun?”

“The leader of the gang. I shall have the others, but he first.”

“How did you trace it, then?”

He took a large sheet of paper from his pocket, all covered with dates and names.

“I have spent the whole day,” said he, “over Lloyd’s registers⁴³ and files of the old papers, following the future career of every vessel which touched at Pondicherry in January and February in ’83. There were thirty-six ships of fair tonnage which were reported there during those months. Of these, one, the *Lone Star*, instantly attracted my attention, since, although it was reported as having cleared from London, the name is that which is given to one of the States of the Union.”

“Texas, I think.”

“I was not and am not sure which; but I knew that the ship must have an American origin.”

“What then?”

“I searched the Dundee records, and when I found that the barque *Lone Star* was there in January, ’85, my suspicion became a certainty. I then inquired as to the vessels which lay at present in the port of London.”

“Yes?”

“The *Lone Star* had arrived here last week. I went down to the Albert Dock, and found that she had been taken down river by the early tide this morning; homeward bound to Savannah. I wired to Gravesend,⁴⁴ and learned that she had passed some time ago, and as the wind is easterly, I have no doubt that she is now past the Goodwins,⁴⁵ and not very far from the Isle of Wight.”⁴⁶



Cleopatra's Needle.

The Queen's London (1897) "What will you do then?"

"Oh, I have my hand upon him. He and the two mates are, as I learn, the only native-born Americans in the ship. The others are Finns and Germans. I know also that they were all three away from the ship last night. I had it from the stevedore, who has been loading their cargo. By the time that their sailing ship reaches Savannah the mail-boat will have carried this letter, and the cable will have informed the police of Savannah that these three gentlemen are badly wanted here upon a charge of murder."

There is ever a flaw, however, in the best laid of human plans, and the murderers of John Openshaw were never to receive the orange pips which would show them that another, as cunning and as resolute as themselves, was upon their track. Very long and very severe were the equinoctial gales that year. We waited long for news of the *Lone Star* of Savannah, but none ever reached us. We did at last hear that somewhere far out in the Atlantic, a shattered stern-post of the boat was seen swinging in the trough of a wave, with the letters "L.S." carved upon it, and that is all which we shall ever know of the fate of the *Lone Star*.

1 "The Five Orange Pips" was published in the *Strand Magazine* in November 1891 and in the *American Strand Magazine* in December 1891.

2 Why is 1881, the year in which the events of *A Study in Scarlet* occurred, omitted? Gavin Brend suggests that Watson spent most of his time that year writing up his account of that case, the only one in which he participated. He would be ignorant of any other case of Holmes's that occurred during or before that year. "It was only at the beginning of 1882 that systemized records of the cases came into existence."

3 Numerous pastiches have explored this strange reference, but Klas Lithner, in "A Key to the Paradol Chamber," identifies the chamber as the residence of Lucien-Anatole Paradol, a French journalist and political figure.

4 As early as July 1901, the editor of *The Bookman* complained that the *Adventures* and the *Memoirs* were replete with "allusions to affairs of which the reader knows nothing" and demanded that the author "clear away the mystery of all the titles." There are over 110 "unrecorded cases" mentioned in the Canon, according to Christopher Redmond, but John Hall, in *The Abominable Wife*, points out that there is meaningful information about only thirty-nine of these cases.

5 The word "ago" becomes "before" in American editions. Lord Donegall, in "The Horological Holmes," observes, "Dr. Watson's statement as it stands is palpable nonsense. Holmes would have had to wind the watch *and let it run down completely* before being able to tell how many turns of the key or pendant represented 2 hours—even approximately. . . . Watson must have omitted some essential link in the chain of reasoning."

6 The autumnal equinox is an imaginary event, occurring annually about September 23, when the sun first travels southerly across the celestial equator. Of course, an equinox, as a mere convenience of reference, cannot actually cause any storms. However, seasonal shifts of air masses may create unusually violent weather, and the belief in “equinoctial gales” likely originated with sailors who observed West Indian hurricanes occurring most often at the time of the autumnal equinox.

7 William Clark Russell (1844–1911) was an American novelist, the writer of many nautical tales. Between 1867 and 1905 he published 65 titles of fiction, most of them in three volumes, and 15 nonfiction titles. Russell’s novels included *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* (1877), *The Frozen Pirate* (1887), and *The Romance of a Midshipman* (1898).

8 The Doubleday edition’s version of “The Five Orange Pips” follows the *Strand Magazine* version in using the word “mother.” In the first book publication of “The Five Orange Pips,” the word “mother” has been replaced with “aunt.” The latter was adopted as the “definitive text” by Edgar W. Smith for the Limited Editions Club publication of the *Adventures* in 1950 and has been widely copied.

Based in part on the reference to Watson’s “wife,” some chronologists reject Watson’s explicit date of September 1887 and put the case after *The Sign of Four*, following which Watson married Mary Morstan. However, this is a shaky foundation, for according to Mary Morstan in *The Sign of Four*, her mother died before 1878, and she had no living relatives in England (“My father was an officer in an Indian regiment, who sent me home when I was quite a child. My mother was dead, and I had no relative in England”). Ian McQueen states: “Let us say here and now that we no more believe in the existence of Mary Watson’s aunt than we do in the orphan-girl’s mother. Both were figments of Conan Doyle’s imagination, erroneously inserted in the manuscript while he was editing Watson’s notes for publication.” McQueen suggests that Conan Doyle was misled by Watson’s notes into assuming that Watson was already married in September 1887 and invented the visit to Mary’s mother as the most plausible explanation for his absence from home.

It has been ingeniously suggested that Mary Morstan’s relationship to Mrs. Cecil Forrester, with whom she lodges in *The Sign of Four* in an unexplained relationship, was practically that of aunt and niece. Philip Weller, in “A Relative Question,” suggests that the “mother” is Mary Morstan’s stepmother. However, neither argument seems very convincing, and this editor believes that this aunt/wife reference must be to a wife who preceded Mary Morstan and died before 1888 and to whom Watson, out of delicacy for the feelings of his *current* wife, makes little or no reference.

9 Indeed, Holmes is not exaggerating here—there is no report in the entire Canon of any person with whom Holmes has regular social intercourse, save for Dr. Watson, his brother Mycroft, and his professional colleagues Inspector Lestrade and Inspector Stanley Hopkins.

10 A small town in the county of West Sussex. In “The Sussex Vampire,” Holmes and Watson visited Lamberley, which is south of Horsham. Percy Bysshe Shelley was born on the outskirts of Horsham in 1792. According to Baedeker’s *Great Britain* (1894), the town’s Free Library was opened in 1892 as a memorial to Shelley, and the Horsham Museum now has an extensive collection of first and early editions of his works, as well as memorabilia of his life and career.

11 The editors of the Catalogue of the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition in London dispute this deduction, suggesting that Holmes made a rare error, Watson’s notes were incorrect, or Openshaw was not wholly honest about his movements. According to the editors, Horsham sits atop the Tunbridge Wells Sands, surrounded on three sides by the Weald Clay. “Apart from material deposited by builders or from some similar artificial source, it would have been quite impossible for Openshaw to get chalk on his toe-caps in or around Horsham. Sand and clay, perhaps; chalk and clay, no.” To the north of Horsham, however, is a zone in which may be found “the Lower Greensand, Gault Clay, Upper Greensand (a very narrow strip) and the Chalk. . . . In this zone even a short walk could provide a mixture of chalk and clay.” Perhaps Holmes actually said “south,” and Watson embellished Holmes’s statement when writing up his notes.

The editors offer three possible explanations for Openshaw's acquisition of clay and chalk on his boots. First, Watson may have changed a reference to Dorking, for example, to Horsham, either erroneously or to disguise the actual location. Second, Openshaw may have "acquired the chalk on a previous journey and had simply omitted to clean his boots." Third, Openshaw may have passed through Dorking, for reasons undisclosed, and neglected to mention it to Holmes. The editors of the Catalogue profess a preference for the first theory, blaming Dr. Watson's report, inasmuch as the second conflicts with Watson's description of Openshaw as "well-groomed and trimly clad" and the third would have been penetrated by Holmes.

12 Chronologists such as H. W. Bell and Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler are quick to identify this woman with Irene Adler and use the remark to find Watson's September 1887 date in error, instead assigning the case to a date after the March 1888 events of "A Scandal in Bohemia." A few proponents of the year 1887 for "The Five Orange Pips" propose other candidates for the woman purported to have beaten Holmes. Gavin Brend, for example, nominates Effie Munro (of "The Yellow Face," which Brend places in 1882). Tempting as such speculation is, however, it seems that the best that can be said is that if Watson's dating is correct, plainly the victorious woman was *not* Irene Adler; perhaps one of the unreported cases was the source of this defeat. As Brend wisely notes, "After all, we do not know who the three men were who beat Holmes. Why should not the woman be equally anonymous?" For more questions on the dating of this case, see note 29.

13 *Baedeker* describes Coventry in 1896 as "an ancient city with 54,740 inhab., possesses extensive manufactories of ribbons, dress-trimmings, coach-lace, and watches, and is famous for its artistic work in metal. It is also the headquarters of the manufacture of bicycles and tricycles." However, Coventry is perhaps most famous for a legendary horseback ride. In the eleventh century, Lady Godiva bargained with her husband, a powerful noble, to reduce taxes in the district. He promised to do so if she rode naked on horseback through the Coventry marketplace at midday. Lady Godiva made her now-famous ride, and the taxes were eliminated. The story was recorded several times before 1400. In later accounts, probably at the urging of churchmen, the account was embellished with the tale of "Peeping Tom," who was struck blind (or dead) when he alone gazed upon Lady Godiva. Another later invention was the detail of the story, often added, that Godiva was covered totally, except for her legs, by an enormous and improbable quantity of hair. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, commemorated a visit to Coventry with a poem about the legend entitled "Godiva" (1842).

14 Openshaw was far from the only Englishman participating in America's Civil War. Of course, the vast majority of Americans at the time of the Civil War were of British descent, and many in England had family connections in America, on both sides of the war. Although England remained officially neutral in the war, the British aided the Confederacy with the building and manning of commerce raiders and blockade running to Southern ports. There were pro-Confederate and anti-slavery movements and politicking in England itself, as well as natural concern for the security of its colony Canada. Thousands of Britons, including Irishmen Captain John J. Coppinger, Major Myles Walter Keogh, and Joseph A. O'Keeffe (recruited by Secretary of War Seward for the Union), and Englishmen Sir Percy Wyndham (the flamboyant Union cavalryman), Currie, Morley, Jenkins, Gordon, Brou, and Major John Carwardine (Union), came to America to fight.

15 In an era when "Republican" implies "conservative," it is perhaps hard to remember that the Republican Party was organized in 1856 on the basis of opposition to the growth of slavery.

16 The board game referred to by Americans as "checkers," so-called as early as 1400.

17 A town on the eastern coast of India, part of the French colony of Pondicherry until 1954. It was said to have the purest water in southern India. Major Sholto and his son Bartholomew (*The Sign of Four*) lived in Pondicherry Lodge in Upper Norwood.

18 The seeds of an orange or any small fruit.

19 “I am not a lawyer,” W. G. Daish writes in “Ponderings and Pitfalls,” “but I have sometimes wondered how far young Openshaw would have got with the will he witnessed . . . under which he was eventually to be a beneficiary and which, meanwhile, made his own father, his closest relative, the sole legatee.” In the United States, however, more modern laws do not automatically invalidate a will witnessed by an interested witness if there are sufficient other disinterested witnesses. Furthermore, if a witness is an “interested” witness, there is merely a *presumption* that the witness caused the person whose will was witnessed to make gifts to the witness by means of undue influence, menace, fraud, or duress. This presumption may be rebutted by adequate proof to the contrary.

20 “[This is] surely an extraordinary verdict, under the circumstances,” observes Benjamin Clark in “The Horsham Fiasco,” “for who, drunk or sober, would ever attempt to end his life by lying face down in a two-foot-deep puddle?”

21 Why the colonel took the records is never explained. Was he perhaps contemplating blackmailing fellow members of the K.K.K.?

22 A former royal burgh in Scotland, it was made a city in 1892. This industrial seaport was the site of the 1879 Tay Bridge disaster, in which the two-mile bridge—then the longest in the world—collapsed in heavy winds, killing all seventy-five passengers and crew aboard the evening train from Edinburgh. It stands as perhaps the worst rail disaster in British history. Support for the nomination of poet William McGonagall, a native of Dundee, as Scotland’s (and perhaps the world’s) worst poet can be found in his memorable 1890 poem, “The Tay Bridge Disaster,” which ends with the lines:

“Oh! Ill-fated Bridge of the Silv’ry Tay,
I must now conclude my lay
By telling the world fearlessly without the least dismay,
That your central girders would not have given way,
At least many sensible men do say,
Had they been supported on each side with buttresses,
At least many sensible men confesses,
For the stronger we our houses do build,
The less chance we have of being killed.”

23 A hill in southern Hampshire, just north of Portsmouth, overlooking the Solent. Six forts were constructed there in 1868 to defend against possible attack by the French. The invasion never came, however, and the forts became known as “Palmerston’s Folly,” after the British prime minister who ordered them built.

24 A market town and English Channel seaport in Hampshire, at the head of a creek opening into the north-western corner of the major harbour of Portsmouth. Arthur Conan Doyle knew this area well, having lived for several years in nearby Southsea and later purchasing a cottage in the neighbouring New Forest (Bignell Wood). This fondness for the area was apparently shared by Doctor Watson, who, when the weather was hot, longed for the glades of the New Forest and the shingle of Southsea (“The Cardboard Box”).

25 In 1856, after the successful reforms of Rowland Hill (see “A Scandal in Bohemia,” note 24), the post office divided the city into eight postal districts (West Central, East Central, East, South East, South West, West, North West, and North). Each had its district post office, from which letters were distributed to the surrounding district.

26 This sentence, repeated verbatim in the *Strand Magazine* and all book editions, would seem to make

more sense as “Why did you *not* come to me.”

27 The meaning of “ ‘Same old platform’ ” is far from clear, whether it was a literal railway platform on which a meeting took place or was arranged or the Ku Klux Klan’s stated “platform” of subjugating, torturing, and killing blacks and their collaborators.

28 For almost fifty years, until reconstruction of Euston Station began in 1951, Waterloo Station was London’s most modern, the first terminus built in the twentieth century. Opened in 1838 as “Nine Elms,” the metropolitan station of the London & Southampton Railway, in 1848, it was taken over by the South Western Railway and altered and expanded. In 1854, the London Necropolis & National Mausoleum Company opened a cemetery nearby, and strange one-way traffic began at a private “necropolis” station at Waterloo, from which funeral trains with specially built hearse-carriages operated daily.

29 Virtually every bit of internal evidence in “The Five Orange Pips” points to 1887 as the year in which the events occurred. Yet *The Sign of Four*, in which the Sholtos appeared, seems equally unalterably set in 1888. It is clear that the remark respecting the Sholtos and *The Sign of Four* is gratuitous at best. It has no relation to the flow of the story and contains none of the critical character that Watson’s readers have come to expect in Holmes’s comments respecting Watson’s literary efforts. What purpose does the remark serve? It seems likely that Watson was engaged in a bit of advertising for the recently published book. Note the proximity of publication dates: *The Sign of Four*, published in late 1890, and “The Five Orange Pips,” published in late 1891. What better way to boost sales of a relatively obscure novel than a “plug,” in modern parlance, in a “hot” new series of short stories. Watson, of course, could expect additional royalties from further sales, but suspicion for the marketing ploy rests heavily on Arthur Conan Doyle, who had yet to achieve marked financial success. It may well be that Watson made a much more lucrative commission arrangement with Conan Doyle for *The Sign of Four* than for the *Adventures*. Until the details of this arrangement come to light, however, investigators can only speculate on the contractual terms between this author and agent.

30 Georges (Jean-Léopold-Nicolas-Frédéric), Baron Cuvier (1769–1832), French zoologist and statesman, established the science of comparative anatomy and palaeontology and demonstrated that extinct animals could be “reconstructed” from fragmentary remains by applying his law of the “correlation of growth” (later observed by T. H. Huxley to have numerous exceptions, apparently unknown to Holmes). Holmes’s remark here is similar to his assertion in his article “The Book of Life” (quoted in *A Study in Scarlet*) that “[f]rom a drop of water, a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other.”

31 The incident is recorded in the second chapter of *A Study in Scarlet*.

32 Watson called Holmes’s knowledge of chemistry “profound” in *A Study in Scarlet*. Perhaps closer observation had led Watson to amend his earlier characterisation.

33 The latter seems to be “the pot calling the kettle black,” in light of Watson’s own habitual smoking of “ship’s” tobacco (*A Study in Scarlet*).

34 Benjamin Clark, in “The Horsham Fiasco,” points out various irregularities in the case if the papers were indeed of “vital importance.” Whoever murdered Elias Openshaw, for instance, seemingly made no attempt to retrieve the papers after Openshaw’s death. Further, the delay of almost two years before Elias’s brother was contacted proves puzzling, writes Clark, for “while Colonel Openshaw was in possession of the papers he could not make public their contents without implicating himself, whereas his brother, if the records had still been in existence, ran no risk, and in fact might even, without being aware of their significance, have turned them over to the police who in turn would have given them to the American authorities.” Even more difficult to understand is how the murderers of John Openshaw’s father, if they

were in fact Southern-accented Americans, managed to pursue him first to Horsham and then to Portsdown Hill without attracting his notice. With the records still uncollected, Clark quips, “Presumably there is no end to insomnia in Dixieland.”

35 The original Ku Klux Klan was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866 and grew to become the most prominent of various secret terrorist organisations (the Knights of the White Camelia was another) promoting white resistance to post-Civil War Reconstruction. Contrary to the information in Holmes’s encyclopaedia, the name is believed to have been derived from the Greek word *kuklos*, meaning circle. The Klan was officially disbanded in 1869 by order of Grand Wizard Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former Confederate cavalry general, after the increasing lawlessness of local chapters began to concern the society’s leaders. Such disbanding did little to stop various splinter groups from taking violent acts in the Klan’s name, and in 1870 Congress passed the Force Act, and in 1871 the Ku Klux Klan Act, authorizing federal prosecutions of Klan members. During the late 1870s, Southern political power gradually reverted to traditional white Democratic control, and the organisations disappeared as the need for secret anti-Republican groups diminished.

A second Ku Klux Klan was formed in Georgia by William J. Simmons in 1915, inspired in part by books about the original Klan and by D. W. Griffith’s powerful film *The Birth of a Nation*, which expressed pro-Klan sentiments. This incarnation of the Klan embraced a broader, more national agenda, expanding its targets of hate to include Catholics, Jews, foreigners, and organised labour. At its peak, the Klan counted millions of members. While the membership has dwindled sharply today, the organisation continues to deliver its messages of hate throughout America and has apparently gained footholds in England and Canada.

36 Manly Wade Wellman argues that Holmes’s tale of the hounding of Elias Openshaw is a distortion of reality. He writes, “Preservation of Klan secrets were no matter for killing men in far countries: John C. Lester, one of the Klan’s original six founders, published a revealing history of the order in 1884, and he was neither ambushed nor threatened nor even blamed by his former fellows. . . .” Wellman surmises that the case of Elias Openshaw was “something more—a history of theft or extortion or robbery. . . . The adventure unquestionably revolved around membership in a post-Klan mob of Southern hoodlums.”

Conversely, Richard Lancelyn Green notes that after the Civil War, the leaders of the former Confederacy still maintained their ties to the Klan and its offshoots, in many cases fraternising with those people in charge of orchestrating murderous activities. Thus the existence of papers proving that the supposed “new” rough element who had taken over the Klans were in fact the original leaders would have had politically devastating consequences for Southern Democratic leaders, the “first men in the South.” “So the background of the story is historically sound,” Green concludes. “What is wrong is the date. By 1891, or indeed from the return of the Democratic party to presidential power in 1885, such revelations would have had little effect, and ex-Confederate white power in the ex-Confederate states would have quashed any attempt to bring prosecutions. In 1881–2, on the other hand, something might have been made of serious proofs of participation in the Klan murders of 1867–8 by members of the social élite.”

37 In 1891, this was one of the twenty-two administrative divisions of the Metropolitan Police, now sixty-three districts. H Division was very generally analogous to the metropolitan borough of Stepney, at the extreme western edge of which lie the Tower of London and the Royal Mint. Stepney, along with the boroughs of Rotherhithe, Limehouse, and Shadwell, borders the Thames and enclosed the docks. It was filled with lodgings for sailors, warehouses, pubs, and other nautical necessities, as well as immigrants such as the Huguenots and the Jews who landed there, bringing the weaving and clothing trades. There is an old tradition that any child born on the high seas may claim to be a native of Stepney.

38 Built in 1817 over the Thames, this bridge was known as the “Bridge of Sighs” for the numerous suicides leaping from its railings. Thomas Hood’s 1844 poem, “The Bridge of Sighs,” mourns “One more unfortunate, *Weary of breath*, Rashly importunate, / Gone to her death!”

39 Properly the Thames Division of the Metropolitan Police, the “water police” was the oldest of the police branches incorporated within Scotland Yard, established in 1798. Its area of patrol included the whole of the Thames from just below Kingston to Barking. According to *Dickens’s Dictionary of the Thames*, “Both night and day several boats patrol the river in different parts; a fresh boat starting from the station hard every two hours to relieve the one whose watch is up. Each boat contains an inspector and two men, the latter of whom do the rowing, and a careful system of supervision is maintained by which the passing of each boat is checked at varying points.” Steam launches of the River Police figure prominently in the conclusion of *The Sign of Four*.

40 The “Victoria Embankment,” on the north bank of the Thames, stretches about one and one-quarter miles from Westminster Bridge to Blackfriars Bridge. There are various pedestals from which to view the Thames and various statues. Its most prominent landmark is “Cleopatra’s Needle,” an Egyptian obelisk erected here in 1878, which stands 68¹⁻² feet in height and is flanked by two (modern) sphinxes. The “sister” to the Embankment’s obelisk stands in New York City’s Central Park.

41 In *The Valley of Fear*, likely set in 1887 or 1888, Holmes remarks that Watson is “developing a certain unexpected vein of pawky humour,” implying that, in general, Watson is not very humorous. Commentators point to this sterling bit of Watsonian understatement as a refutation of such criticism.

42 Several scholars conclude that it is not the K.K.K. whom Holmes pursued but rather his adversary from “The Final Problem,” Professor Moriarty, who, they contend, organised all three murders. John Lockwood, in “A Study in White,” suggests that because “The Five Orange Pips” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in 1891, Watson may have left out any mention of Moriarty in the story so as not to prejudice the forthcoming trials of the rest of the Moriarty gang.

43 The world’s first and largest ship-classification society began in 1760 as a register of ships likely to be insured by marine insurance underwriters meeting at Lloyd’s coffeehouse in London. Though it remains headquartered in London, Lloyd’s Register is now an international nonprofit organisation focussed on maritime management and safety. Its register book, issued annually, lists all merchant ships of 100 or more tonnes gross. Today the register is accessible on the Internet and in CD-ROM format, a development that Holmes would undoubtedly have appreciated!

44 A city on the Thames, known as the “gateway to the port of London.” Pocahontas, the Indian princess who saved the life of Captain John Smith, coloniser of Virginia, is buried there at St. George’s Church, having died of tuberculosis while visiting England with her husband, John Rolfe, in 1616–1617. In 1896 a memorial tablet to Pocahontas was placed in the chancel of the Church, and the Colonial Dames of America presented memorial windows in 1914.

45 The Goodwin Sands is a dangerous line of shoals at the entrance to the Strait of Dover, about six miles off the east coast of Kent, and a once-frequent scene of shipwrecks. Attempts to erect a lighthouse on the shifting sands have failed, and lightships mark the limits of the sands.

46 An island county in the English Channel, off the southern coast of Hampshire. Prince Albert and Queen Victoria summered there at Osborne House, a thousand-acre property that they bought and rebuilt in 1845. After Albert’s death in 1861, the queen spent even more time at Osborne with her family; she died there in 1901.

THE MAN WITH THE TWISTED LIP¹

“The Man with the Twisted Lip” opens in an opium den in the crime-ridden East End of London, a milieu vivid in the Victorian popular imagination. Watson’s tale is one of the earliest examples of a “play-fair” mystery, in which all of the clues are known to the reader at the same time as the detective. Holmes solves the puzzle in a manner available to the reader—by sheer intellect—and Watson draws the indelible image of Holmes, surrounded by pillows, sitting cross-legged in his dressing gown, smoking his pipe and contemplating the problem before him. There are tantalising hints of a romantic interlude between Holmes and the lovely Mrs. Neville St. Clair, but Watson’s unexpected appearance on the scene leaves her longings apparently unfulfilled, and the reader is left to wonder whether Watson’s cynical views of Holmes’s feelings towards women (expressed in his opening remarks in “A Scandal in Bohemia”) are accurate.

ISA WHITNEY, brother of the late Elias Whitney, D.D., Principal of the Theological College of St. George's,² was much addicted to opium.³ The habit grew upon him, as I understand, from some foolish freak when he was at college, for having read De Quincey's⁴ description of his dreams and sensations, he had drenched his tobacco with laudanum⁵ in an attempt to produce the same effect. He found, as so many more have done, that the practice is easier to attain than to get rid of, and for many years he continued to be a slave to the drug, an object of mingled horror and pity to his friends and relatives. I can see him now, with yellow, pasty face, drooping lids and pin-point pupils, all huddled in a chair, the wreck and ruin of a noble man.

One night—it was in June, '89—there came a ring to my bell, about the hour when a man gives his first yawn, and glances at the clock.

I sat up in my chair, and my wife laid her needlework down in her lap and made a little face of disappointment.

“A patient!” said she. “You'll have to go out.”

I groaned, for I was newly come back from a weary day.

We heard the door open, a few hurried words, and then quick steps upon the linoleum. Our own door flew open, and a lady, clad in some dark-coloured stuff, with a black veil, entered the room.

“You will excuse my calling so late,” she began, and then, suddenly losing her self-control, she ran forward, threw her arms about my wife's neck, and sobbed upon her shoulder. “Oh! I'm in such trouble!” she cried; “I do so want a little help.”

“Why,” said my wife, pulling up her veil, “it is Kate Whitney. How you startled me, Kate! I had not an idea who you were when you came in.”

“I didn't know what to do, so I came straight to you.” That was always the way. Folk who were in grief came to my wife like birds to a lighthouse.⁶

“It was very sweet of you to come. Now, you must have some wine and water, and sit here comfortably and tell us all about it. Or should you rather that I sent James⁷ off to bed?”

“Oh, no, no, I want the doctor's advice and help, too. It's about Isa. He has not been home for two days. I am so frightened about him!”

It was not the first time that she had spoken to us of her husband's trouble, to me as a doctor, to my wife as an old friend and school companion.

We soothed and comforted her by such words as we could find. Did she know where her husband was? Was it possible that we could bring him back to her?

It seems that it was. She had the surest information that of late he had, when

the fit was on him, made use of an opium den in the furthest east of the City. Hitherto his orgies had always been confined to one day, and he had come back, twitching and shattered, in the evening. But now the spell had been upon him eight-and-forty hours, and he lay there, doubtless among the dregs of the docks, breathing in the poison or sleeping off the effects. There he was to be found, she was sure of it, at the “Bar of Gold,” in Upper Swandam Lane.⁸ But what was she to do? How could she, a young and timid woman, make her way into such a place, and pluck her husband out from among the ruffians who surrounded him?

There was the case, and of course there was but one way out of it. Might I not escort her to this place? And, then, as a second thought, why should she come at all? I was Isa Whitney’s medical adviser, and as such I had influence over him. I could manage it better if I were alone. I promised her on my word that I would send him home in a cab within two hours if he were indeed at the address which she had given me. And so in ten minutes I had left my armchair and cheery sitting-room behind me, and was speeding eastward in a hansom on a strange errand, as it seemed to me at the time, though the future only could show how strange it was to be.

But there was no great difficulty in the first stage of my adventure. Upper Swandam Lane⁹ is a vile alley lurking behind the high wharves which line the north side of the river to the east of London Bridge.¹⁰ Between a slop shop¹¹ and a gin shop, approached by a steep flight of steps leading down to a black gap like the mouth of a cave, I found the den of which I was in search. Ordering my cab to wait, I passed down the steps, worn hollow in the centre by the ceaseless tread of drunken feet and by the light of a flickering oil lamp above the door I found the latch and made my way into a long, low room, thick and heavy with the brown opium smoke, and terraced with wooden berths, like the forecastle of an emigrant ship.



London Bridge.

Through the gloom one could dimly catch a glimpse of bodies lying in strange fantastic poses, bowed shoulders, bent knees, heads thrown back, and chins pointing upwards, with here and there a dark, lack-lustre eye turned upon the new-comer. Out of the black shadows there glimmered little red circles of light, now bright, now faint, as the burning poison waxed or waned in the bowls of the metal pipes. The most lay silent, but some muttered to themselves, and others talked together in a strange, low, monotonous voice, their conversation coming in gushes, and then suddenly tailing off into silence, each mumbling out his own thoughts, and paying little heed to the words of his neighbour. At the further end was a small brazier of burning charcoal, beside which on a three-legged wooden stool there sat a tall, thin old man, with his jaw resting upon his two fists, and his elbows upon his knees, staring into the fire.¹²



“Staring into the fire.”

Sidney Paget, *strand Magazine*, 1891

As I entered, a sallow Malay attendant had hurried up with a pipe for me and a supply of the drug, beckoning me to an empty berth.

“Thank you. I have not come to stay,” said I. “There is a friend of mine here, Mr. Isa Whitney, and I wish to speak with him.”

There was a movement and an exclamation from my right, and peering through the gloom, I saw Whitney, pale, haggard, and unkempt, staring out at me.

“My God! It’s Watson,” said he. He was in a pitiable state of reaction, with every nerve in a twitter. “I say, Watson, what o’clock is it?”

“Nearly eleven.”

“Of what day?”

“Of Friday, June 19th.”¹³

“Good heavens! I thought it was Wednesday. It is Wednesday. What d’you want to frighten a chap for?” He sank his face onto his arms and began to sob in a high treble key.

“I tell you that it is Friday, man. Your wife has been waiting this two days for you. You should be ashamed of yourself!”

“So I am. But you’ve got mixed, Watson, for I have only been here a few hours, three pipes, four pipes—I forget how many. But I’ll go home with you. I wouldn’t frighten Kate—poor little Kate. Give me your hand! Have you a cab?”

“Yes, I have one waiting.”

“Then I shall go in it. But I must owe something. Find what I owe, Watson. I am all off colour. I can do nothing for myself.”

I walked down the narrow passage between the double row of sleepers, holding my breath to keep out the vile, stupefying fumes of the drug, and looking about for the manager. As I passed the tall man who sat by the brazier I felt a sudden pluck at my skirt, and a low voice whispered, “Walk past me, and then look back at me.” The words fell quite distinctly upon my ear. I glanced down. They could only have come from the old man at my side, and yet he sat now as absorbed as ever, very thin, very wrinkled, bent with age, an opium pipe¹⁴ clanging down from between his knees, as though it had dropped in sheer lassitude from his fingers. I took two steps forward and looked back. It took all my self-control to prevent me from breaking out into a cry of astonishment. He had turned his back so that none could see him but I. His form had filled out, his wrinkles were gone, the dull eyes had regained their fire, and there, sitting by the fire and grinning at my surprise, was none other than Sherlock Holmes. He made a slight motion to me to approach him, and instantly, as he turned his face half round to the company once more, subsided into a doddering, loose-lipped senility.

“Holmes!” I whispered, “what on earth are you doing in this den?”

“As low as you can,” he answered, “I have excellent ears. If you would have the great kindness to get rid of that sottish friend of yours I should be exceedingly glad to have a little talk with you.”

“I have a cab outside.”

“Then pray send him home in it. You may safely trust him, for he appears to be too limp to get into any mischief. I should recommend you also to send a note by the cabman to your wife to say that you have thrown in your lot with me. If

you will wait outside, I shall be with you in five minutes.”



“ ‘Holmes!’ I whispered.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

It was difficult to refuse any of Sherlock Holmes’s requests, for they were always so exceedingly definite, and put forward with such a quiet air of mastery. I felt, however, that when Whitney was once confined in the cab, my mission was practically accomplished;¹⁵ and for the rest, I could not wish anything better than to be associated with my friend in one of those singular adventures which were the normal condition of his existence. In a few minutes I had written my note, paid Whitney’s bill, led him out to the cab, and seen him driven through the darkness. In a very short time a decrepit figure had emerged from the opium den, and I was walking down the street with Sherlock Holmes. For two streets he shuffled along with a bent back and an uncertain foot. Then glancing quickly round, he straightened himself out and burst into a hearty fit of laughter.



“Holmes,” I whispered,
“what on earth are you doing in this den?”

Staff artists “Cargis” and E. S. Morris,
Seattle Post-Intelligencer, November 12, 1911

“I suppose, Watson,” said he, “that you imagine that I have added opium-smoking to cocaine injections and all the other little weaknesses on which you have favoured me with your medical views.”



London cabmen.

(contemporary photograph)

“I was certainly surprised to find you there.”

“But not more so than I to find you.”

“I came to find a friend.”

“And I to find an enemy.”

“An enemy?”

“Yes, one of my natural enemies, or, shall I say, my natural prey. Briefly, Watson, I am in the midst of a very remarkable inquiry, and I have hoped to find a clue in the incoherent ramblings of these sots, as I have done before now. Had I been recognized in that den my life would not have been worth an hour’s purchase for I have used it before now for my own purposes, and the rascally Lascar¹⁶ who runs it has sworn to have vengeance upon me. There is a trap-door at the back of that building, near the corner of Paul’s Wharf, which could tell some strange tales of what has passed through it upon the moonless nights.”

“What! You do not mean bodies?”

“Ay, bodies, Watson. We should be rich men if we had a thousand pounds for every poor devil who has been done to death in that den. It is the vilest murder-trap on the whole river-side, and I fear that Neville St. Clair has entered it never to leave it more. But our trap should be here.” He put his two fore-fingers between his teeth and whistled shrilly, a signal which was answered by a similar whistle from the distance, followed shortly by the rattle of wheels and the clink of horses’ hoofs.

“Now, Watson,” said Holmes, as a tall dog-cart¹⁷ dashed up through the gloom, throwing out two golden tunnels of yellow light from its side lanterns. “You’ll come with me, won’t you?”

“If I can be of use.”

“Oh, a trusty comrade is always of use, and a chronicler still more so. My room at The Cedars is a double-bedded one.”

“The Cedars?”

“Yes; that is Mr. St. Clair’s house.¹⁸ I am staying there while I conduct the inquiry.”

“Where is it, then?”

“Near Lee, in Kent. We have a seven-mile drive before us.”

“But I am all in the dark.”

“Of course you are. You’ll know all about it presently. Jump up here! All right, John;¹⁹ we shall not need you. Here’s half a crown. Look out for me tomorrow, about eleven. Give her head. So long, then!”

He flicked the horse with his whip, and we dashed away through the endless succession of sombre and deserted streets, which widened gradually, until we were flying across a broad balustraded bridge, with the murky river flowing sluggishly beneath us. Beyond lay another broad wilderness of bricks and mortar, its silence broken only by the heavy, regular footfall of the policeman, or

the songs and shouts of some belated party of revelers. A dull wrack²⁰ was drifting slowly across the sky, and a star or two twinkled dimly here and there through the rifts of the clouds. Holmes drove in silence, with his head sunk upon his breast, and the air of a man who is lost in thought, whilst I sat beside him curious to learn what this new quest might be which seemed to tax his powers so sorely, and yet afraid to break in upon the current of his thoughts. We had driven several miles, and were beginning to get to the fringe of the belt of suburban villas, when he shook himself, shrugged his shoulders, and lit up his pipe with the air of a man who has satisfied himself that he is acting for the best.



“He flicked the horse with his whip.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“You have a grand gift of silence, Watson,” said he. “It makes you quite invaluable as a companion. ’Pon my word, it is a great thing for me to have some one to talk to, for my own thoughts are not over-pleasant. I was wondering what I should say to this dear little woman to-night when she meets me at the door.”

“You forget that I know nothing about it.”

“I shall just have time to tell you the facts of the case before we get to Lee. It seems absurdly simple, and yet, somehow, I can get nothing to go upon. There’s plenty of thread, no doubt, but I can’t get the end of it in my hand. Now, I’ll state the case clearly and concisely to you, Watson, and maybe you may see a spark where all is dark to me.”

“Proceed, then.”

“Some years ago—to be definite, in May, 1884—there came to Lee a gentleman, Neville St. Clair by name, who appeared to have plenty of money.

He took a large villa, laid out the grounds very nicely, and lived generally in good style. By degrees he made friends in the neighbourhood, and in 1887 he married the daughter of a local brewer, by whom he has now had two children. He had no occupation, but was interested in several companies, and went into town as a rule in the morning, returning by the 5.14 from Cannon Street every night. Mr. St. Clair is now 37 years of age, is a man of temperate habits, a good husband, a very affectionate father, and a man who is popular with all who know him. I may add that his whole debts at the present moment, as far as we have been able to ascertain, amount to £88 10s., while he has £220 standing to his credit in the Capital and Counties Bank.²¹ There is no reason, therefore, to think that money troubles have been weighing upon his mind.

“Last Monday Mr. Neville St. Clair went into town rather earlier than usual, remarking before he started that he had two important commissions to perform, and that he would bring his little boy home a box of bricks.²² Now, by the merest chance his wife received a telegram upon this same Monday, very shortly after his departure, to the effect that a small parcel of considerable value which she had been expecting was waiting for her at the offices of the Aberdeen Shipping Company. Now, if you are well up in your London, you will know that the office of the company is in Fresno Street, which branches out of Upper Swandam Lane, where you found me to-night. Mrs. St. Clair had her lunch, started for the City, did some shopping, proceeded to the company’s office, got her packet, and found herself exactly at 4.35 walking through Swandam Lane on her way back to the station. Have you followed me so far?”

“It is very clear.”

“If you remember, Monday was an exceedingly hot day, and Mrs. St. Clair walked slowly, glancing about in the hope of seeing a cab, as she did not like the neighbourhood in which she found herself. While she walked in this way down Swandam Lane she suddenly heard an ejaculation or cry, and was struck cold to see her husband looking down at her, and, as it seemed to her, beckoning to her from a second-floor window. The window was open, and she distinctly saw his face, which she describes as being terribly agitated. He waved his hands frantically to her, and then vanished from the window so suddenly that it seemed to her that he had been plucked back by some irresistible force from behind. One singular point which struck her quick feminine eye was that, although he wore some dark coat, such as he had started to town in, he had on neither collar nor necktie.



And then vanished.

Artist unknown, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, December 6, 1891

“Convinced that something was amiss with him, she rushed down the steps—for the house was none other than the opium den in which you found me to-night—and, running through the front room she attempted to ascend the stairs which led to the first floor. At the foot of the stairs, however, she met this Lascar scoundrel of whom I have spoken, who thrust her back, and, aided by a Dane, who acts as assistant there, pushed her out into the street. Filled with the most maddening doubts and fears, she rushed down the lane and, by rare good-fortune, met, in Fresno Street a number of constables with an inspector, all on their way to their beat. The inspector and two men accompanied her back, and, in spite of the continued resistance of the proprietor, they made their way to the room in which Mr. St. Clair had last been seen. There was no sign of him there. In fact, in the whole of that floor there was no one to be found save a crippled wretch of hideous aspect, who, it seems, made his home there. Both he and the Lascar stoutly swore that no one else had been in the front room during the afternoon. So determined was their denial that the inspector was staggered, and had almost come to believe that Mrs. St. Clair had been deluded when, with a cry, she sprang at a small deal box which lay upon the table, and tore the lid from it. Out there fell a cascade of children’s bricks. It was the toy which he had

promised to bring home.



“At the foot of the stairs she met this Lascar scoundrel.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“This discovery, and the evident confusion which the cripple showed, made the inspector realise that the matter was serious. The rooms were carefully examined, and results all pointed to an abominable crime. The front room was plainly furnished as a sitting-room, and led into a small bedroom, which looked out upon the back of one of the wharves. Between the wharf and the bedroom window is a narrow strip, which is dry at low tide, but is covered at high tide with at least four and a half feet of water. The bedroom window was a broad one and opened from below. On examination traces of blood were to be seen upon the window sill, and several scattered drops were visible upon the wooden floor of the bedroom. Thrust away behind a curtain in the front room were all the clothes of Mr. Neville St. Clair, with the exception of his coat. His boots, his socks, his hat, and his watch—all were there. There were no signs of violence upon any of these garments, and there were no other traces of Mr. Neville St. Clair. Out of the window he must apparently have gone, for no other exit could be discovered, and the ominous bloodstains upon the sill gave little promise that he could save himself by swimming, for the tide was at its very highest at the moment of the tragedy.²³

“And now as to the villains who seemed to be immediately implicated in the matter. The Lascar was known to be a man of the vilest antecedents, but as by Mrs. St. Clair’s story he was known to have been at the foot of the stair within a

few seconds of her husband's appearance at the window, he could hardly have been more than an accessory to the crime. His defence was one of absolute ignorance, and he protested that he had no knowledge as to the doings of Hugh Boone, his lodger, and that he could not account in any way for the presence of the missing gentleman's clothes.

“So much for the Lascar manager. Now for the sinister cripple who lives upon the second floor of the opium den, and who was certainly the last human being whose eyes rested upon Neville St. Clair. His name is Hugh Boone, and his hideous face is one which is familiar to every man who goes much to the City. He is a professional beggar, though in order to avoid the police regulations he pretends to a small trade in wax vestas.²⁴ Some little distance down Threadneedle Street²⁵ upon the left hand side there is, as you may have remarked, a small angle in the wall. Here it is that this creature takes his daily seat, cross-legged, with his tiny stock of matches on his lap, and as he is a piteous spectacle a small rain of charity descends into the greasy leather cap which lies upon the pavement before him. I have watched this fellow more than once, before ever I thought of making his professional acquaintance, and I have been surprised at the harvest which he has reaped in a short time. His appearance, you see, is so remarkable, that no one can pass him without observing him. A shock of orange hair, a pale face disfigured by a horrible scar, which, by its contraction, has turned up the outer edge of his upper lip, a bulldog chin, and a pair of very penetrating dark eyes, which present a singular contrast to the colour of his hair, all mark him out from amid the common crowd of mendicants, and so, too, does his wit, for he is ever ready with a reply to any piece of chaff which may be thrown at him by the passers-by. This is the man whom we now learn to have been the lodger at the opium den, and to have been the last man to see the gentleman of whom we are in quest.”



“He is a professional beggar.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“But a cripple!” said I. “What could he have done single-handed against a man in the prime of life?”

“He is a cripple in the sense that he walks with a limp; but, in other respects, he appears to be a powerful and well-nurtured man. Surely your medical experience would tell you, Watson, that weakness in one limb is often compensated for by exceptional strength in the others.”

“Pray continue your narrative.”

“Mrs. St. Clair had fainted at the sight of the blood upon the window, and she was escorted home in a cab by the police, as her presence could be of no help to them in their investigations. Inspector Barton, who had charge of the case, made a very careful examination of the premises, but without finding anything which threw any light upon the matter. One mistake had been made in not arresting Boone instantly, as he was allowed some few minutes during which he might have communicated with his friend the Lascar, but this fault was soon remedied, and he was seized and searched, without anything being found which could incriminate him. There were, it is true, some blood stains upon his right shirt-sleeve, but he pointed to his ring finger, which had been cut near the nail, and explained that the bleeding came from there, adding that he had been to the window not long before, and that the stains which had been observed there came doubtless from the same source. He denied strenuously having ever seen Mr. Neville St. Clair, and swore that the presence of the clothes in his room was as

much a mystery to him as to the police. As to Mrs. St. Clair's assertion that she had actually seen her husband at the window, he declared that she must have been either mad or dreaming. He was removed, loudly protesting, to the police station, while the inspector remained upon the premises in the hope that the ebbing tide might afford some fresh clue.



Threadneedle St. (Bank of England).

The Queen's London (1897)

“And it did, though they hardly found upon the mud bank what they had feared to find. It was Neville St. Clair's coat, and not Neville St. Clair, which lay uncovered as the tide receded. And what do you think they found in the pockets?”

“I cannot imagine.”

“No, I don't think you will guess. Every pocket stuffed with pennies and halfpennies—four hundred and twenty-one pennies and two hundred seventy halfpennies.²⁶ It was no wonder that it had not been swept away by the tide. But a human body is a different matter. There is a fierce eddy between the wharf and the house. It seemed likely enough that the weighted coat had remained when the stripped body had been sucked away into the river.”

“But I understand that all the other clothes were found in the room. Would the body be dressed in a coat alone?”

“No, sir, but the facts might be met speciously enough. Suppose that this man Boone had thrust Neville St. Clair through the window, there is no human eye which could have seen the deed. What would he do then? It would of course instantly strike him that he must get rid of the tell-tale garments. He would seize the coat then, and be in the act of throwing it out when it would occur to him that it would swim and not sink. He has little time, for he has heard the scuffle downstairs when the wife tried to force her way up, and perhaps he has already heard from his Lascar confederate that the police are hurrying up the street.

There is not an instant to be lost. He rushes to some secret hoard, where he has accumulated the fruits of his beggary, and he stuffs all the coins upon which he can lay his hands into the pockets to make sure of the coat's sinking. He throws it out, and would have done the same with the other garments had not he heard the rush of steps below, and only just had time to close the window when the police appeared."

"It certainly sounds feasible."

"Well, we will take it as a working hypothesis for want of a better. Boone, as I have told you, was arrested and taken to the station, but it could not be shown that there had ever before been anything against him. He had for years been known as a professional beggar, but his life appeared to have been a very quiet and innocent one. There the matter stands at present, and the questions which have to be solved, what Neville St. Clair was doing in the opium den, what happened to him when there, where is he now, and what Hugh Boone had to do with his disappearance, are all as far from a solution as ever. I confess that I cannot recall any case within my experience which looked at the first glance so simple, and yet which presented such difficulties."



"Stuffs all the coins into the pockets."

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

Whilst Sherlock Holmes had been detailing this singular series of events we had been whirling through the outskirts of the great town until the last straggling houses had been left behind, and we rattled along with a country hedge upon

either side of us. Just as he finished, however, we drove through two scattered villages, where a few lights still glimmered in the windows.

“We are on the outskirts of Lee,” said my companion. “We have touched on three English counties in our short drive, starting in Middlesex, passing over an angle of Surrey, and ending in Kent.²⁷ See that light among the trees? That is The Cedars, and beside that lamp sits a woman whose anxious ears have already, I have little doubt, caught the clink of our horse’s feet.”

“But why are you not conducting the case from Baker Street?” I asked.

“Because there are many inquiries which must be made out here.²⁸ Mrs. St. Clair has most kindly put two rooms at my disposal, and you may rest assured that she will have nothing but a welcome for my friend and colleague. I hate to meet her, Watson, when I have no news of her husband. Here we are. Whoa, there, whoa!”

We had pulled up in front of a large villa which stood within its own grounds. A stable-boy had run out to the horse’s head and springing down I followed Holmes up the small, winding gravel drive which led to the house. As we approached, the door flew open, and a little blonde woman stood in the opening, clad in some sort of light *mousseline de soie*,²⁹ with a touch of fluffy pink chiffon at her neck and wrists. She stood with her figure outlined against the flood of light, one hand upon the door, one half raised in her eagerness, her body slightly bent, her head and face protruded, with eager eyes and parted lips, a standing question.³⁰

“Well?” she cried, “well?” And then, seeing that there were two of us, she gave a cry of hope which sank into a groan as she saw that my companion shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

“No good news?”

“None.”

“No bad?”

“No.”

“Thank God for that. But come in. You must be weary, for you have had a long day.”

“This is my friend, Dr. Watson. He has been of most vital use to me in several of my cases, and a lucky chance has made it possible for me to bring him out and associate him with this investigation.”

“I am delighted to see you,” said she, pressing my hand warmly. “You will, I am sure, forgive anything which may be wanting in our arrangements, when you consider the blow which has come so suddenly upon us.”

“My dear madam,” said I, “I am an old campaigner, and if I were not I can

very well see that no apology is needed. If I can be of any assistance, either to you or to my friend here, I shall be indeed happy.”

“Now, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” said the lady, as we entered a well-lit dining-room, upon the table of which a cold supper had been laid out, “I should very much like to ask you one or two plain questions, to which I beg that you will give a plain answer.”

“Certainly, madam.”

“Do not trouble about my feelings. I am not hysterical, nor given to fainting.³¹ I simply wish to hear your real, real opinion.”

“Upon what point?”

“In your heart of hearts, do you think that Neville is alive?”

Sherlock Holmes seemed to be embarrassed by the question. “Frankly now!” she repeated, standing upon the rug and looking keenly down at him as he leaned back in a basket chair.

“Frankly, then, madam, I do not.”

“You think that he is dead?”

“I do.”

“Murdered?”

“I don’t say that. Perhaps.”



“ ‘Frankly, now,’ she repeated.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“And on what day did he meet his death?”

“On Monday.”

“Then perhaps, Mr. Holmes, you will be good enough to explain how it is that I have received this letter from him to-day.”

Sherlock Holmes sprang out of his chair as if he had been galvanized.

“What!” he roared.

“Yes, to-day.” She stood smiling, holding up a little slip of paper in the air.

“May I see it?”

“Certainly.”

He snatched it from her in his eagerness, and smoothing it out upon the table he drew over the lamp and examined it intently. I had left my chair and was gazing at it over his shoulder. The envelope was a very coarse one and was stamped with the Gravesend post-mark and with the date of that very day, or rather of the day before, for it was considerably after midnight.

“Coarse writing!” murmured Holmes. “Surely this is not your husband’s writing, madam.”

“No, but the enclosure is.”

“I perceive also that whoever addressed the envelope had to go and inquire as to the address.”

“How can you tell that?”

“The name, you see, is in perfectly black ink, which has dried itself. The rest is of the greyish colour, which shows that blotting-paper has been used. If it had been written straight off, and then blotted, none would be of a deep black shade. This man has written the name, and there has then been a pause before he wrote the address, which can only mean that he was not familiar with it. It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles. Let us now see the letter. Ha! there has been an enclosure here!”

“Yes, there was a ring. His signet ring.”

“And you are sure that this is your husband’s hand?”

“One of his hands.”

“One?”

“His hand when he wrote hurriedly. It is very unlike his usual writing, and yet I know it well.”

Dearest do not be frightened. All will come well. There is a huge error which it may take some little time to rectify. Wait in patience—

NEVILLE

“Written in pencil upon the fly-leaf of a book, octavo size,³² no water mark. Hum! Posted to-day in Gravesend by a man with a dirty thumb. Ha! And the flap has been gummed, if I am not very much in error, by a person who had been chewing tobacco. And you have no doubt that it is your husband’s hand, madam?”

“None, Neville wrote those words.”

“And they were posted to-day at Gravesend. Well, Mrs. St. Clair, the clouds lighten, though I should not venture to say that the danger is over.”

“But he must be alive, Mr. Holmes.”

“Unless this is a clever forgery to put us on the wrong scent. The ring, after all, proves nothing. It may have been taken from him.”

“No, no; it is, it is, his very own writing!”

“Very well. It may, however, have been written on Monday, and only posted to-day.”

“That is possible.”

“If so, much may have happened between.”

“Oh, you must not discourage me, Mr. Holmes. I know that all is well with him. There is so keen a sympathy between us that I should know if evil came upon him. On the very day that I saw him last he cut himself in the bedroom, and yet I in the dining room rushed upstairs instantly with the utmost certainty that something had happened. Do you think that I would respond to such a trifle, and yet be ignorant of his death?”

“I have seen too much not to know that the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoner. And in this letter you certainly have a very strong piece of evidence to corroborate your view. But if your husband is alive and able to write letters, why should he remain away from you?”

“I cannot imagine. It is unthinkable.”

“And on Monday he made no remarks before leaving you?”

“No.”

“And you were surprised to see him in Swandam Lane?”

“Very much so.”

“Was the window open?”

“Yes.”

“Then he might have called to you?”

“He might.”

“He only, as I understand, gave an inarticulate cry?”

“Yes.”

“A call for help, you thought?”

“Yes. He waved his hands.”

“But it might have been a cry of surprise. Astonishment at the unexpected sight of you might cause him to throw up his hands.”

“It is possible.”

“And you thought he was pulled back?”

“He disappeared so suddenly.”

“He might have leaped back. You did not see any one else in the room?”

“No, but this horrible man confessed to having been there. And the Lascar was at the foot of the stairs.”

“Quite so. Your husband, as far as you could see, had his ordinary clothes on?”

“But without his collar or tie. I distinctly saw his bare throat.”

“Had he ever spoken of Swandam Lane?”

“Never.”

“Had he ever showed any signs of having taken opium?”

“Never.”

“Thank you, Mrs. St. Clair. Those are the principal points about which I wished to be absolutely clear. We shall now have a little supper and then retire, for we may have a very busy day to-morrow.”

A large and comfortable double-bedded room had been placed at our disposal, and I was quickly between the sheets, for I was weary after my night of adventure. Sherlock Holmes was a man, however, who when he had an unsolved problem upon his mind would go for days, and even for a week, without rest, turning it over, rearranging his facts, looking at it from every point of view, until he had either fathomed it, or convinced himself that his data were insufficient. It was soon evident to me that he was now preparing for an all-night sitting. He took off his coat and waistcoat, put on a large blue dressing-gown,³³ and then wandered about the room collecting pillows from his bed, and cushions from the sofa and armchairs. With these he constructed a sort of Eastern divan, upon which he perched himself cross-legged, with an ounce of shag tobacco and a box of matches laid out in front of him. In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old briar pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoke curling up from him, silent, motionless, with the light shining upon his strong set aquiline features. So he sat as I dropped off to sleep, and so he sat when a sudden ejaculation caused me to wake up, and I found the summer sun shining into the apartment. The pipe was still between his lips, the smoke still curled upward, and the room was full of a dense tobacco haze, but nothing remained of the heap of shag which I had seen upon the previous night.

“Awake, Watson?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Game for a morning drive?”

“Certainly.”



“The pipe was still between his lips.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Then dress. No one is stirring yet, but I know where the stable-boy sleeps, and we shall soon have the trap out.” He chuckled to himself as he spoke, his eyes twinkled, and he seemed a different man to the sombre thinker of the previous night.

As I dressed I glanced at my watch. It was no wonder that no one was stirring. It was twenty-five minutes past four. I had hardly finished when Holmes returned with the news that the boy was putting in the horse.

“I want to test a little theory of mine,” said he, pulling on his boots. “I think, Watson, that you are now standing in the presence of one of the most absolute fools in Europe. I deserve to be kicked from here to Charing Cross.³⁴ But I think I have the key of the affair now.”

“And where is it?” I asked, smiling.

“In the bath-room,” he answered. “Oh, yes, I am not joking,” he continued, seeing my look of incredulity. “I have just been there, and I have taken it out, and I have got it in this Gladstone bag.³⁵ Come on, my boy, and we shall see whether it will not fit the lock.”

We made our way downstairs as quietly as possible; and out into the bright morning sunshine. In the road stood our horse and trap, with the half-clad stable-

boy waiting at the head. We both sprang in, and away we dashed down the London Road. A few country carts were stirring, bearing in vegetables to the metropolis, but the lines of villas on either side were as silent and lifeless as some city in a dream.

“It has been in some points a singular case,” said Holmes, flicking the horse on into a gallop. “I confess that I have been as blind as a mole, but it is better to learn wisdom late, than never to learn it at all.”

In town, the earliest risers were just beginning to look sleepily from their windows as we drove through the streets of the Surrey side.³⁶ Passing down the Waterloo Bridge Road we crossed over the river, and dashing up Wellington Street wheeled sharply to the right, and found ourselves in Bow Street.³⁷ Sherlock Holmes was well known to the Force, and the two constables at the door saluted him. One of them held the horse’s head while the other led us in.

“Who is on duty?” asked Holmes.

“Inspector Bradstreet,³⁸ sir.”

“Ah, Bradstreet, how are you?” A tall, stout official had come down the stone-flagged passage, in a peaked cap and frogged jacket. “I wish to have a word with you, Bradstreet.”

“Certainly, Mr. Holmes. Step into my room here.”

It was a small, office-like room, with a huge ledger upon the table, and a telephone³⁹ projecting from the wall. The inspector sat down at his desk.

“What can I do for you, Mr. Holmes?”

“I called about that beggarman, Boone—the one who was charged with being concerned in the disappearance of Mr. Neville St. Clair, of Lee.”

“Yes. He was brought up and remanded for further inquiries.”

“So I heard. You have him here?”

“In the cells.”

“Is he quiet?”

“Oh, he gives no trouble. But he is a dirty scoundrel.”

“Dirty?”



Bow St. Police Court.

The Queen's London (1897)

“Yes, it is all we can do to make him wash his hands, and his face is as black as a tinker’s. Well, when once his case has been settled, he will have a regular prison bath; and I think, if you saw him, you would agree with me that he needed it.”

“I should like to see him very much.”

“Would you? That is easily done. Come this way. You can leave your bag.”

“No, I think that I’ll take it.”

“Very good. Come this way, if you please.” He led us down a passage, opened a barred door, passed down a winding stair, and brought us to a white-washed corridor with a line of doors on each side.

“The third on the right is his,” said the inspector. “Here it is!” He quietly shot back a panel in the upper part of the door and glanced through.

“He is asleep,” said he. “You can see him very well.”

We both put our eyes to the grating. The prisoner lay with his face towards us, in a very deep sleep, breathing slowly and heavily. He was a middle-sized man, coarsely clad as became his calling, with a coloured shirt protruding through the rent in his tattered coat. He was, as the inspector had said, extremely dirty, but the grime which covered his face could not conceal its repulsive ugliness. A broad wheal from an old scar ran right across it from eye to chin, and by its contraction had turned up one side of the upper lip, so that three teeth were exposed in a perpetual snarl. A shock of very bright red hair grew low over his eyes and forehead.

“He’s a beauty, isn’t he?” said the inspector.

“He certainly needs a wash,” remarked Holmes. “I had an idea that he might, and I took the liberty of bringing the tools with me.” He opened the Gladstone bag as he spoke, and took out, to my astonishment, a very large bath sponge.

“He! he! You are a funny one,” chuckled the inspector.

“Now, if you will have the great goodness to open that door very quietly, we will soon make him cut a much more respectable figure.”



“He took out a very large bath sponge.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Well, I don’t know why not,” said the inspector. “He doesn’t look a credit to the Bow Street cells, does he?” He slipped his key into the lock, and we all very quietly entered the cell. The sleeper half turned, and then settled down once more into a deep slumber. Holmes stooped to the water jug, moistened his sponge, and then rubbed it twice vigorously across and down the prisoner’s face.



“He broke into a scream.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1891

“Let me introduce you,” he shouted. “to Mr. Neville St. Clair, of Lee, in the

county of Kent.”⁴⁰

Never in my life have I seen such a sight. The man’s face peeled off under the sponge like the bark from a tree. Gone was the coarse brown tint!⁴¹ Gone, too, was the horrid scar which had seamed it across, and the twisted lip which had given the repulsive sneer to the face! A twitch brought away the tangled red hair, and there, sitting up in his bed, was a pale, sad-faced, refined-looking man, black-haired and smooth-skinned, rubbing his eyes, and staring about him with sleepy bewilderment. Then suddenly realizing the exposure, he broke into a scream, and threw himself down with his face to the pillow.

“Great heavens!” cried the inspector, “it is, indeed, the missing man. I know him from the photograph.”



“And what am I charged with?”

Artist unknown, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, December 6, 1891

The prisoner turned with the reckless air of a man who abandons himself to his destiny. “Be it so,” said he. “And pray what am I charged with?”

“With making away with Mr. Neville St.—Oh, come, you can’t be charged with that unless they make a case of attempted suicide of it,” said the inspector, with a grin. “Well, I have been twenty-seven years in the Force, but this really takes the cake.”

“If I am Mr. Neville St. Clair, then it is obvious that no crime has been committed, and that, therefore, I am illegally detained.”

“No crime, but a very great error has been committed,” said Holmes. “You would have done better to have trusted your wife.”

“It was not the wife, it was the children,” groaned the prisoner. “God help me,

I would not have them ashamed of their father. My God! What an exposure! What can I do?"

Sherlock Holmes sat down beside him on the couch, and patted him kindly on the shoulder.

"If you leave it to a court of law to clear the matter up," said he, "of course you can hardly avoid publicity. On the other hand, if you convince the police authorities that there is no possible case against you, I do not know that there is any reason that the details should find their way into the papers. Inspector Bradstreet would, I am sure, make notes upon anything which you might tell us and submit it to the proper authorities. The case would then never go into court at all."

"God bless you!" cried the prisoner passionately. "I would have endured imprisonment, ay, even execution, rather than have left my miserable secret as a family blot to my children.

"You are the first who have ever heard my story. My father was a schoolmaster in Chesterfield, where I received an excellent education. I traveled in my youth, took to the stage, and finally became a reporter on an evening paper in London. One day my editor wished to have a series of articles upon begging in the metropolis, and I volunteered to supply them. There was the point from which all my adventures started. It was only by trying begging as an amateur that I could get the facts upon which to base my articles. When an actor I had, of course, learned all the secrets of making up,⁴² and had been famous in the green-room for my skill. I took advantage now of my attainments. I painted my face, and to make myself as pitiable as possible I made a good scar and fixed one side of my lip in a twist by the aid of a small slip of flesh-coloured plaster. Then with a red head of hair, and an appropriate dress, I took my station in the busiest part of the City, ostensibly as a match-seller but really as a beggar. For seven hours I plied my trade, and when I returned home in the evening I found to my surprise that I had received no less than 26s. 4d.⁴³

"I wrote my articles, and thought little more of the matter until, some time later, I backed a bill⁴⁴ for a friend, and had a writ served upon me for £25. I was at my wits' end where to get the money, but a sudden idea came to me. I begged a fortnight's grace from the creditor, asked for a holiday from my employers, and spent the time in begging in the City under my disguise. In ten days I had the money and had paid the debt.

"Well, you can imagine how hard it was to settle down to arduous work at two pounds a week, when I knew that I could earn as much in a day by smearing my face with a little paint, laying my cap on the ground, and sitting still. It was a

long fight between my pride and the money, but the dollars won at last,⁴⁵ and I threw up reporting, and sat day after day in the corner which I had first chosen, inspiring pity by my ghastly face, and filling my pockets with coppers. Only one man knew my secret. He was the keeper of a low den in which I used to lodge in Swandam Lane, where I could every morning emerge as a squalid beggar, and in the evenings transform myself into a well-dressed man about town. This fellow, a Lascar, was well paid by me for his rooms, so that I knew that my secret was safe in his possession.

“Well, very soon I found that I was saving considerable sums of money. I do not mean that any beggar in the streets of London could earn seven hundred pounds a year—which is less than my average takings—but I had exceptional advantages in my power of making up, and also in a facility of repartee, which improved by practice, and made me quite a recognized character in the City. All day a stream of pennies, varied by silver, poured in upon me, and it was a very bad day upon which I failed to take two pounds.

“As I grew richer I grew more ambitious, took a house in the country, and eventually married, without any one having a suspicion as to my real occupation. My dear wife knew that I had business in the City. She little knew what.

“Last Monday I had finished for the day, and was dressing above the opium den, when I looked out of my window and saw, to my horror and astonishment, that my wife was standing in the street, with her eyes fixed full upon me. I gave a cry of surprise, threw up my arms to cover my face, and rushing to my confidant, the Lascar, entreated him to prevent any one from coming up to me. I heard her voice downstairs, but I knew that she could not ascend. Swiftly I threw off my clothes, pulled on those of a beggar, and put on my pigments and wig. Even a wife’s eyes could not pierce so complete a disguise. But then it occurred to me that there might be a search in the room, and that the clothes might betray me. I threw open the window, re-opening by my violence a small cut which I had inflicted upon myself in the bedroom that morning. Then I seized my coat, which was weighted by the coppers which I had just transferred to it from the leather bag in which I carried my takings. I hurled it out of the window, and it disappeared into the Thames. The other clothes would have followed, but at that moment there was a rush of constables up the stair, and a few minutes after I found, rather, I confess, to my relief, that instead of being identified as Mr. Neville St. Clair, I was arrested as his murderer.

“I do not know that there is anything else for me to explain. I was determined to preserve my disguise as long as possible, and hence my preference for a dirty face. Knowing that my wife would be terribly anxious, I slipped off my ring, and confided it to the Lascar at a moment when no constable was watching me,

together with a hurried scrawl, telling her that she had no cause to fear.”

“That note only reached her yesterday,” said Holmes.

“Good God! What a week she must have spent!”

“The police have watched this Lascar,” said Inspector Bradstreet, “and I can quite understand that he might find it difficult to post a letter unobserved. Probably he handed it to some sailor customer of his, who forgot all about it for some days.”

“That was it,” said Holmes, nodding approvingly, “I have no doubt of it. But have you never been prosecuted for begging?”

“Many times; but what was a fine to me?”

“It must stop here, however,” said Bradstreet. “If the police are to hush this thing up, there must be no more of Hugh Boone.”

“I have sworn it by the most solemn oaths which a man can take.”⁴⁶

“In that case I think that it is probable that no further steps may be taken.⁴⁷ But if you are found again, then all must come out. I am sure, Mr. Holmes, that we are very much indebted to you for having cleared the matter up. I wish I knew how you reach your results.”

“I reached this one,” said my friend, “by sitting upon five pillows and consuming an ounce of shag. I think, Watson, that if we drive to Baker Street we shall just be in time for breakfast.”⁴⁸ ■

“A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME . . .”

THE NARRATOR of “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” who purports to be John H. Watson, M.D., is at home with his wife when Kate Whitney unexpectedly arrives. Watson’s wife invites Kate: “[S]it here comfortably and tell us all about [your problem]. Or should you rather than I sent James off to bed?”

The identity of “James” has plagued students of the Canon for more than sixty years, with the proposed solutions ranging from the mundane to the grotesque. Among the more benign proposals is Dorothy L. Sayers’s famous suggestion, in her essay “Dr. Watson’s Christian Name,” that “James” is an affectionate reference to Watson’s middle name of “Hamish,” the Scots for “James.” In another version of the “pet name” theory, Ebbe Curtis Hoff proposes that “James” was a playful reference to Watson’s role as Holmes’s Boswell—James Boswell.

An ingenious innocent explanation is proffered by Donald A. Yates, in “An Illumination of the ‘John/James’ Question,” who proposes that this “slip” was a

familial codeword employed by Watson's wife (to whom troubled friends came "like birds to a lighthouse") meaning "John, leave us alone to talk privately." However, H. W. Bell, in *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson: The Chronology of Their Adventures*, dismisses "James" as a mere typographical error; similarly John Ball Jr., in "Early Days in Baker Street," asserts that Watson's scribbled "John" could have been misread as "James" by the typographer. Dorothy Sayers rejects the "typographical error" theory on the basis that Watson must have reread the story in various book editions and never corrected it. Unlike other errors, one would expect Watson to remember his own name!

Casting the blame on Mrs. Watson, Christopher Morley ("Was Sherlock Holmes An American?") ascribes the "James" to forgetfulness on the part of Mrs. Watson, even going so far as to suggest that this slip may have led to the Watsons' eventual separation.

Others pin the "James" discrepancy on Dr. Watson, claiming that the "James" reference was deliberate. For example, in "John and James," Giles Playfair argues that Watson intentionally falsified the records by having his wife refer to him as "James" (to avoid a possible libel action by Isa Whitney or Neville St. Clair), but later threw in the cabby's name, "John," as a clue to the true author of "The Man with the Twisted Lip." The possibility that Watson's name was really "James," while he chose for some unspecified reason to use "John H." as his pen name, is advanced by J. S. Coltart. Thomas I. Francis suggests that Watson deliberately left or placed the name "James" in the manuscript to show other women that his wife did not even know his name. "The use of 'James' provides a clue as to why this marriage did not last," Francis writes.

Some scholars see the "James" reference as an indication of a "second hand" in the narrative. For example, T. S. Blakeney writes, "Composite authorship may generally be attributed to historical writings, irrespective of whether the original record was the work of the putative author or of another person of the same name; and the suggestion arises that the 'James' Watson spoke of in *The Man with the Twisted Lip* may be one of these editors."

There are numerous suggestions that "James" refers to some person other than the narrator. Least disruptive to the traditional view of the Watson household is Ralph A. Ashton's thought that "James" was the name of Watson's bull pup. More radical are ideas that "James was Watson's stepson, by the doctor's marriage to Mrs Forrester rather than to Mary Watson" (A. Carson Simpson, in "It Must Have Been Two Other Fellows") or that "[t]here must have been a former husband—James by name . . ." (Arthur K. Akers). Ruth Berman, in "James Watson," hypothesises that "James" is not an error or a pet name for Dr. Watson but a reference to an adopted son—a child young enough to be described

as being sent to bed, and whose death was the “sad bereavement” to which Watson referred in “The Empty House.” Corroborative evidence, the author argues, is the extra room in the Watson’s flat mentioned in “The Crooked Man.” A similar notion, that “James” was John and Mary’s newly born son who failed to survive infancy, is proposed by C. Alan Bradley and William A. S. Sarjeant.

Even more fantastic is Bliss Austin’s speculation, entitled “What Son Was Watson? A Case of Identity,” that there were two Watsons, John and James; that John died prematurely (shortly after the adventure of “The Reigate Squires”); and that James, seizing a good opportunity, thereupon masqueraded as his elder brother. Equally outré is Ian Neil Abrams’s suggestion that there were identical twins named John and James Watson. Abrams proposes that during that fateful day in Afghanistan, John was wounded in the shoulder and James in the leg. It was John who met Holmes in Bart’s and who originally shared rooms with him in the Baker Street flat. But later, as his practice developed, it was James who would actually occupy the room. It was James who shared the adventure of *The Sign of Four* and subsequently married Mary Morstan; it was James who attended John’s practice during the frequent intervals when “the game was afoot.” Holmes may or may not have known the truth, suggests Abrams.

The “deutero-Watson” theories actually find support in a letter from Arthur Conan Doyle to the editor of the *Strand Magazine* on March 4, 1908: “I don’t suppose so far as I see that I should write [*sic*] a new ‘Sherlock Holmes’ series but I see no reason why I should not do an occasional scattered story under some such heading as ‘Reminiscences of Mr. Sherlock Holmes (Extracted from the diaries of his friend, Dr. James Watson).’”

But for sheer audacity, no proposed solution can match that expounded by Robert S. Katz and David N. Haugen. Haugen explains their idea: “Mary’s ‘James’ in *The Twisted Lip* was not the result of a mistake, typographical error, forgetfulness, or any other previously cited reason. On that quiet evening she had been silently reliving those days of love with her most ardent suitor. During the ensuing turmoil, it was his name, ‘James,’ she spoke, not that of her new husband.” That man: James Moriarty!

1 “The Man with the Twisted Lip” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in December 1891. It appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* a month before its appearance in the *New York Strand Magazine* (January 1892) as “The Strange Tale of a Beggar.” See “A Scandal in Bohemia,” note 1.

2 No such college exists—perhaps Watson here conceals the Roman Catholic Missionary College of St. Joseph.

3 Opium, obtained by processing the juice from unripe poppy-seed pods, has as its principal ingredient the alkaloid morphine, a narcotic that may be processed further to create heroin. Cultivated as long ago as 3400 B.C. by the Sumerians, who called it “Hul Gil,” or “the joy plant,” opium spread throughout the East and eventually made its way to England and America, where it was used for both medicinal and recreational purposes. With the conquest of India, England actively fostered the cultivation and trade of the drug through the British East India Company, which had a government-controlled monopoly on its Indian trade. So important did opium become to the British economy that efforts by China (which had outlawed the drug in 1799) to halt its import led the British to instigate and claim victory in two “Opium Wars,” in 1839–1842 (which also resulted in the cession of Hong Kong to England) and 1856–1860, and British importation of opium from India to China increased annually.

The British government took steps to curb opium use in the late 1800s and early 1900s, but by then the genie was well out of the bottle. Although opium was commonly viewed as a symbol of Eastern licentiousness and corruption, the lure of its calming, euphoric properties claimed some famous literary addicts, including poets Charles Baudelaire, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Samuel Coleridge (whose “Kubla Khan” was inspired by an opium-induced dream), and John Keats and novelist Wilkie Collins (*The Moonstone*, *The Woman in White*). Critics have speculated that Lewis Carroll’s fantastic *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) was written as a result of (or at least referred to) opium use.

The drug’s addictive properties were not well understood. The 1888 *Encyclopædia Britannica* scoffed at any notion that smoking opium might be considered dangerous, comparing the smoking of opium—which enabled smokers “to undergo great fatigue and to go for a considerable time with little or no food”—to moderate alcohol or tobacco consumption. Ultimately, “[w]hen carried to excess it becomes an inveterate habit; but this happens chiefly in individuals of weak will-power, who would just as easily become the victims of intoxicating drinks, and who are practically moral imbeciles, also addicted to other forms of depravity.”

This view—that use of drugs such as opium, cocaine, and morphine could be beneficial—sounds much like Holmes’s defence of his use of cocaine: “I suppose that its influence is physically a bad one. I find it, however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment” (*The Sign of Four*). Watson did not share this view (“Count the cost! Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process, which involves increased tissue-change and may at least leave a permanent weakness. You know, too, what a black reaction comes upon you. Surely the game is hardly worth the candle. Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed?” [*The Sign of Four*]) and exerted continuous efforts over the length of his partnership with Holmes to wean him from drug usage, knowing full well that his task could never be completed.

4 Thomas De Quincey (1785–1859), English essayist and critic. His best-known work was *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, first published in the *London Magazine* in 1821. Although the work’s avowed purpose was to warn the reader of the dangers of opium, it combined a journalistic exposé of the subject with a contradictory picture of the subjective pleasures of drug addiction: “Thou has the keys of Paradise, oh just, subtle, and mighty opium!” Not surprisingly, De Quincey remained an opium addict until his death.

5 An alcoholic preparation of opium in liquid form, commonly administered as a pain reliever in Victorian times.

6 There is no indication in *The Sign of Four*—or any other tale in which she is mentioned, for that matter—that Mary Morstan has this character, and John D. Beirle points this out in “The Curious Incident of the Drive Through Middlesex and Surrey.” Ian McQueen argues that Watson’s use of the past tense—“came” instead of “come”—signifies that in 1891, when “The Man with the Twisted Lip” was published, Mary Morstan was dead.

7 Explanations of the reference to a person named “James”—of course Watson’s first name is John—range

from the ingenious to the outlandish and are collected in “ ‘A Rose by Any Other Name . . . ’ ” on page 194.

8 This was a disguised name. J. C. Parkinson, in his *Places and people, being studies from life* (1869), reports visiting an opium den, which he refers to as Yahee’s (the proprietor’s name). Charles Dickens (Jr.)’s *Dickens’s Dictionary of London* (1879) notes Johnstone’s garret, off the Ratcliff Highway (mentioned in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, 1870—see note 12) and Johnny Chang’s den in the London and St. Katharine Coffee-house, in the Ratcliff Highway, as popular opium smoking dens. J. Hall Richardson’s “Ratcliff Highway and the Opium Dens of To-Day,” which appeared in *Cassell’s Saturday Journal* of January 17, 1891, described a “Mahogany Bar” among other dockside haunts of “wily Lascars.” In Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868), the opium den was named The Wheel of Fortune.

9 There is, or was, no “Upper Swandam Lane” in London, and the commentators have been unable to agree on an identification.

10 Until the middle of the eighteenth century, London Bridge was the only bridge over the Thames in London. The first London Bridge was built by the Romans circa 43 A.D., but as it was made of wood, it proved susceptible to fire, flood, and attack and had to be rebuilt several times. (One such rebuilding was necessitated after Anglo Saxons and Vikings sailed up the Thames to attack London and were showered with spears by Danes defending the bridge; the attackers covered their heads with the roofs of nearby houses, getting close enough to the bridge to pull it down with ropes. The incident is popularly thought to be the basis for the nursery rhyme “London Bridge is Falling Down.”)

The first London Bridge to be made of stone was completed in 1209; the bridge referred to here was opened in 1831 and stood slightly north of the old bridge (which was by then dismantled). The 1831 structure stood for over a century, until it was transported to Lake Havasu, Arizona, in 1968. *Baedeker* noted in 1896: “It is estimated that, in spite of the relief afforded by the Tower Bridge, 22,000 vehicles and about 110,000 pedestrians cross London Bridge daily.”

11 A store where ready-made, cheap, or inferior garments are sold. The term is derived from the meaning of “slop” as a loose covering garment for workmen, such as a surplice, smock, or overalls, and can be traced to Chaucer (1386).

12 Watson’s description may be compared with that in “A Night in an Opium Den,” by the anonymous author of “A Dead Man’s Diary,” which appeared in the June 1891 issue of the *Strand Magazine*. (The article is generally regarded now as wholly fictional.) Other authors of the time who attempted to depict the squalour of the opium den include Oscar Wilde, whose *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) spoke of “opium dens where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new” and where Dorian Gray, himself craving the drug, is fascinated by “the twisted limbs, the gaping mouths, the staring lustreless eyes” he sees in one such place. In Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the protagonist, John Jasper, awakens “in the meanest and closest of small rooms,” sharing a bed with “a Chinaman, a Lascar, and a haggard woman. The first two are in a sleep or stupor; the last is blowing at a kind of pipe, to kindle it. . . . ‘Another?’ says this woman, in a querulous, rattling whisper. ‘Have another?’” Charles Dickens, Jr., identified the room as an accurate depiction of “Johnstone’s garret” (see note 8).

13 Watson is in error about the day, the month, or the year: June 19, 1889, was a Wednesday.

14 An opium pipe consists of a long stem and metal bowl. Although opium use was subjected to various legal restrictions, as late as 1907, the British continued to sell opium to China and other countries, and the normally staid *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in its 1910 edition, continued to carry instructions for its use.

15 Watson’s confidence in the honesty of the cabman, and his cavalier attitude toward Kate Whitney, who was anxiously awaiting the delivery of her husband—and Watson’s own wife, presumably by now in a

similar state over her own husband—are astonishing at the least. In the view of Clifton R. Andrew (“What Happened to Watson’s Married Life After June 14, 1889?”), Watson failed to refer to Mrs. Watson in stories after “Man with the Twisted Lip” because their marriage ended in divorce, as a result of conduct such as Holmes suggests and Watson adopts here.

16 This is an Anglo-Persian term, which formerly meant a noncombatant but later came to mean any extra personnel on shipboard and especially “native” (that is, non-white) sailors who supplemented the crews of European vessels in Eastern waters. The large steamship companies especially favoured them, reportedly on account of their greater docility, temperance, and obedience to orders.

17 A “dog-cart” was an open one-horse vehicle with two transverse seats back-to-back, possibly with the rearmost seat made to close to form a box for dogs.

18 David L. Hammer identifies the building now used as the Convent of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, in Belmont Hill, as The Cedars, Lee.

19 D. Martin Dakin wonders at the identity of this mysterious “John,” pointing out that he could not be St. Clair’s coachman, or he would not have remained in London while Holmes rode away. Dakin suggests, “John . . . must have been one of those casual *employés* whom Holmes had at his beck and call all over London. . . . It is to be hoped that he did not wait too long next morning for the appointment that Holmes never kept.”

20 Watson means “rack,” clouds, or a mass of cloud, driven before the wind in the upper air.

21 This was Holmes’s own bank (“The Priory School”) as well as that of Arthur Conan Doyle and Arthur Cadogan West (“The Bruce-Partington Plans”).

22 A box of wooden blocks for a child to build with.

23 Indeed, the high tide for Monday, June 17, 1889, at London Bridge occurred at about 4:30 P.M.

24 Short matches, with shanks of thin wax tapers. In Roman mythology, Vesta was the goddess of the hearth; she was assisted by the Vestal Virgins in assuring that the sacred fire never went out.

25 Threadneedle Street is best known as the southern boundary of The Bank of England building, an irregular and isolated building of one storey devoid of windows. Alexander Holder, of Holder & Stevenson (“The Beryl Coronet”), also had his banking office in Threadneedle Street.

26 One scholar computes that the pennies would have weighed over twelve pounds!

27 On March 31, 1889, an Act of Parliament created a single new “Administrative County of London,” which included the City of London and parts of the counties of Middlesex, Surrey, and Kent (including Lee, which became a part of Lewisham). Holmes’s remark here, of “three English counties,” reflects what must have been the residual popular usage and not a legally accurate description.

28 Because any local inquiries about St. Clair’s antecedents and habits would not have been likely to take several days, commentators look with grave suspicion on Holmes’s sojourn at The Cedars. Three distinct theories have evolved to explain it:

First, Roberta Pearson theorises that Holmes was enjoying an illicit liaison with Mrs. St. Clair. This possibility is considered further in note 30.

Alternatively, Bernard Davies, in “Holmes and the Halls,” argues that Neville St. Clair and Holmes were old friends. This preexisting friendship ultimately gave Holmes the knowledge of St. Clair’s background that he needed to solve the case. Holmes’s “solution” of the mystery is never explained, although, if Watson knew of their friendship, how Holmes came to the solution must have been obvious to Watson. Watson

could only have omitted mention of the friendship at Holmes's request, reflecting Holmes's desire to repress publicity about his own background.

But D. Martin Dakin rejects this theory, noting that no sign of recognition is given when the two men later meet. Dakin continues, "I think it is more likely that Mrs. St. Clair herself was an old friend of Holmes, in no romantic sense, but possibly through his family, or in connection with some earlier case, and she had begged him to come and help her. . . . [Holmes] was perhaps rather shy of mentioning this to Watson, as he had made a point of being a friendless person."

Brad Keefauver, in *Sherlock and the Ladies*, lends support to this third theory, which explains Holmes's unexpected friendliness on the basis of a preexisting friendship with Mrs. St. Clair. Keefauver points out her outstanding qualities: (1) Courage, demonstrated by her charge into the opium den; (2) a "quick feminine eye" (and ear), evidenced by her uncanny bond with her husband (which Keefauver explains as observation of subtleties); and (3) a flair for the dramatic. "Such traits sound strangely familiar," Keefauver observes, "and you have to wonder where she got them. Whether she picked them up genetically, as a cousin or sibling, or merely got them through close contact, as a childhood playmate, it would seem that Mrs. St. Clair came by her familiarity with Holmes quite naturally—as an old friend." It must be admitted that the foregoing is more palatable than Mr. Keefauver's other suggestion, in "Domesticity in Disguise," that Neville St. Clair and Mrs. Neville St. Clair were not husband and wife (à la *The Hound of the Baskervilles*) but brother and sister, and that she was really the wife of Sherlock Holmes.

29 A thin silk-like material similar to muslin (*mousseline* being French for muslin, *soie* for silk).

30 "Surely as men of the world," writes an amused Richard Asher in "Holmes and the Fair Sex," "we can interpret [this posture] correctly." As evidence that Mrs. St. Clair had "designs" on Holmes, Asher points to her insistence that Holmes stay at her house in Kent, an inconvenient seven miles from the scene of Holmes's investigation; her attire and attitude at the arrival of Watson and Holmes seem less that of a bereaved wife than a "designing woman." Another indication is her reaction to the arrival of Watson (who had met Holmes only by chance in the opium den), for Watson goes on to note that the sight of the two men caused her to give out "a cry which sank into a groan," as Holmes simply shrugs. "Is it not abundantly clear that Holmes had brought Watson with him as a chaperon?" asks Asher. "Yet, even with [Watson sleeping in his room], Holmes does not seem to have felt quite secure, for he sat up all night on a pile of cushions smoking shag and probably ruminating over his narrow escape."

C. Alan Bradley and William A. S. Sarjeant, in *Ms. Holmes of Baker Street: The Truth about Sherlock*, see this incident as the plainest indication that Holmes was a woman. Of course, the entire incident is easily explicable by those who suggest a homosexual relationship between Holmes and Watson (for example, Larry Townsend's *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, first published by "J. Watson" in 1971).

31 Yet "Mrs. St. Clair had fainted at the sight of the blood upon the window . . ."

32 A printer's term for the page size obtained by folding a printer's sheet into eight leaves. In contrast, "folio size" is the result of folding a printer's sheet once to make two leaves (four pages); "quarto size" is the product of folding a sheet twice, making four leaves (eight pages).

33 In "The Blue Carbuncle," Holmes wears a purple dressing gown; in "The Empty House" and "The Bruce-Partington Plans," he sports a "mouse-coloured" gown. Whether Holmes owned three dressing gowns or one is addressed by Christopher Morley in "Was Sherlock Holmes an American?": "Elementary. This particular gown was blue when new. . . . It had gone purple by the time of 'The Blue Carbuncle.' During the long absence 1891–1894, when Mrs. Hudson faithfully aired and sunned it in the backyard, it faded to mouse." S. B. Blake suggests instead that Holmes had two gowns, one blue, one purple, that were burned in the fire set by Moriarty's minions in April 1891 (see "The Final Problem"), and that Holmes acquired a third gown in Italy (see "The Empty House"), which he took with him during his travels in Tibet and elsewhere. Richard Lancelyn Green dismisses the controversy, observing that the dressing-gown was

likely borrowed from Neville St. Clair.

34 A district in central London, it is so named for the stone cross placed there in 1290 by Edward I, marking the final stop of twelve along the route of the funeral procession for his first wife, Eleanor of Castile. (The decaying cross was destroyed in 1643 and replaced with a copy in 1863.) “Charing” is thought by some to be a corruption of *chère reine*, or French for “beloved queen”; others think it a corruption of the village “Cheringe” which stood there in the thirteenth century. It is frequently mentioned in the Canon, and Holmes and Watson regularly used the Charing Cross railway station and, in “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” a trap for a foreign agent was set at the Charing Cross Hotel. Even a century earlier, Samuel Johnson had remarked, “I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing Cross.”

Today Charing Cross, long the home of antiquarian booksellers, may be best remembered from the title of Helene Hanff’s 1970 collection of letters *84, Charing Cross Road* (and the subsequent film), inspired by her correspondence with a bookseller located there.

35 A travelling bag or small portmanteau, opening out flat, named after W. E. Gladstone, prime minister of England.

36 The “Surrey side” of London meant the area south of the Thames, predominantly working-class.

37 The original Bow Street court was established in 1740 by Sir Thomas de Veil. His successor, Judge Henry Fielding, and his brother John in 1749 supplemented the court with a group of constables in an effort to combat the city’s widespread corruption, crime, and disorganised system of policing. The office’s stable of constables—originally known as “Robin Redbreasts” for their red waistcoats, and later known as the “Bow Street Runners”—were an important step in police reform. In 1836, the Bow Street Horse Patrol was subsumed by Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel’s ambitious new Metropolitan Police Force, created in 1829 (and known popularly as “Bobbies” or “Peelers”); in 1839, the Bow Street Foot Patrol came under the control of the Metropolitan force. The fame of the Bow Street Runners was helped in no small part by publication of *Richmond; or, Scenes in the life of a Bow Street Officer* (1827), probably written by Thomas Skinner Surr, which became a cornerstone of detective writing along with Vidoq’s memoirs (see *Foreword*).

Bow Street also gained fame as a magistrates’ court, where many of London’s high-profile criminal cases were tried. The building visited by Holmes and Watson, known as the “New Bow Street Police Court,” was constructed in 1878–1881 to better house both police station and court functions. The building was also marked by its distinctive outside lights, which were white rather than the traditional blue. These lights were used at the request of Queen Victoria, who frequently attended the nearby Opera House and disliked being reminded of the blue room in which her beloved Prince Albert had died.

38 Bradstreet also appears in “The Blue Carbuncle” and “The Engineer’s Thumb.” Bradstreet’s postings changed over time. Here, he is posted to the E Division of Scotland Yard. In “The Blue Carbuncle,” he was serving in B Division, according to the newspapers, and arrested John Horner. In “The Engineer’s Thumb,” he accompanied Holmes to Eyford, revealing himself to be assigned most likely to the central headquarters staff.

39 Alexander Graham Bell first demonstrated the telephone in 1876 with his famous statement “Watson—come here—I want you” (no known relation to the chronicler of these stories), and in 1889 Almon Strowger patented the direct-dial telephone. London’s communications were mainly handled by the National Telephone Co., which maintained numerous call-rooms throughout London and its districts that were open to the public at the rate of 3*d.* for each three minutes’ conversation.

40 Nathan Bengis observes, “[H]ad [Holmes] been as adept in seeing through the disguises of others as he was in fooling others with his own, [he] would have solved this case practically at the start. . . . at no time during these close contacts did it occur to him that the ‘shock of orange hair’ and the ‘pale face disfigured

by a horrible scar' were—or even might be—a disguise.”

41 “[W]hatever [Holmes] knew about putting on make-up, he seems to have known very little about getting the stuff off, if he thought it could be done with two rubs with a sponge moistened in water,” writes D. Martin Dakin. “As everyone knows who has ever taken part in theatricals, a very careful application of cold cream is necessary; any attempt to remove it with soap and water would have disastrous results.” Dakin concludes that Watson must have been exaggerating when describing St. Clair’s quick and dramatic transformation: “[I]n fact St. Clair must have presented a decidedly piebald appearance as he told his story.”

42 Before the invention of electrical footlights, theatres were lit by limelight and gaslight, which required exaggerated face paint to achieve a “natural” look. These paints were often composed of toxic dyes and were crude and dangerous. Grease-paint sticks replaced powder-based make-up after their invention in the 1860s by Ludwig Leichner, a Wagnerian opera singer.

43 As early as 1838, there were more than 8,000 professional beggars in London, and the public rewarded them with donations estimated at over £350,000 per year. Neville’s claimed earnings, therefore, while above average, are credible.

44 That is, served as a guarantor or surety.

45 “Dollar” was British slang for the crown, or 5-shilling piece.

46 “The Man with the Twisted Lip” was published in December 1891 in the *Strand Magazine*, reporting events of June 1889. In Tit-Bits of January 17, 1891, an article entitled “A Day as a Professional Beggar” appeared. The author records that he had the idea of becoming a beggar for a day. He engaged a small room in a back street and, applying a change of clothes and some make-up, stationed himself in the street. The anonymous author recounts how he received a severe fright when he saw his closest friend with a lady of his acquaintance approaching him. He reports that he earned three shillings and sixpence for his day’s “work.” Did Neville St. Clair break his “most solemn oaths” and return to begging?

47 “Imagine . . . a superintendent of police being complaisant enough to overlook a systematic robbery of the public by a fraudulent beggar, and undertaking without demur not to prosecute,” J. B. Mackenzie writes in “Sherlock Holmes’ Plots and Strategy,” in 1902.

48 John D. Beirle makes much of two points in the story, the previously unknown character of Mary Morstan Watson as a “lighthouse” (see note 6) and her reference to her husband as “James” (see *Appendix*). “Viewed objectively,” he concludes, “*The Man with the Twisted Lip* gives evidence of hasty and even careless composition by someone not familiar with Dr. Watson’s family life.” He infers that the story was not written by Watson but rather by Arthur Conan Doyle. Beirle’s view is not a popular one.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE 1

Esteemed Holmes scholar and writer Christopher Morley referred to “The Blue Carbuncle” as “a Christmas story without slush,” and some readers favour the story—the only tale in the Canon set in the holiday season—over such traditional fare as Dickens’s “A Christmas Carol.” Like Frank Capra’s brilliant film “It’s a Wonderful Life,” the tale of the stolen gem commemorates the triumph of compassion over justice. There are gems within the story, to be sure: Holmes’s tour-de-force deductions from hapless Henry Baker’s hat, Holmes’s deception of Breckinridge, the sporting seller of geese, and the clever but ultimately foolish plan of the criminal to smuggle the countess’s carbuncle to his “fence” in Kilburn. What draws us back each year, however, is the evident warmth of the friendship between Holmes and Watson, as Watson travels from his married household to visit his bachelor friend and wish him “compliments of the season.” Sherlock

Holmes, too, appears more human, less the “perfect reasoner,” again taking the law into his own hands. After all, he concludes magnanimously, “It is the season of forgiveness.”

I HAD CALLED UPON my friend Sherlock Holmes upon the second morning after Christmas, with the intention of wishing him the compliments of the season.² He was lounging upon the sofa in a purple dressing-gown, a pipe-rack within his reach upon the right, and a pile of crumpled morning papers, evidently newly studied, near at hand. Beside the couch was a wooden chair, and on the angle of the back hung a very seedy and disreputable hard felt hat, much the worse for wear, and cracked in several places. A lens and a forceps lying upon the seat of the chair suggested that the hat had been suspended in this manner for the purpose of examination.

“You are engaged,” said I; “perhaps I interrupt you.”

“Not at all. I am glad to have a friend with whom I can discuss my results. The matter is a perfectly trivial one” (he jerked his thumb in the direction of the old hat) “but there are points in connection with it which are not entirely devoid of interest, and even of instruction.”



“A very seedy hard felt hat.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

I seated myself in his armchair and warmed my hands before his crackling fire, for a sharp frost had set in, and the windows were thick with the ice crystals. “I suppose,” I remarked, “that, homely as it looks, this thing has some deadly story linked on to it—that it is the clue which will guide you in the solution of some mystery, and the punishment of some crime.”

“No, no. No crime,” said Sherlock Holmes, laughing. “Only one of those whimsical little incidents which will happen when you have four million human beings all jostling each other within the space of a few square miles. Amid the action and reaction of so dense a swarm of humanity, every possible combination of events may be expected to take place, and many a little problem will be presented which may be striking and bizarre without being criminal. We have already had experience of such.”

“So much so,” I remarked, “that of the last six cases which I have added to my notes, three have been entirely free of any legal crime.”³

“Precisely. You allude to my attempt to recover the Irene Adler papers, to the singular case of Miss Mary Sutherland, and to the adventure of the man with the twisted lip.⁴ Well, I have no doubt that this small matter will fall into the same innocent category. You know Peterson, the commissionaire?”⁵

“Yes.”

“It is to him that this trophy belongs.”

“It is his hat.”

“No, no; he found it. Its owner is unknown. I beg that you will look upon it, not as a battered billycock⁶ but as an intellectual problem. And, first, as to how it came here. It arrived upon Christmas morning, in company with a good fat goose, which is, I have no doubt, roasting at this moment in front of Peterson’s fire.

“The facts are these. About four o’clock on Christmas morning, Peterson, who, as you know, is a very honest fellow, was returning from some small jollification, and was making his way homeward down Tottenham Court Road. In front of him he saw, in the gaslight, a tallish man, walking with a slight stagger, and carrying a white goose slung over his shoulder. As he reached the corner of Goodge Street, a row broke out⁷ between this stranger and a little knot of roughs. One of the latter knocked off the man’s hat, on which he raised his stick to defend himself, and, swinging it over his head, smashed the shop window behind him. Peterson had rushed forward to protect the stranger from

his assailants, but the man, shocked at having broken the window, and seeing an official-looking person in uniform rushing towards him, dropped his goose, took to his heels, and vanished amid the labyrinth of small streets which lie at the back of Tottenham Court Road. The roughs had also fled at the appearance of Peterson, so that he was left in possession of the field of battle, and also of the spoils of victory in the shape of this battered hat and a most unimpeachable Christmas goose.”⁸

“Which surely he restored to their owner?”

“My dear fellow, there lies the problem. It is true that ‘For Mrs. Henry Baker’ was printed upon a small card which was tied to the bird’s left leg, and it is also true that the initials ‘H. B.’⁹ are legible upon the lining of this hat; but, as there are some thousands of Bakers, and some hundreds of Henry Bakers¹⁰ in this city of ours, it is not easy to restore lost property to any one of them.”

“What, then, did Peterson do?”



“The roughs had fled at the appearance of Peterson.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“He brought round both hat and goose to me on Christmas morning, knowing that even the smallest problems are of interest to me. The goose we retained until this morning, when there were signs that, in spite of the slight frost, it would be well that it should be eaten without unnecessary delay. Its finder has carried it off, therefore, to fulfil the ultimate destiny of a goose, while I continue to retain the hat of the unknown gentleman who lost his Christmas dinner.”

“Did he not advertise?”

“No.”

“Then, what clue could you have as to his identity?”

“Only as much as we can deduce.”

“From his hat?”

“Precisely.”

“But you are joking. What can you gather from this old battered felt?”

“Here is my lens. You know my methods. What can you gather yourself as to the individuality of the man who has worn this article?”

I took the tattered object in my hands, and turned it over rather ruefully. It was a very ordinary black hat of the usual round shape, hard, and much the worse for wear. The lining had been of red silk, but was a good deal discoloured. There was no maker’s name; but, as Holmes had remarked, the initials “H. B.” were scrawled upon one side. It was pierced in the brim for a hat-securer, but the elastic was missing. For the rest, it was cracked, exceedingly dusty, and spotted in several places, although there seemed to have been some attempt to hide the discoloured patches by smearing them with ink.

“I can see nothing,” said I, handing it back to my friend.

“On the contrary, Watson, you can see everything. You fail, however, to reason from what you see. You are too timid in drawing your inferences.”

“Then, pray tell me what it is that you can infer from this hat?”

He picked it up and gazed at it in the peculiar introspective fashion which was characteristic of him. “It is perhaps less suggestive than it might have been,” he remarked, “and yet there are a few inferences which are very distinct, and a few others which represent at least a strong balance of probability. That the man was highly intellectual is of course obvious upon the face of it, and also that he was fairly well-to-do within the last three years, although he has now fallen upon evil days. He had foresight, but has less now than formerly, pointing to a moral retrogression, which, when taken with the decline of his fortunes, seems to indicate some evil influence, probably drink, at work upon him. This may account also for the obvious fact that his wife has ceased to love him.”

“My dear Holmes!”

“He has, however, retained some degree of self-respect,” he continued, disregarding my remonstrance. “He is a man who leads a sedentary life, goes out little, is out of training entirely, is middle-aged, has grizzled hair which he has had cut within the last few days, and which he anoints with lime-cream.¹¹ These are the more patent facts which are to be deduced from his hat. Also, by the way, that it is extremely improbable that he has gas laid on in his house.”

“You are certainly joking, Holmes.”

“Not in the least. Is it possible that even now, when I give you these results, you are unable to see how they are attained?”

“I have no doubt that I am very stupid; but I must confess that I am unable to follow you. For example, how did you deduce that this man was intellectual?”

For answer Holmes clapped the hat upon his head. It came right over the forehead and settled upon the bridge of his nose. "It is a question of cubic capacity," said he; "a man with so large a brain must have something in it."¹²

"The decline of his fortunes, then?"

"This hat is three years old. These flat brims curled at the edge came in then. It is a hat of the very best quality. Look at the band of ribbed silk, and the excellent lining. If this man could afford to buy so expensive a hat three years ago, and has had no hat since, then he has assuredly gone down in the world."¹³

"Well, that is clear enough, certainly. But how about the foresight and the moral retrogression?"

Sherlock Holmes laughed. "Here is the foresight," said he, putting his finger upon the little disc and loop of the hat-securer. "They are never sold upon hats. If this man ordered one, it is a sign of a certain amount of foresight, since he went out of his way to take this precaution against the wind. But since we see that he has broken the elastic, and has not troubled to replace it, it is obvious that he has less foresight now than formerly, which is a distinct proof of a weakening nature. On the other hand, he has endeavoured to conceal some of these stains upon the felt by daubing them with ink, which is a sign that he has not entirely lost his self-respect."

"Your reasoning is certainly plausible."

"The further points, that he is middle-aged, that his hair is grizzled, that it has been recently cut, and that he uses lime-cream, are all to be gathered from a close examination of the lower part of the lining. The lens discloses a large number of hair ends, clean cut by the scissors of the barber. They all appear to be adhesive, and there is a distinct odour of lime-cream. This dust, you will observe, is not the gritty, grey dust of the street, but the fluffy brown dust of the house, showing that it has been hung up indoors most of the time; while the marks of moisture upon the inside are proof positive that the wearer perspired very freely, and could therefore, hardly be in the best of training."¹⁴

"But his wife—you said that she had ceased to love him."

"This hat has not been brushed for weeks. When I see you, my dear Watson, with a week's accumulation of dust upon your hat, and when your wife allows you to go out in such a state, I shall fear that you also have been unfortunate enough to lose your wife's affection."

"But he might be a bachelor."

"Nay, he was bringing home the goose as a peace-offering to his wife. Remember the card upon the bird's leg."

"You have an answer to everything. But how on earth do you deduce that the

gas is not laid on in the house?”

“One tallow stain, or even two, might come by chance; but when I see no less than five, I think that there can be little doubt that the individual must be brought into frequent contact with burning tallow—walks upstairs at night probably with his hat in one hand and a guttering candle in the other.¹⁵ Anyhow, he never got tallow stains from a gas jet. Are you satisfied?”

“Well, it is very ingenious,” said I, laughing; “but since, as you said just now, there has been no crime committed, and no harm done save the loss of a goose, all this seems to be rather a waste of energy.”

Sherlock Holmes had opened his mouth to reply, when the door flew open, and Peterson the commissionaire rushed into the apartment with flushed cheeks and the face of a man who is dazed with astonishment.

“The goose, Mr. Holmes! The goose, sir!” he gasped.

“Eh? What of it, then? Has it returned to life, and flapped off through the kitchen window?” Holmes twisted himself round upon the sofa to get a fairer view of the man’s excited face.

“See here, sir! See what my wife found in its crop!”¹⁶ He held out his hand, and displayed upon the centre of the palm a brilliantly scintillating blue stone, rather smaller than a bean in size, but of such purity and radiance that it twinkled like an electric point in the dark hollow of his hand.

Sherlock Holmes sat up with a whistle. “By Jove, Peterson!” said he, “this is treasure trove indeed. I suppose you know what you have got?”

“A diamond, sir! A precious stone! It cuts into glass as though it were putty.”¹⁷

“It’s more than a precious stone. It’s *the* precious stone.”

“Not the Countess of Morcar’s blue carbuncle!”¹⁸ I ejaculated.



“See what my wife found in its crop!”

“Precisely so. I ought to know its size and shape, seeing that I have read the advertisement about it in *The Times*¹⁹ every day lately. It is absolutely unique, and its value can only be conjectured, but the reward offered of a thousand pounds is certainly not within a twentieth part of the market price.”²⁰

“A thousand pounds! Great Lord of mercy!” The commissionaire plumped down into a chair and stared from one to the other of us.

“That is the reward, and I have reason to know that there are sentimental considerations in the background which would induce the Countess to part with half of her fortune if she could but recover the gem.”

“It was lost, if I remember aright, at the Hotel Cosmopolitan,”²¹ I remarked.

“Precisely so, on the twenty-second of December, just five days ago. John Horner, a plumber, was accused of having abstracted it from the lady’s jewel case. The evidence against him was so strong that the case has been referred to the Assizes. I have some account of the matter here, I believe.” He rummaged amid his newspapers, glancing over the dates, until at last he smoothed one out, doubled it over, and read the following paragraph:

Hotel Cosmopolitan Jewel Robbery. John Horner, 26, plumber, was brought up upon the charge of having upon the 22nd inst. abstracted from the jewel-case of the Countess of Morcar the valuable gem known as the blue carbuncle. James Ryder, upper-attendant at the hotel, gave his evidence to the effect that he had shown Horner up to the dressing-room of the Countess of Morcar upon the day of the robbery, in order that he might solder the second bar of the grate, which was loose. He had remained with Horner some little time, but had finally been called away. On returning, he found that Horner had disappeared, that the bureau had been forced open, and that the small morocco casket in which, as it afterwards transpired, the Countess was accustomed to keep her jewel was lying empty upon the dressing-table. Ryder instantly gave the alarm, and Horner was arrested the same evening; but the stone could not be found either upon his person or in his rooms. Catherine Cusack, maid to the Countess, deposed to having heard Ryder’s cry of dismay on discovering the robbery, and to having rushed into the room, where she found matters as described by the last witness. Inspector Bradstreet, B division,²² gave evidence as to the arrest of Horner, who struggled frantically, and protested his innocence in the strongest terms. Evidence of a previous conviction for robbery having been given against the prisoner, the magistrate refused to deal summarily with

the offence, but referred it to the Assizes. Horner, who had shown signs of intense emotion during the proceedings, fainted away at the conclusion, and was carried out of court.

“Hum! So much for the police-court,” said Holmes, thoughtfully, tossing aside the paper. “The question for us now to solve is the sequence of events leading from a rifled jewel case at one end to the crop of a goose in Tottenham Court Road at the other. You see, Watson, our little deductions have suddenly assumed a much more important and less innocent aspect. Here is the stone; the stone came from the goose, and the goose came from Mr. Henry Baker, the gentleman with the bad hat and all the other characteristics with which I have bored you. So now we must set ourselves very seriously to finding this gentleman, and ascertaining what part he has played in this little mystery. To do this, we must try the simplest means first, and these lie undoubtedly in an advertisement in all the evening papers. If this fail, I shall have recourse to other methods.”

“What will you say?”

“Give me a pencil, and that slip of paper. Now, then:

Found at the corner of Goodge Street, a goose and a black felt hat. Mr. Henry Baker can have the same by applying at 6:30 this evening at 221B, Baker Street.

That is clear and concise.”

“Very. But will he see it?”

“Well, he is sure to keep an eye on the papers, since, to a poor man, the loss was a heavy one. He was clearly so scared by his mischance in breaking the window, and by the approach of Peterson, that he thought of nothing but flight; but since then he must have bitterly regretted the impulse which caused him to drop his bird. Then, again, the introduction of his name will cause him to see it, for every one who knows him will direct his attention to it. Here you are, Peterson, run down to the advertising agency, and have this put in the evening papers.”

“In which, sir?”

“Oh, in the *Globe*, *Star*, *Pall Mall*, *St. James’s*, *Evening News*, *Standard*, *Echo*, and any others that occur to you.”²³

“Very well, sir. And this stone?”

“Ah, yes, I shall keep the stone. Thank you. And, I say, Peterson, just buy a goose on your way back, and leave it here with me, for we must have one to give

to this gentleman in place of the one which your family is now devouring.”

When the commissionaire had gone, Holmes took up the stone and held it against the light, “It’s a bonny thing,” said he.

“Just see how it glints and sparkles. Of course it is a nucleus and focus of crime. Every good stone is. They are the devil’s pet baits. In the larger and older jewels every facet may stand for a bloody deed. This stone is not yet twenty years old. It was found in the banks of the Amoy River in Southern China²⁴ and is remarkable in having every characteristic of the carbuncle, save that it is blue in shade, instead of ruby red. In spite of its youth, it has already a sinister history. There have been two murders, a vitriol-throwing, a suicide, and several robberies brought about for the sake of this forty-grain weight²⁵ of crystallized charcoal.²⁶ Who would think that so pretty a toy would be a purveyor to the gallows and the prison? I’ll lock it up in my strong-box now and drop a line to the Countess to say that we have it.”

“Do you think that this man Horner is innocent?”

“I cannot tell.”

“Well, then, do you imagine that this other one, Henry Baker, had anything to do with the matter?”

“It is, I think, much more likely that Henry Baker is an absolutely innocent man, who had no idea that the bird which he was carrying was of considerable more value than if it were made of solid gold. That, however, I shall determine by a very simple test, if we have an answer to our advertisement.”

“And you can do nothing until then?”

“Nothing.”

“In that case I shall continue my professional round. But I shall come back in the evening at the hour you have mentioned, for I should like to see the solution of so tangled a business.”

“Very glad to see you. I dine at seven. There is a woodcock, I believe. By the way, in view of recent occurrences, perhaps I ought to ask Mrs. Hudson to examine its crop.”²⁷

I had been delayed at a case, and it was a little after half-past six when I found myself in Baker Street once more. As I approached the house I saw a tall man in a Scotch bonnet,²⁸ with a coat which was buttoned up to his chin, waiting outside in the bright semicircle which was thrown from the fanlight. Just as I arrived, the door was opened, and we were shown up together to Holmes’s room.

“Mr. Henry Baker, I believe,” said he, rising from his armchair, and greeting his visitor with the easy air of geniality which he could so readily assume. “Pray take this chair by the fire, Mr. Baker. It is a cold night, and I observe that your

circulation is more adapted for summer than for winter. Ah, Watson, you have just come at the right time. Is that your hat, Mr. Baker?"

"Yes, sir, that is undoubtedly my hat."

He was a large man, with rounded shoulders, a massive head, and a broad, intelligent face, sloping down to a pointed beard of grizzled brown. A touch of red in nose and cheeks, with a slight tremor of his extended hand, recalled Holmes's surmise as to his habits. His rusty black frock coat was buttoned right up in front, with the collar turned up, and his lank wrists protruded from his sleeves without sign of cuff or shirt. He spoke in a slow staccato fashion, choosing his words with care, and gave the impression generally of a man of learning and letters who had had ill-usage at the hands of fortune.

"We have retained these things for some days," said Holmes, "because we expected to see an advertisement from you giving your address. I am at a loss to know now why you did not advertise."

Our visitor gave a rather shame-faced laugh. "Shillings have not been so plentiful with me as they once were," he remarked. "I had no doubt that the gang of roughs who assaulted me had carried off both my hat and the bird. I did not care to spend more money in a hopeless attempt at recovering them."

"Very naturally. By the way, about the bird, we were compelled to eat it."

"To eat it!" Our visitor half rose from his chair in his excitement.

"Yes, it would have been of no use to any one had we not done so. But I presume that this other goose upon the sideboard, which is about the same weight and perfectly fresh, will answer your purpose equally well?"

"Oh, certainly, certainly," answered Mr. Baker, with a sigh of relief.

"Of course, we still have the feathers, legs, crop, and so on of your own bird, so if you wish—"

The man burst into a hearty laugh. "They might be useful to me as relics of my adventure," said he, "but beyond that I can hardly see what use the *dissecta membra*²⁹ of my late acquaintance are going to be to me. No, sir, I think that, with your permission, I will confine my attentions to the excellent bird which I perceive upon the sideboard."

Sherlock Holmes glanced sharply across at me with a slight shrug of his shoulders.

"There is your hat, then, and there your bird," said he. "By the way, would it bore you to tell me where you got the other one from? I am somewhat of a fowl fancier, and I have seldom seen a better-grown goose."

"Certainly, sir," said Baker, who had risen and tucked his newly-gained property under his arm. "There are a few of us who frequent the Alpha Inn, near the Museum—we are to be found in the Museum itself during the day, you

understand.³⁰ This year our good host, Windigate by name, instituted a goose club, by which, on consideration of some few pence every week, we were each to receive a bird at Christmas. My pence were duly paid, and the rest is familiar to you. I am much indebted to you, sir, for a Scotch bonnet is fitted neither to my years nor my gravity.” With a comical pomposity of manner he bowed solemnly to both of us, and strode off upon his way.



The British Museum: The Reading Room.

The Queen's London (1897) “So much for Mr. Henry Baker,” said Holmes, when he had closed the door behind him.

“It is quite certain that he knows nothing whatever about the matter. Are you hungry, Watson?”

“Not particularly.”

“Then I suggest that we turn our dinner into a supper, and follow up this clue while it is still hot.”

“By all means.”

It was a bitter night, so we drew on our ulsters and wrapped cravats about our throats. Outside, the stars were shining coldly in a cloudless sky, and the breath of the passers-by blew out into smoke like so many pistol shots. Our footfalls rang out crisply and loudly as we swung through the Doctors' quarter, Wimpole Street,³¹ Harley Street, and so through Wigmore Street³² into Oxford Street. In a quarter of an hour we were in Bloomsbury³³ at the “Alpha Inn,”³⁴ which is a small public-house at the corner of one of the streets which runs down into Holborn.³⁵ Holmes pushed open the door of the private bar, and ordered two glasses of beer from the ruddy-faced, white-aproned landlord.



“He bowed solemnly to both of us.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Your beer should be excellent if it is as good as your geese,” said he.

“My geese!” the man seemed surprised.

“Yes. I was speaking only half an hour ago to Mr. Henry Baker, who was a member of your goose-club.”

“Ah! yes, I see. But you see, sir, them’s not *our* geese.”

“Indeed! Whose, then?”

“Well, I got the two dozen from a salesman in Covent Garden.”³⁶

“Indeed! I know some of them. Which was it?”

“Breckinridge is his name.”



Our footfalls rang out crisply.

Staff artists “Cargs” and E. S. Morris,
Seattle Post-Intelligencer, November 19, 1911

“Ah! I don’t know him. Well, here’s your good health, landlord, and prosperity to your house. Good-night.



Holborn.

Victorian and Edwardian London

“Now for Mr. Breckinridge,” he continued, buttoning up his coat, as we came out into the frosty air. “Remember, Watson, that though we have so homely a thing as a goose at one end of this chain, we have at the other a man who will certainly get seven years’ penal servitude,³⁷ unless we can establish his innocence. It is possible that our inquiry may but confirm his guilt; but, in any

case, we have a line of investigation which has been missed by the police, and which a singular chance has placed in our hands. Let us follow it out to the bitter end. Faces to the south, then, and quick march!”

We passed across Holborn, down Endell Street, and so through a zigzag of slums to Covent Garden Market. One of the largest stalls bore the name of Breckinridge upon it, and the proprietor, a horsy-looking³⁸ man, with a sharp face and trim side-whiskers was helping a boy to put up the shutters.

“Good evening. It’s a cold night,” said Holmes.

The salesman nodded, and shot a questioning glance at my companion.

“Sold out of geese, I see,” continued Holmes, pointing at the bare slabs of marble.



Covent Garden Market.

The Queen’s London (1897) “Let you have five hundred to-morrow morning.”

“That’s no good.”

“Well, there are some on the stall with the gas flare.”

“Ah, but I was recommended to you.”

“Who by?”

“The landlord of the ‘Alpha.’ ”

“Oh, yes; I sent him a couple of dozen.”



Leadenhall Market.

The Queen's London (1897) "Fine birds they were, too. Now where did you get them from?"

To my surprise the question provoked a burst of anger from the salesman.

"Now, then, mister," said he, with his head cocked and his arms akimbo, "what are you driving at? Let's have it straight, now."

"It is straight enough. I should like to know who sold you the geese which you supplied to the 'Alpha.' "

"Well, then, I shan't tell you. So now!"

"Oh, it is a matter of no importance; but I don't know why you should be so warm over such a trifle."

"Warm! You'd be as warm, maybe, if you were as pestered as I am. When I pay good money for a good article there should be an end of the business; but it's 'Where are the geese?' and 'Who did you sell the geese to?' and 'What will you take for the geese?' One would think they were the only geese in the world, to hear the fuss that is made over them."

"Well, I have no connection with any other people who have been making inquiries," said Holmes carelessly. "If you won't tell us the bet is off, that is all. But I'm always ready to back my opinion on a matter of fowls, and I have a fiver on it that the bird I ate is country bred."

"Well, then, you've lost your fiver, for it's town bred," snapped the salesman.

"It's nothing of the kind."

"I say it is."

"I don't believe it."

"D'you think you know more about fowls than I, who have handled them ever since I was a nipper? I tell you, all those birds that went to the Alpha were town bred."

"You'll never persuade me to believe that."

"Will you bet, then?"

"It's merely taking your money, for I know that I am right. But I'll have a sovereign³⁹ on with you, just to teach you not to be obstinate."

The salesman chuckled grimly. "Bring me the books, Bill," said he.

"The small boy brought round a small thin volume and a great greasy-backed one, laying them out together beneath the hanging lamp.

"Now then, Mr. Cocksure," said the salesman, "I thought that I was out of geese, but before I finish you'll find that there is still one left in my shop. You see this little book?"

"Well?"

“That’s the list of the folk from whom I buy. D’you see? Well, then, here on this page are the country folk, and the numbers after their names are where their accounts are in the big ledger. Now, then! You see this other page in red ink? Well, that is a list of my town suppliers. Now, look at that third name. Just read it out to me.”

“Mrs. Oakshott, 117, Brixton Road—249,” read Holmes.⁴⁰

“Quite so. Now turn that up in the ledger.”

Holmes turned to the page indicated. “Here you are, ‘Mrs. Oakshott, 117, Brixton Road, egg and poultry supplier.’ ”

“Now, then, what’s the last entry?”

“ ‘December 22. Twenty-four geese at 7s. 6d.’ ”

“Quite so. There you are. And underneath?”

“ ‘Sold to Mr. Windigate of the ‘Alpha,’ at 12s.’ ”

“What have you to say now?”

Sherlock Holmes looked deeply chagrined. He drew a sovereign from his pocket and threw it down upon the slab, turning away with the air of a man whose disgust is too deep for words. A few yards off he stopped under a lamp-post, and laughed in the hearty, noiseless fashion which was peculiar to him.



“Just read it out to me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“When you see a man with whiskers of that cut and the ‘Pink ‘un’⁴¹ protruding out of his pocket, you can always draw him by a bet,” said he. “I daresay that if I had put a hundred pounds down in front of him that man would not have given me such complete information as was drawn from him by the idea that he was doing me on a wager. Well, Watson, we are, I fancy, nearing the end of our quest, and the only point which remains to be determined is whether we should go on to this Mrs. Oakshott to-night, or whether we should reserve it

for to-morrow. It is clear from what that surly fellow said that there are others besides ourselves who are anxious about the matter, and I should—”

His remarks were suddenly cut short by a loud hubbub which broke out from the stall which we had just left.

Turning round we saw a little rat-faced fellow standing in the centre of the circle of yellow light which was thrown by the swinging lamp, while Breckinridge the salesman, framed in the door of his stall, was shaking his fists fiercely at the cringing figure. “I’ve had enough of you and your geese,” he shouted. “I wish you were all at the devil together. If you come pestering me any more with your silly talk I’ll set the dog at you. You bring Mrs. Oakshott here and I’ll answer her, but what have you to do with it? Did I buy the geese off you?”

“No; but one of them was mine all the same,” whined the little man.

“Well then, ask Mrs. Oakshott for it.”

“She told me to ask you.”

“Well, you can ask the King of Proosia,⁴² for all I care. I’ve had enough of it. Get out of this!” He rushed fiercely forward, and the inquirer flitted away into the darkness.

“Ha! this may save us a visit to Brixton Road,” whispered Holmes, “Come with me, and we will see what is to be made of this fellow.” Striding through the scattered knots of people who lounged round the flaring stalls, my companion speedily overtook the little man and touched him upon the shoulder. He sprang round, and I could see in the gaslight that every vestige of colour had been driven from his face.

“Who are you, then? What do you want?” he asked in a quavering voice.

“You will excuse me,” said Holmes, blandly, “but I could not help overhearing the questions which you put to the salesman just now. I think that I could be of assistance to you.”

“You? Who are you? How could you know anything of the matter?”

“My name is Sherlock Holmes. It is my business to know what other people don’t know.”

“But you can know nothing of this?”

“Excuse me, I know everything of it. You are endeavouring to trace some geese which were sold by Mrs. Oakshott, of Brixton Road, to a salesman named Breckinridge, by him in turn to Mr. Windigate, of the Alpha, and by him to his club, of which Mr. Henry Baker is a member.”



“You are the very man.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Oh, sir, you are the very man whom I have longed to meet,” cried the little fellow with outstretched hands and quivering fingers. “I can hardly explain to you how interested I am in this matter.”

Sherlock Holmes hailed a four-wheeler which was passing. “In that case we had better discuss it in a cosy room rather than in this wind-swept marketplace,” said he. “But pray tell me, before we go farther, who it is that I have the pleasure of assisting.”

The man hesitated for an instant. “My name is John Robinson,” he answered with a sidelong glance.

“No, no; the real name,” said Holmes, sweetly. “It is always awkward doing business with an *alias*.”

A flush sprang to the white cheeks of the stranger. “Well, then,” said he, “my real name is James Ryder.”

“Precisely so. Head attendant at the Hotel Cosmopolitan. Pray step into the cab, and I shall soon be able to tell you everything which you would wish to know.”

The little man stood glancing from one to the other of us with half-frightened, half-hopeful eyes, as one who is not sure whether he is on the verge of a windfall or of a catastrophe. Then he stepped into the cab, and in half an hour we were back in the sitting-room at Baker Street. Nothing had been said during our drive, but the high, thin breathing of our new companion, and the claspings and unclaspings of his hands, spoke of the nervous tension within him.

“Here we are!” said Holmes, cheerily, as we filed into the room. “The fire looks very seasonable in this weather. You look cold, Mr. Ryder. Pray take the basketchair. I will just put on my slippers before we settle this little matter of yours. Now, then! You want to know what became of those geese?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Or rather, I fancy, of that goose. It was one bird, I imagine, in which you were interested—white, with a black bar across the tail.”

Ryder quivered with emotion. “Oh, sir,” he cried, “can you tell me where it went to?”

“It came here.”

“Here?”

“Yes, and a most remarkable bird it proved. I don’t wonder that you should take an interest in it. It laid an egg after it was dead—the bonniest, brightest little blue egg that ever was seen. I have it here in my museum.”

Our visitor staggered to his feet, and clutched the mantelpiece with his right hand. Holmes unlocked his strong-box and held up the blue carbuncle, which shone out like a star, with a cold, brilliant, many-pointed radiance. Ryder stood glaring with a drawn face, uncertain whether to claim or to disown it.

“The game’s up, Ryder,” said Holmes, quietly. “Hold up, man, or you’ll be into the fire! Give him an arm back into his chair, Watson. He’s not got blood enough to go in for felony with impunity. Give him a dash of brandy. So! Now he looks a little more human. What a shrimp it is, to be sure!”

For a moment he had staggered and nearly fallen, but the brandy brought a tinge of colour into his cheeks, and he sat staring with frightened eyes at his accuser.

“I have almost every link in my hands, and all the proofs which I could possibly need, so there is little which you need tell me. Still that little may as well be cleared up to make the case complete. You had heard, Ryder, of this blue stone of the Countess of Morcar’s?”

“It was Catherine Cusack who told me of it,” said he, in a crackling voice.

“I see. Her ladyship’s waiting-maid. Well, the temptation of sudden wealth so easily acquired was too much for you, as it has been for better men before you; but you were not very scrupulous in the means you used. It seems to me, Ryder, that there is the making of a very pretty villain in you. You knew that this man Horner, the plumber, had been concerned in some such matter before, and that suspicion would rest the more readily upon him. What did you do, then? You made some small job in my lady’s room—you and your confederate Cusack—and you managed that he should be the man sent for. Then, when he had left, you rifled the jewel case, raised the alarm, and had this unfortunate man arrested.

You then—”

Ryder threw himself down suddenly upon the rug, and clutched at my companion’s knees. “For God’s sake, have mercy!” he shrieked. “Think of my father! of my mother! It would break their hearts. I never went wrong before! I never will again. I swear it. I’ll swear it on a Bible. Oh, don’t bring it into court! For Christ’s sake, don’t!”

“Get back into your chair!” said Holmes, sternly. “It is very well to cringe and crawl now, but you thought little enough of this poor Horner in the dock for a crime of which he knew nothing.”



“ ‘Have mercy,’ he shrieked.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I will fly, Mr. Holmes. I will leave the country, sir. Then the charge against him will break down.”

“Hum! We will talk about that. And now let us hear a true account of the next act. How came the stone into the goose, and how came the goose into the open market? Tell us the truth, for there lies your only hope of safety.”

Ryder passed his tongue over his parched lips. “I will tell you just as it happened, sir,” said he. “When Horner had been arrested, it seemed to me that it would be best for me to get away with the stone at once, for I did not know at what moment the police might not take it into their heads to search me and my room. There was no place about the hotel where it would be safe. I went out, as if on some commission, and I made for my sister’s house. She had married a man named Oakshott, and lived in Brixton Road, where she fattened fowls for

the market. All the way there every man I met seemed to me to be a policeman or detective, and, for all that it was a cold night, the sweat was pouring down my face before I came to the Brixton Road. My sister asked me what was the matter, and why I was so pale; but I told her that I had been upset by the jewel robbery at the hotel. Then I went into the back yard, and smoked a pipe, and wondered what it would be best to do.

“I had a friend once called Maudsley, who went to the bad, and has just been serving his time in Pentonville.⁴³ One day he had met me, and fell into talk about the ways of thieves and how they could get rid of what they stole. I knew that he would be true to me, for I knew one or two things about him, so I made up my mind to go right on to Kilburn, where he lived, and take him into my confidence. He would show me how to turn the stone into money. But how to get to him in safety? I thought of the agonies I had gone through in coming from the hotel. I might at any moment be seized and searched, and there would be the stone in my waistcoat pocket. I was leaning against the wall at the time, and looking at the geese which were waddling about round my feet, and suddenly an idea came into my head which showed me how I could beat the best detective that ever lived.

“My sister had told me some weeks before that I might have the pick of her geese for a Christmas present, and I knew that she was always as good as her word. I would take my goose now, and in it I would carry my stone to Kilburn.⁴⁴ There was a little shed in the yard, and behind this I drove one of the birds, a fine big one, white with a barred tail. I caught it, and, prising its bill open, I thrust the stone down its throat as far as my finger could reach. The bird gave a gulp, and I felt the stone pass along its gullet and down into its crop. But the creature flapped and struggled, and out came my sister to know what was the matter. As I turned to speak to her the brute broke loose, and fluttered off among the others.

“ ‘Whatever were you doing with that bird, Jem?’ says she.

“ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘you said you’d give me one for Christmas, and I was feeling which was the fattest.’

“ ‘Oh,’ says she, ‘we’ve set yours aside for you. Jem’s bird, we call it. It’s the big white one over yonder. There’s twenty-six of them, which makes one for you, an one for us, and two dozen for the market.’



The bird gave a gulp.

Dan Smith,

Sunday *Portland Oregonian*, August 20, 1905

“ ‘Thank you, Maggie,’ says I; ‘but if it is all the same to you I’d rather have that one I was handling just now.’

“ ‘The other is a good three pound heavier,’ she said, ‘and we fattened it expressly for you.’

“ ‘Never mind. I’ll have the other, and I’ll take it now,’ said I.

“ ‘Oh, just as you like,’ said she, a little huffed. ‘Which is it you want, then?’

“ ‘That white one with the barred tail, right in the middle of the flock.’

“ ‘Oh, very well. Kill it and take it with you.’

“Well, I did what she said, Mr. Holmes, and I carried the bird all the way to Kilburn. I told my pal what I had done, for he was a man that it was easy to tell a thing like that to. He laughed until he choked, and we got a knife and opened the goose. My heart turned to water, for there was no sign of the stone, and knew that some terrible mistake had occurred, I left the bird, rushed back to my sister’s, and hurried into the back yard. There was not a bird to be seen there.

“ ‘Where are they all, Maggie?’ I cried.

“ ‘Gone to the dealer’s.’

“ ‘Which dealer’s?’

“ ‘Breckinridge, of Covent Garden.’

“ ‘But was there another with a barred tail?’ I asked, ‘the same as the one I chose?’

“ ‘Yes, Jem, there were two barred-tailed ones, and I could never tell them apart.’

“Well, then, of course, I saw it all, and I ran off as hard as my feet would carry me to this man Breckinridge; but he had sold the lot at once, and not one word would he tell me as to where they had gone. You heard him yourselves to-night. Well, he has always answered me like that. My sister thinks that I am going mad. Sometimes I think that I am myself. And now—and now I am myself a branded thief, without ever having touched the wealth for which I sold my character. God help me! God help me!” He burst into convulsive sobbing, with his face buried in his hands.

There was a long silence, broken only by his heavy breathing, and by the measured tapping of Sherlock Holmes’s finger-tips upon the edge of the table. Then my friend rose, and threw open the door.



“He burst into convulsive sobbing.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Get out!” said he.

“What, sir! Oh, Heaven bless you!”

“No more words. Get out!”

And no more words were needed. There was a rush, a clatter upon the stairs, the bang of a door, and the crisp rattle of running footfalls from the street.

“After all, Watson,” said Holmes, reaching up his hand for his clay pipe, “I am not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies. If Horner were in danger it would be another thing, but this fellow will not appear against him, and the case must collapse. I suppose that I am commuting a felony,⁴⁵ but it is just possible that I am saving a soul. This fellow will not go wrong again. He is too terribly frightened. Send him to gaol now, and you make him a gaol-bird for life.⁴⁶ Besides, it is the season of forgiveness. Chance has put in our way a most singular and whimsical problem, and its solution is its own reward.⁴⁷ If you will have the goodness to touch the bell, Doctor, we will begin another investigation,

in which also a bird will be the chief feature.” ■

A WINTER'S CROP

“A GOOSE has no crop,” Miss Mildred Sammons states in a letter to the *Chicago Tribune* of December 26, 1946. Dr. Jay Finley Christ, to whom her note was sent for comment, replies: “Mildred Sammons’ announcement in the Line of Dec. 26 that ‘a goose has no crop’ produced a considerable shock among Sherlock Holmes experts. Consultation of one ornithologist, two zoologists, and three poultry dressers, together with ocular demonstration, made it abundantly clear that the lady is correct. Holmes made an alimentary error, which the Baker Street Irregulars should have noted long ago.”

S. Tupper Bigelow, in “The Blue Enigma,” seeks to defend Holmes’s knowledge of geese. He consulted the Encyclopaedia Britannica Library Research Service: “[W]e contacted members of the Department of Ornithology at the Natural History Museum of Chicago. I am quoting below their comments to this office: ‘We do not know of a goose that has a crop, properly speaking. Many geese have a gullet that distends, but it is not a dilation of the oesophagus before its entrance into the thorax. In other words, it is not a crop.’ ”

Dr. Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler then enters the fray, taking Holmes’s side in the matter. He quoted experts in the poultry department of the Agricultural School of the University of New Hampshire, who state “[G]eese *have* crops. The crop is simply not as visible as on a turkey, but apparently all barnyard fowl have them.”

The Marquis of Donegall, then head of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and editor of the *Sherlock Holmes Journal*, asked two more sources, the Minister of Agriculture and Fish, and Mr. Edward Moulton, a practical farmer. The Ministry wrote:

The view of the Ministry’s Chief Poultry Adviser, Dr. Rupert Coles, M.Sc. (Agric.), M.Sc. (Econ.), B.A., Ph.D., D. Sc. (Agric.), D.V.Sc., is: “The American Professor [Christ] is quite correct in stating that ‘a goose has no crop.’ However, as a Sherlock Holmes fan I am glad to say that this fact does not necessarily invalidate the theory in the story of ‘The Blue Carbuncle.’ ”

Coles made his case by pointing out that chickens and turkeys have a *true* crop or storage pouch at the lower end of the gullet; while geese and ducks have

no such pouch, the gullet can be dilated as much as 2-½ inches and provide storage capacity when the gizzard is full. Assuming that the Blue Carbuncle was three-quarters of an inch or so in diameter, Coles continued, and the goose had been fully fed before Ryder acquired it, then the jewel could indeed have been stored in the gullet, even if Holmes was technically in error in describing the goose as having a crop.

Edward Moulton, the farmer, replied that he believed that a goose has a crop, albeit an elongated one (unlike the round crop of a hen). This belief, he asserted,

is supported by my veterinary surgeon, fish and game dealer, a natural science graduate and a butcher. On the other hand my own butcher, another vet., and Mrs. Stanton, in the village, do not think the animal is thus endowed, or, and this is significant, they do not remember one. One should be aware too of the complication caused by the use of colloquial, non specific terms during Trans-Atlantic research.

“So I think,” concludes the Marquis, “we can take it that crop, gullet, dilation, proventriculus, or whatever, Mr. Henry Baker’s goose—undoubtedly *over-fed* at that moment—experienced no difficulty or discomfort in concealing the Countess of Morcar’s blue carbuncle for the relevant period of time. Q.E.D.”

In “The Matter Is a Perfectly Trivial One . . . ,” Peter Blau submits, however, that “the matter of geese’s crops is really beside the point . . . if we assume that the Blue Carbuncle was not found in the goose’s crop at all, and that the long debate has actually centred on a printer’s error, which substituted an *o* for Watson’s *a*.”

[1](#) “The Blue Carbuncle” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in January 1892 and in the New York *Strand Magazine* in February 1892. It also appeared in January 1892 in American newspapers, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, where it ran under the title “The Christmas Goose that Swallowed a Diamond.” See “A Scandal in Bohemia,” note 1.

[2](#) What we think of as Christmas was actually invented, for the most part, in the Victorian era. Prior to the 1800s, Christmas, which had evolved from winter solstice festivals, had often been an occasion of raucous, drunken celebration. The publication of Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, with its message of goodwill and charity, helped to transform the holiday into an appreciation of family and community. The words to many Christmas carols were penned in the 1800s, both in England and the United States, and the Christmas tree was popularised by Prince Albert, who brought the practice over from his native Germany in the 1840s. In addition, the tradition of exchanging Christmas cards originated during this era—the first commercial Christmas card is said to have been printed in 1843—and, aided by the 1860 reduction of postage to a half-penny for unsealed envelopes and formal calls such as Watson’s, attained widespread popularity by the 1870s and 1880s.

3 Fletcher Pratt computes that by 1914, when the record of Holmes's detective activities ceases, no crimes had taken place in one quarter of the total published cases. In nine of these cases, there was no legal crime. In six no crime took place because Holmes intervened in time to prevent its occurrence.

4 Watson is not speaking here of crimes committed by Holmes or himself, such as throwing a smoke-bomb into a house and creating a near-riot ("A Scandal in Bohemia") or washing a man's face against his will ("The Man with the Twisted Lip").

5 A member of the Corps of Commissionaires, an association of pensioned former soldiers, formed in London in 1859 by a retired cavalry officer, determined to better the lot of veterans, who were often down on their luck. Commissionaires were uniformed and acted as porters, messengers, attendants, and the like.

6 A hard low-crowned felt hat; a bowler; a derby. It is commonly thought that the first bowler hat was designed for a Mr. William Coke (that is, "Billy Coke") by James and George Lock and produced by their supplier, William Bowler. Various witnesses to the Jack the Ripper murders, which occurred in 1888, reported seeing a gentleman wearing a felt hat or billycock. The hat was very popular, and no one has yet suggested that Henry Baker was involved in the brutal slayings.

7 If Henry Baker was proceeding northward along the west side of Tottenham Court Road and the roughs came out of Goodge Street on the south side, or if Baker was travelling southward on the west side and the roughs were on the north side of Goodge Street, neither party would see the other until they ran into each other on the corner. It being "the season of forgiveness," one likes to think that the collision was accidental.

8 Most families in the 1800s celebrated Christmas with a dinner of roast goose, although the end of the century saw an increasing preference for turkey (a trend imported from the United States). Accompanying the bird were often—among other treats—a plum pudding (perhaps containing coins and trinkets) and a mincemeat pie. *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861) contains several excellent recipes for these ornaments of the holiday table.

9 S. Tupper Bigelow points out that it is just as logical to assume that Mrs. Henry Baker and Henry Baker were mother and son or daughter-in-law and father as husband and wife. The bird might have been intended for Mrs. Henry Baker, but "H.B." could stand for anything. See "The Noble Bachelor" and "Black Peter" for other coincidences of initials.

10 In fact, the London Post Office Directory of 1890 listed only seven Henry Bakers; only 139 Bakers were listed altogether in London.

11 A popular hair cream, scented with lime.

12 The "big head, big brain; big brain, great mind" principle, a subset of the Victorian science of phrenology, had a great many Victorian followers. It was first espoused by the Viennese physician Franz Joseph Gall, who laid out his theory in an October 1, 1798, letter to Joseph von Retzer, explaining—his tongue, we might assume, at least partly in cheek—"A man like you possesses more than double the quantity of brain in a stupid bigot; and at least one-sixth more than the wisest or the most sagacious elephant." The thinking went that the larger the skull, the larger the brain beneath it, and the greater that brain's power in any number of faculties. (For a more detailed discussion of phrenology, see "The Final Problem," note 14.) Without weighing in on the question of intelligence, Dr. Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler concurs that the hat wearer probably did have a good-sized brain rather than any sort of medical abnormality. "Judging size of brain from size of hat is quite reliable," Zeisler agrees, "for large skull without large brain will be unusual, in such things as acromegaly and hydrocephalus; the latter could have been excluded, and the former was practically unknown to any one before 1886, and was very rare then." Watson similarly remarks upon Inspector MacDonald's "great cranium" in *The Valley of Fear*, and Moriarty expresses surprise at Holmes's lack of "frontal development" in "The Final Problem."

13 It is a bit rash to assume, of course, that Baker could not still afford to buy an expensive hat or that it was the only one he had. As S. Tupper Bigelow points out, Baker might well have had a battery of expensive hats at home and chosen to wear the billycock on that particular evening.

14 “This, of course, is ‘ineffable twaddle’ and ‘unmitigated bleat’ at their best,” scoffs Bigelow. “There cannot be a three-year-old hat in the world, now or then, whether worn by the finest Olympic athlete or a skid-row bum, that does not have evidence of perspiration on its inside or on its inner band. Everybody perspires in given circumstances.”

15 There are numerous improbabilities in this line of reasoning, helpfully deconstructed by J. B. Mackenzie in 1902. First, it would seem unnecessary for this individual to bring his hat upstairs at all, let alone busy his spare hand with it instead of simply putting it on his head. Mackenzie further remarks that grease from a candle in one hand would hardly have an easy transfer to a hat carried in the other.

16 See “A Winter’s Crop,” page 224, for a consideration of whether a goose actually has a crop (a part of a bird’s gullet that may be used as a pouch, for storage or digestion).

17 This is a mythical test. Diamonds, rubies, sapphires, garnets, aquamarines, beryls, and so forth are all harder than glass and will cut it. Even tempered glass will cut glass.

18 A carbuncle is a garnet, typically cut *en cabochon* (with a domed top). Garnets come in many colours: white, yellow, green, red, orange, brown, purple, and black; no “Blue Carbuncle” garnet has ever been reported.

19 *The Times* had been in existence for over a century at this point, having been founded on January 1, 1785, as the *Daily Universal Register* (its name was changed to *The Times* in 1788). Its circulation in 1856 was 51,658 copies, nearly seven times that of its nearest competitor.

20 Richard Lancelyn Green remarks, “[£20,000] would be an improbable price for a stone of 12 carats (even if it were unique). The Russian or Orloff Diamond of 194 carats in the Russian Imperial Sceptre was valued in 1891 at £90,000, and the Hope Diamond (which had cost £18,000) was valued at £30,000. The moonstone, in the Wilkie Collins novel of the same name (1868), was said to be worth £20,000.”

21 Probably Claridge’s, a hotel favoured by foreign royalty, nobility, and other distinguished guests seeking a certain degree of anonymity. (Queen Victoria visited Empress Eugénie of France there in 1860). The opulent Savoy opened in August 1889, but it is unlikely that by December 1889, the generally accepted date of “The Blue Carbuncle,” a bedroom grate would need repair.

22 The Metropolitan Police District consisted of twenty-two divisions (now sixty-three divisions). “B” Division at the time covered Knightsbridge, Chelsea, and Fulham, *not* the district in which any of the events in “The Blue Carbuncle” occurred.

23 In 1887, there were six evening papers, excluding the purely commercial *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*. These were the *Globe*, dating from 1803; *Evening Standard*, 1827; *St. James’s Gazette*, 1880; *Evening News*, 1881; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1865; and *The Echo*, 1868. *The Star* was established in 1888. According to Peter Calamai, in “Headlines and Deadlines: How Sherlock Holmes Used the Press,” the only omitted general-interest afternoon daily was the *Westminster Gazette*. However, there were also eleven morning papers.

24 Amoy (also known as Xiamen), a city in southern China, was captured by the British in the first Opium War and opened up to trade as a “treaty port” as a condition of the 1842 Treaty of Nanjing. The Jiu-lung River flows into the city of Amoy; there is no river known as the “Amoy River.”

25 Gems were customarily weighed in carats, the precise weight of which varied from country to country. An English carat of 1889 was 3.163 troy grains, which would make the weight of the blue carbuncle 12.62 English carats. Such a gem would not be “rather smaller than a bean in size.” For comparison, the Hope Diamond weighs 177 grains, roughly 45 carats.

26 Only diamonds are crystallised charcoal. A garnet is a combination of the elements of magnesium, calcium, manganese or ferrous iron, together with any of the elements of aluminum, ferric iron, or chromium. So what was the “blue carbuncle”? Doyle W. Beckmeyer suggests that it was a star sapphire; several other scholars propose a blue diamond. D. A. Redmond, in “Some Chemical Problems in the Canon,” makes the interesting observation that “carbonado” is one name for a massive black diamond, an impure, dark-coloured diamond used for drilling. Thus the “blue carbonado” might be a reference to the rare occurrence of a gem discovered in a mass of carbonado, with the gem’s extensive travel corrupting the term to the “blue carbuncle.”

27 The gamebird known as the woodcock has no crop. See “A Winter’s Crop,” page 224.

28 A tam-o’-shanter; a soft woollen brimless hat with a flat circular crown. The fiery tropical pepper “Scotch bonnet” is so named for the resemblance its fruit bears to this hat.

29 An adaptation of a phrase in one of Horace’s Satires (Satires I, 4, line 62): “*Invenias etiam disjecti membra poetae*” (“You would still find the limbs of the dismembered poet”).

30 Although London boasted other museums in 1889 (for example, the splendid South Kensington Museum held most of the art and artifacts gathered for the great Exhibition of 1851), the Museum was the *British Museum*, founded in 1753 and located on Great Russell Street, a few blocks from where the goose was found. Speculation as to Baker’s occupation has led D. Martin Dakin to suggest that he was a “down-and-out” professor studying archaeology, or, more likely, a hack writer collecting material for another man’s work. Dean and Shirley Dickensheets argue that Baker was a uniformed guard or attendant at the British Museum.

31 Probably best known for its association with poets Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning, whose passionate, clandestine correspondence—574 letters in twenty months—took place while the invalid Barrett was living with her possessive father at 50 Wimpole Street in the early 1840s. The story of the two poets, who married and moved to Italy in 1846, was immortalised in the 1930 play *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* by Rudolf Besier, made into a movie by director Sidney Franklin in 1934 (and remade by him in 1957, in a version including Sir John Gielgud as Mr. Barrett—Gielgud played Sherlock Holmes in BBC Light Programme radio broadcasts in the 1950s). It has also been produced twice for television, once starring John Neville as Robert Browning (1961)—Neville went on to play Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Terror*, 1965—and once featuring Jeremy Brett in the same rôle (1982). (Brett starred as Holmes in the Granada television series from 1984 to 1994.) The last version also included British actor Nigel Stock as a minor character—Stock played Dr. Watson in a short-lived 1964 BBC television series.

In late 1890, Arthur Conan Doyle established a consulting room in Upper Wimpole Street.

32 Wigmore Street derives its name from Edward Harley, Earl of Oxford and Mortimer and Baron Harley of Wigmore Castle. In *The Sign of Four*, Watson patronised the Wigmore Street Post Office, a visit deduced by Holmes from the distinct mould on Watson’s instep.

33 A residential and academic district of Camden borough, Bloomsbury in the late nineteenth century was the site of the British Museum, the College of Preceptors, University College, and the University College Hospital. William Makepeace Thackeray’s Sedley family (*Vanity Fair*, 1847) lived there. Culturally, the area is perhaps best known for the “Bloomsbury group,” a group of English intellectuals (including Lytton Strachey, John Maynard Keynes, Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, and, variously, Bertrand Russell,

Aldous Huxley, and E. M. Forster) who met frequently for drinks and conversation between 1907 and 1930 at the homes of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell. Members of the group, most of them educated at Cambridge, were renowned for casting aside the mores of Victorian society and publicly embracing unconventionality, whether in intellectual thought, artistic expression, or sexual freedom. Beyond their immense literary and artistic achievements, the members' famously libertine romantic entanglements—artist Duncan Grant's fathering a child by Vanessa Bell, for example, whose brother, Adrian, was Grant's former lover; or the platonic yet devoted "marriage" of homosexual biographer Strachey and heterosexual artist Dora Carrington—have also attracted attention in recent years.

Holmes and the Bloomsbury group were approximate contemporaries, but in outlook they were the products of vastly different eras. While Holmes may have been characterised by Watson as "Bohemian," one cannot imagine Holmes, whose sexuality is virtually unmentioned in the Canon (with the extremely limited exception of his feelings about "*the woman*," mentioned in "A Scandal in Bohemia"), being comfortable in the company of this group's members, rushing as they were headlong toward modernism. Indeed, notwithstanding the detective's description of a staid Watson in "His Last Bow," it is Holmes, not Watson, who is truly the "one fixed point in a changing age."

34 Christopher Morley expresses the view that "the Alpha Inn" was the Museum Tavern. The other candidate is the "Plough" at the corner of Museum and Little Russell Streets, put forward on the tenuous grounds that Alpha is the largest star in the constellation of the Plough. Regardless of the choice, it is pleasant to think of Sherlock Holmes visiting these pubs in his pre-detective years. With his rooms in Montague Street (mentioned in "The Musgrave Ritual"), the Museum Tavern was less than two blocks away from Holmes's first London lodgings.

David L. Hammer suggests, in *For the Sake of the Game*, that Watson concealed the name of the pub, which surely would not have suffered from publicity, out of sheer habit.

British ale predates the Roman conquest of England, and British ale houses (pubs) were conducting their businesses before the Norman conquest. A neologism of the Victorian age, the "pub" (short for "public house"), an outgrowth of the coach-houses and taverns and inns necessitated by horse-powered travel, with its frequent stops, flourished even after the advent of the railways. In 1869, there were 118,602 licensed premises (almost twice as many as today).

35 High Holborn is the eastern extension of New Oxford Street. Milton once lived here, and condemned criminals were conducted along this route to hangings at Tyburn.

36 Windigate undoubtedly refers to Covent Garden Market. But according to *Baedeker*, Covent Garden Market was at the time the main vegetable, fruit, and flower market in London, and it is unlikely that geese were sold there. The name is a corruption of "convent garden," for produce was once grown here for the monks of Westminster Abbey; the site also housed the Royal Opera Theatre, which first opened in 1732 (as the Theatre Royal) and was burned to the ground twice in the 1800s. The entire market was relocated in 1974, but conservationists battled to preserve the buildings and won. They remain, adapted to other uses, and Covent Garden is now a popular shopping and entertainment precinct.

Baedeker indicates that there were two markets specialising in poultry, the "Market for Pork, Poultry and Provisions," at Smithfield, and the Leadenhall Market, on Leadenhall Street, "where poultry and game have been sold for at least 400 years."

37 Penal servitude had three stages: (1) solitary confinement in a "close" prison, limited to nine months but with the prisoner engaged in some industrial employment; (2) a period of labour at a "public works" prison, and finally (3) conditional release for the unexpired portion of the sentence upon licence or ticket-of-leave if the prisoner earned "marks" of credit for remission of up to one-quarter of his or her sentence.

38 This seems to be in the sense of having to do with horse racing, that is, characteristic of the manners, dress, or tastes of horsemen or the habitués of racetracks (rather than a suggestion that Breckinridge

resembled a horse), as indicated by Holmes's later observation to Watson about Breckinridge's sideburns and his copy of the "Pink 'un," lending him the air of a gambling man.

[39](#) D. Martin Dakin observes that Holmes, who had no client to cover his expenses, must have been financially solvent enough at this time to spend a sovereign (a pound, or almost twice Watson's daily wound pension of 11s. 6d., mentioned in *A Study in Scarlet*) to get the information he wanted from Mr. Breckinridge. Of course, he may have planned to claim the £1,000 offered by the countess for the recovery of the stone.

[40](#) No. 117 stood on a corner site, the side running along Blackwell Street, which used to be known as Baker Street!

[41](#) The popular name for the *Sporting Times*, a weekly paper published from 1865 to 1931. Like the *Financial Times*, it was printed on pink paper.

[42](#) Prussia was a kingdom of Europe, the largest state of the German Empire; its capital was Berlin. William I, who assumed the Prussian throne in 1861, was proclaimed kaiser of the German Empire in 1871 after victories in the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars (instigated by William I's premier, Otto von Bismarck) confirmed Prussia's dominance. As creator of the German empire, it was Bismarck (now chancellor, or "The Iron Chancellor"), not the empire's sovereign, who held the reins in shaping German domestic policy and in orchestrating international relations throughout Europe. Bismarck resigned in 1890 after a power struggle with William II, who had succeeded Frederick III as "King of Prussia" in 1888.

[43](#) Pentonville penitentiary, which opened in London in 1842, subscribed to a rather severe disciplinary system and served as a model for incarceration not only in England but also throughout Europe. The new system was so lauded because London's prisons had historically been notoriously ineffective as instruments of punishment and notoriously corrupt. At Pentonville, a combination of solitary confinement and labour was meant to "crush the will," according to Robert Hughes. In addition to the twelve-hour days of cobbling or weaving, Hughes continues, "Whenever the prisoner stepped outside his cell for muster or exercise, he was required to don a woolen mask with eyeholes so that he could neither recognize nor be recognized by his fellow-prisoners. The Pentonville chapel, where prisoners were assembled every day, was designed with a separate box for each prisoner; wooden partitions and a door in each box assured that no convict could see the man to right or left of him, only the preacher in the 'cackle tub' or pulpit."

[44](#) There was precedent for this method of conveyance. T. S. Blakeney notes in "Some Disjecta Membra" that Sir Robert Walpole's steward, John Wrott, used to send the rents he collected to his master inside geese, in order to hoodwink highwaymen, who in those days (early eighteenth century) infested the roads from Norfolk to London.

[45](#) In "The Priory School," Holmes accuses the Duke of Holderness of *condoning* a felony; in "The Mazarin Stone," Holmes agrees to *compound* a felony; and in "The Three Gables," he says: "Well, well, I suppose I shall have to *compound* a felony as usual." One wonders whether *commuting* here is confused with *committing*, *condoning*, or *compounding*. British Counsel E. J. C. concludes that no typographical error has occurred and that Holmes *meant* "commuting," in the sense of exchanging Ryder's punishment for one less severe. However, in England, according to E. J. C., the power to commute "is a *prerogative of the Crown* and may not be delegated to a *subject*." William S. Baring-Gould ponders, "Is Holmes by any chance hinting here that he—like John Clay—had royal blood in his veins? These are deep waters, indeed . . ."

[46](#) Robert Keith Leavitt computes that in Holmes's sixty cases of record there are thirty-seven definite felonies where the criminal was known to him. In fourteen of these cases Holmes freed the guilty person.

[47](#) This might seem to imply that Holmes, seized even further by the holiday spirit, did not accept the

countess's reward. Although Watson fails to mention any further benevolent actions of Holmes, D. Martin Dakin believes that Holmes shared the reward with Peterson and Henry Baker and arranged for Horner's immediate release.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND¹

Scholars have delighted in the minutiae of “The Speckled Band,” arguing over the identity of the “speckled band” (whose characteristics defy those known to science), whether Holmes again takes justice into his own hands or an accident occurs, and the geographical sources of cheetahs and baboons. Conan Doyle, knowing a good story when he heard it, turned Watson’s tale into a highly successful stage play. Perhaps second only to “The Red-Headed League” in its popularity, “The Speckled Band” has Gothic elements to thrill every reader, and the confrontation between Dr. Grimesby Roylott and Sherlock Holmes is broadly melodramatic and highly satisfying.

IN GLANCING OVER my notes of the seventy odd cases² in which I have during the last eight years studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic. Of all these

varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular features than that which was associated with the well-known Surrey family of the Royslotts of Stoke Moran. The events in question occurred in the early days of my association with Holmes, when we were sharing rooms as bachelors, in Baker Street. It is possible that I might have placed them upon record before, but a promise of secrecy was made at the time, from which I have only been freed during the last month by the untimely death of the lady to whom the pledge was given. It is perhaps as well that the facts should now come to light, for I have reasons to know there are widespread rumours as to the death of Dr. Grimesby Royslott which tend to make the matter even more terrible than the truth.

It was early in April, in the year '83, that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. He was a late riser as a rule, and as the clock on the mantelpiece showed me that it was only a quarter-past seven, I blinked up at him in some surprise, and perhaps just a little resentment, for I was myself regular in my habits.

“Very sorry to knock you up, Watson,” said he, “but it’s the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been knocked up, she retorted upon me, and I on you.”

“What is it, then? A fire?”

“No, a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, who insists upon seeing me. She is waiting now in the sitting-room. Now, when young ladies wander about the Metropolis at this hour of the morning and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought at any rate that I should call you, and give you the chance.”



A young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement.

John Alan Maxwell, The Golden Book, December 1930

“My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything.”

I had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis, with which he unravelled the problems which were submitted to him. I rapidly threw on my clothes, and was ready in a few minutes to accompany my friend down to the sitting-room. A lady dressed in black and heavily veiled, who had been sitting in the window, rose as we entered.

“Good morning, madam,” said Holmes cheerily. “My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ha! I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering.”

“It is not cold which makes me shiver,” said the woman in a low voice, changing her seat as requested.

“What, then?”

“It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror.” She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and grey, with restless, frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with premature grey, and her expression was weary and haggard.

Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances.

“You must not fear,” said he, soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. “We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see.”

“You know me, then?”

“No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart, along heavy roads, before you reached the station.”



“She raised her veil.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

The lady gave a violent start, and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

“There is no mystery, my dear madam,” said he, smiling. “The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver.”

“Whatever your reasons may be, you are perfectly correct,” said she. “I started from home before six, reached Leatherhead³ at twenty past,⁴ and came in by the first train to Waterloo. Sir, I can stand this strain no longer, I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to—none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs. Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need. It was from her that I had your address. Oh, sir, do you not think that you could help me, too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or two⁵ I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful.”

Holmes turned to his desk, and unlocking it, drew out a small case-book which he consulted.

“Farintosh,” said he. “Ah, yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson.⁶ I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend. As to reward, my profession is its reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses⁷ I may be put to, at the time which suits you best. And now I beg that you will lay before us everything that may help us in forming an opinion upon the matter.”

“Alas!” replied our visitor, “the very horror of my situation lies in the fact that

my fears are so vague, and my suspicions depend so entirely upon small points, which might seem trivial to another, that even he to whom of all others I have a right to look for help and advice looks upon all that I tell him about it as the fancies of a nervous woman. He does not say so, but I can read it from his soothing answers and averted eyes. But I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart. You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me.”



“The very horror of my situation lies in the fact that my fears are so vague.”

John Alan Maxwell, *The Golden Book*, December 1930

“I am all attention, madam.”

“My name is Helen Stoner, and I am living with my stepfather, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon Families in England, the Royslotts of Stoke Moran,⁸ on the western border of Surrey.” Holmes nodded his head.

“The name is familiar to me,” said he.

“The family was at one time among the richest in England, and the estate extended over the borders into Berkshire⁹ in the north, and Hampshire¹⁰ in the west. In the last century, however, four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler, in the days of the Regency.¹¹ Nothing was left save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage. The last squire dragged out his existence there, living the

horrible life of an aristocratic pauper; but his only son, my stepfather, seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions, obtained an advance from a relative, which enabled him to take a medical degree, and went out to Calcutta,¹² where, by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice. In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death, and narrowly escaped a capital sentence. As it was, he suffered a long term of imprisonment, and afterwards returned to England a morose and disappointed man.

“When Dr. Roylott was in India he married my mother, Mrs. Stoner, the young widow of Major-General Stoner, of the Bengal Artillery.¹³ My sister Julia and I were twins, and we were only two years old at the time of my mother’s re-marriage. She had a considerable sum of money, not less than a thousand a year, and this she bequeathed to Dr. Roylott entirely whilst we resided with him, with a provision that a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage.¹⁴ Shortly after our return to England my mother died—she was killed eight years ago in a railway accident¹⁵ near Crewe. Dr. Roylott then abandoned his attempts to establish himself in practice in London,¹⁶ and took us to live with him in the old ancestral house at Stoke Moran. The money which my mother had left was enough for all our wants, and there seemed to be no obstacle to our happiness.¹⁷

“But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbours, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather’s case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics. A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became the terror of the village, and the folks would fly at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

“Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet into a stream, and it was only by paying over all the money that I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure. He had no friends at all save the wandering gipsies,¹⁸ and he would give these vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bramble-covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them sometimes for weeks on end. He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah¹⁹ and a

baboon,²⁰ which wander freely over his grounds, and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master.

“You can imagine from what I say that my poor sister Julia and I had no great pleasure in our lives. No servant would stay with us, and for a long time we did all the work of the house. She was but thirty at the time of her death, and yet her hair had already begun to whiten, even as mine has.”

“Your sister is dead, then?”

“She died just two years ago, and it is of her death that I wish to speak to you. You can understand that, living the life which I have described, we were little likely to see any one of our own age and position. We had, however, an aunt, my mother’s maiden sister, Miss Honoria Westphail, who lives near Harrow,²¹ and we were occasionally allowed to pay short visits at this lady’s house. Julia went there at Christmas two years ago, and met there a half-pay²² Major of Marines, to whom she became engaged. My stepfather learned of the engagement when my sister returned, and offered no objection to the marriage; but within a fortnight of the day which had been fixed for the wedding, the terrible event occurred which has deprived me of my only companion.”



“He hurled the blacksmith over a parapet.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed, and his head sunk in a cushion, but he half opened his lids now, and glanced across at his visitor.

“Pray be precise as to details,” said he.

“It is easy for me to be so, for every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor-house is, as I have already said, very old, and only one wing is now inhabited. The bedrooms in this wing are on the ground floor, the

sitting-rooms being in the central block of the buildings. Of these bedrooms the first is Dr. Roylott's, the second my sister's, and the third my own. There is no communication between them, but they all open out into the same corridor. Do I make myself plain?"

"Perfectly so."

"The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr. Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not retired to rest, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars which it was his custom to smoke. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding. At eleven o'clock she rose to leave me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

" 'Tell me, Helen,' said she, 'have you ever heard any one whistle in the dead of the night?'

" 'Never,' said I.

" 'I suppose that you could not possibly whistle yourself, in your sleep?'

" 'Certainly not. But why?'

" 'Because during the last few nights I have always, about three in the morning, heard a low, clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has awakened me. I cannot tell where it came from—perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the lawn. I thought that I would just ask you whether you had heard it.'

" 'No, I have not. It must be those wretched gipsies in the plantation.'

" 'Very likely. And yet if it were on the lawn I wonder that you did not hear it also.'

" 'Ah, but I sleep more heavily than you.'

" 'Well, it is of no great consequence at any rate.' she smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock."

"Indeed," said Holmes. "Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?"

"Always."

"And why?"

"I think that I mentioned to you that the Doctor kept a cheetah and a baboon. We had no feeling of security unless our doors were locked."

"Quite so. Pray proceed with your statement."

"I could not sleep that night. A vague feeling of impending misfortune impressed me. My sister and I, you will recollect, were twins, and you know how subtle are the links which bind two souls which are so closely allied. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amidst all the hubbub of the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my

sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage my sister's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognized me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out in a voice which I shall never forget, 'Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!' There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the Doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. I rushed out, calling loudly for my stepfather, and I met him hastening from his room in his dressing-gown. When he reached my sister's side she was unconscious, and though he poured brandy down her throat,²³ and sent for medical aid from the village, all efforts were in vain, for she slowly sank and died without having recovered her consciousness. Such was the dreadful end of my beloved sister."



“Her face blanched with terror.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“One moment,” said Holmes; “are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?”

“That was what the county coroner asked me at the inquiry. It is my strong impression that I heard it, and yet among the crash of the gale, and the creaking of an old house, I may possibly have been deceived.”

“Was your sister dressed?”

“No, she was in her nightdress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a matchbox.”²⁴

“Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?”

“He investigated the case with great care, for Dr. Roylott’s conduct had long been notorious in the county, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked by old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully sounded, and were shown to be quite solid all round, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is barred up by four large staples. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides there were no marks of any violence upon her.”

“How about poison?”

“The doctors examined her for it, but without success.”

“What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?”

“It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was that frightened her I cannot imagine.”

“Were there gipsies in the plantation at the time?”

“Yes, there are nearly always some there.”

“Ah, and what did you gather from this allusion to a band—a speckled band?”

“Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of people, perhaps to these very gipsies in the plantation. I do not know whether the spotted handkerchiefs which so many of them wear over their heads might have suggested the strange adjective which she used.”

Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.

“These are very deep waters,” said he; “pray go on with your narrative.”

“Two years have passed since then, and my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, whom I have known for many years, has done me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage²⁵—Percy Armitage—the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading. My stepfather has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, and my bedroom wall has been pierced, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last

night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the Crown Inn, which is opposite, and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice."

"You have done wisely," said my friend. "But have you told me all?"

"Yes, all."

"Miss Roylott, you have not. You are screening your stepfather."

"Why, what do you mean?"

For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

"You have been cruelly used," said Holmes.

The lady coloured deeply, and covered over her injured wrist. "He is a hard man," she said, "and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength."²⁶

There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.

"This is very deep business," he said at last. "There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran to-day, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?"

"As it happens, he spoke of coming into town to-day upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now, but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way."

"Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?"

"By no means."

"Then we shall both come. What are you going to do yourself?"

"I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train, so as to be there in time for your coming."

"And you may expect us early in the afternoon. I have myself some small business matters to attend to. Will you not wait and breakfast?"

"No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon." She dropped her thick black veil over her face, and glided from the room.

“And what do you think of it all, Watson?” asked Sherlock Holmes, leaning back in his chair.

“It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business.”

“Dark enough, and sinister enough.”

“Yet if the lady is correct in saying that the flooring and walls are sound, and that the door, window, and chimney are impassable, then her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end.”

“What becomes, then, of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman?”

“I cannot think.”

“When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gipsies who are on intimate terms with this old Doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the Doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter’s marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars which secured the shutters falling back into its place, I think that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines.”

“But what, then, did the gipsies do?”

“I cannot imagine.”

“I see many objections to any such theory.”

“And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what, in the name of the devil!”

The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top hat, a long frock coat, and a pair of high gaiters,²⁷ with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high thin fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

“Which of you is Holmes?” asked this apparition.

“My name, sir; but you have the advantage of me,” said my companion quietly.

“I am Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran.”

“Indeed, Doctor,” said Holmes, blandly. “Pray take a seat.”



“Which of you is Holmes?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I will do nothing of the kind. My stepdaughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been saying to you?”

“It is a little cold for the time of the year,” said Holmes.

“What has she been saying to you?” screamed the old man furiously.

“But I have heard that the crocuses promise well,” continued my companion imperturbably.

“Ha! You put me off, do you?” said our new visitor, taking a step forward, and shaking his hunting-crop. “I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes the meddler.”

My friend smiled.

“Holmes the busybody!”

His smile broadened.

“Holmes the Scotland Yard Jack-in-office!”²⁸

Holmes chuckled heartily. “Your conversation is most entertaining,” said he. “When you go out close the door, for there is a decided draught.”

“I will go when I have said my say. Don’t you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here—I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! See here.” He stepped swiftly forward, seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands.

“See that you keep yourself out of my grip,” he snarled, and hurling the

twisted poker into the fireplace, he strode out of the room.

“He seems a very amiable person,” said Holmes, laughing. “I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own.” As he spoke he picked up the steel poker, and, with a sudden effort straightened it out again.

“Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence in allowing this brute to trace her. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and afterwards I shall walk down to Doctors’ Commons,²⁹ where I hope to get some data which may help us in this matter.”



It was nearly one o’clock when Sherlock Holmes returned from his excursion. He held in his hand a sheet of blue paper, scrawled over with notes and figures.

“I have seen the will of the deceased wife,” said he. “To determine its exact meaning I have been obliged to work out the present prices of the investments with which it is concerned. The total income, which at the time of the wife’s death was little short of £1,100, is now through the fall in agricultural prices³⁰ not more than £750. Each daughter can claim an income of £250, in case of marriage. It is evident, therefore, that if both girls had married this beauty would have had a mere pittance, while even one of them would cripple him to a very serious extent. My morning’s work has not been wasted, since it has proved that he has the very strongest motives for standing in the way of anything of the sort. And now, Watson, this is too serious for dawdling, especially as the old man is aware that we are interesting ourselves in his affairs, so if you are ready, we shall call a cab and drive to Waterloo. I should be very much obliged if you would slip your revolver into your pocket. An Eley’s No. 2³¹ is an excellent argument with gentlemen who can twist steel pokers into knots. That and a tooth-brush are, I think, all that we need.”

At Waterloo we were fortunate in catching a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a trap at the station inn, and drove for four or five miles through the lovely Surrey lanes. It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few fleecy clouds in the heavens. The trees and wayside hedges were just throwing out their first green shoots, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the moist earth. To me at least there was a strange contrast between the sweet promise of the spring and

this sinister quest upon which we were engaged. My companion sat in the front of the trap, his arms folded, his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his chin sunk upon his breast, buried in the deepest thought. Suddenly, however, he started, tapped me on the shoulder, and pointed over the meadows.

“Look there!” said he.

A heavily timbered park stretched up in a gentle slope, thickening into a grove at the highest point. From amid the branches there jutted out the grey gables and high roof-tree of a very old mansion.

“Stoke Moran?” said he.

“Yes, sir, that be the house of Dr. Grimesby Roylott,” remarked the driver.

“There is some building going on there,” said Holmes; “that is where we are going.”

“There’s the village,” said the driver, pointing to a cluster of roofs some distance to the left; but if you want to get to the house, you’ll find it shorter to get over this stile, and so by the foot path over the fields. There it is, where the lady is walking.”

“And the lady, I fancy, is Miss Stoner,” observed Holmes, shading his eyes. “Yes, I think we had better do as you suggest.”

We got off, paid our fare, and the trap rattled back on its way to Leatherhead.



“We got off, paid our fare.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I thought it as well,” said Holmes, as we climbed the stile, “that this fellow should think we had come here as architects, or on some definite business. It may stop his gossip. Good afternoon, Miss Stoner. You see that we have been as good as our word.”

Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. “I have been waiting so eagerly for you,” she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. “All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening.”

“We have had the pleasure of making the Doctor’s acquaintance,” said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.

“Good Heavens!” she cried, “he has followed me, then.”

“So it appears.”

“He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?”

“He must guard himself, for he may find that there is some one more cunning than himself upon his track. You must lock yourself up from him to-night. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt’s at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine.”

The building was of grey, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion, and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side. In one of these wings the windows were broken, and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided. Some scaffolding had been erected against the end wall, and the stone-work had been broken into, but there were no signs of any workmen at the moment of our visit. Holmes walked slowly up and down the ill-trimmed lawn, and examined with deep attention the outsides of the windows.

“This, I take it, belongs to the room in which you used to sleep, the centre one to your sister’s, and the one next to the main building to Dr. Roylott’s chamber?”

“Exactly so. But I am now sleeping in the middle one.”

“Pending the alterations, as I understand. By the way, there does not seem to be any very pressing need for repairs at that end wall.”

“There were none. I believe that it was an excuse to move me from my room.”

“Ah! that is suggestive. Now, on the other side of this narrow wing runs the corridor from which these three rooms open. There are windows in it, of course?”

“Yes, but very small ones. Too narrow for any one to pass through.”

“As you both locked your doors at night, your rooms were unapproachable from that side. Now, would you have the kindness to go into your room and bar your shutters?”

Miss Stoner did so, and Holmes after a careful examination through the open window, endeavoured in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar.

Then with his lens he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. "Hum!" said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity, "my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted. Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter."

A small side-door led into the whitewashed corridor from which the three bedrooms opened. Holmes refused to examine the third chamber, so we passed at once to the second, that in which Miss Stoner was now sleeping, and in which her sister had met her fate. It was a homely little room, with a low ceiling and a gaping fireplace, after the fashion of old country houses. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow white-counterpaned³² bed in another, and a dressing-table on the left-hand side of the window. These articles, with two small wickerwork chairs, made up all the furniture in the room, save for a square of Wilton carpet in the centre. The boards round and the panelling of the walls were of brown, worm-eaten oak, so old and discoloured that it may have dated from the original building of the house. Holmes drew one of the chairs into a corner and sat silent, while his eyes travelled round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment.

"Where does that bell communicate with?" he asked at last, pointing to a thick bell-rope which hung down beside the bed, the tassel actually lying upon the pillow.

"It goes to the housekeeper's room."

"It looks newer than the other things?"

"Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago."

"Your sister asked for it, I suppose?"

"No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves."

"Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there. You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor." He threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hand, and crawled swiftly backwards and forwards, examining minutely the cracks between the boards. Then he did the same with the woodwork with which the chamber was panelled. Finally he walked over to the bed and spent some time in staring at it, and in running his eye up and down the wall. Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.

"Why, it's a dummy," said he.

"Won't it ring?"

"No, it is not even attached to a wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening for the

ventilator is.”



“You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor.”

John Alan Maxwell, *The Golden Book*, December 1930

“How very absurd! I never noticed that before.”

“Very strange!” muttered Holmes, pulling at the rope. “There are one or two very singular points about this room. For example, what a fool a builder must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with the outside air!”

“That is also quite modern,” said the lady.

“Done about the same time as the bell-rope,” remarked Holmes.

“Yes, there were several little changes carried out about that time.”

“They seem to have been of a most interesting character—dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate. With your permission, Miss Stoner, we shall now carry our researches into the inner apartment.”

Dr. Grimesby Roylott’s chamber was larger than that of his stepdaughter, but was as plainly furnished. A camp bed, a small wooden shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, an armchair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met the eye. Holmes walked slowly round and examined each and all of them with the keenest interest.

“What’s in here?” he asked, tapping the safe.

“My stepfather’s business papers.”

“Oh! you have seen inside, then?”

“Only once, some years ago. I remember that it was full of papers.”

“There isn’t a cat in it, for example?”

“No. What a strange idea!”

“Well, look at this!” He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.

“No; we don’t keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon.”³³

“Ah, yes, of course! Well, a cheetah is just a big cat, and yet a saucer of milk does not go very far in satisfying its wants, I daresay. There is one point which I should wish to determine.” He squatted down in front of the wooden chair, and examined the seat of it with the greatest attention.



“Well, look at this.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Thank you. That is quite settled,” said he, rising and putting his lens in his pocket. “Hullo! Here is something interesting!”

The object which had caught his eye was a small dog lash hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself, and tied so as to make a loop of whipcord.

“What do you make of that, Watson?”

“It’s a common enough lash. But I don’t know why it should be tied.”

“That is not quite so common, is it? Ah, me! it’s a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all. I think that I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner, and, with your permission, we shall walk out upon the lawn.”



One of the many Crown Inns in England.

I had never seen my friend's face so grim, or his brow so dark, as it was when we turned from the scene of this investigation. We had walked several times up and down the lawn, neither Miss Stoner nor myself liking to break in upon his thoughts before he roused himself from his reverie.

"It is very essential, Miss Stoner," said he, "that you should absolutely follow my advice in every respect."

"I shall most certainly do so."

"The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance."

"I assure you that I am in your hands."

"In the first place, both my friend and I must spend the night in your room."

Both Miss Stoner and I gazed at him in astonishment.

"Yes, it must be so. Let me explain. I believe that that is the village inn over there?"

"Yes, that is the Crown."

"Very good. Your windows would be visible from there?"

"Certainly."

"You must confine yourself to your room, on pretence of a headache, when your stepfather comes back. Then when you hear him retire for the night, you must open the shutters of your window, undo the hasp, put your lamp there as a signal to us, and then withdraw with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night."

"Oh, yes, easily."

"The rest you will leave in our hands."

"But what will you do?"

"We shall spend the night in your room, and we shall investigate the cause of this noise which has disturbed you."

"I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind," said Miss Stoner, laying her hand upon my companion's sleeve.

"Perhaps I have."

"Then for pity's sake tell me what was the cause of my sister's death."

“I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak.”

“You can at least tell me whether my own thought is correct, and if she died from some sudden fright.”

“No, I do not think so. I think that there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you, for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us, our journey would be in vain. Good-bye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you.” Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the Crown Inn. They were on the upper floor, and from our window we could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing of Stoke Moran Manor House. At dusk we saw Dr. Grimesby Roylott drive past, his huge form looming up beside the little figure of the lad who drove him. The boy had some slight difficulty in undoing the heavy iron gates, and we heard the hoarse roar of the Doctor’s voice and saw the fury with which he shook his clenched fists at him. The trap drove on, and a few minutes later we saw a sudden light spring up among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.

“Do you know, Watson,” said Holmes, as we sat together in the gathering darkness, “I have really some scruples as to taking you to-night. There is a distinct element of danger.”

“Can I be of assistance?”

“Your presence might be invaluable.”

“Then I shall certainly come.”

“It is very kind of you.”



“Good-bye, and be brave.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“You speak of danger. You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me.”

“No, but I fancy that I may have deduced a little more. I imagine that you saw all that I did.”

“I saw nothing remarkable save the bell-rope, and what purpose that could answer I confess is more than I can imagine.”

“You saw the ventilator, too?”

“Yes, but I do not think that it is such a very unusual thing to have a small opening between two rooms. It was so small that a rat could hardly pass through.”

“I knew that we should find a ventilator before ever we came to Stoke Moran.”

“My dear Holmes!”

“Oh, yes, I did. You remember in her statement she said that her sister could smell Dr. Roylott’s cigar. Now, of course that suggests at once that there must be a communication between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, or it would have been remarked upon at the Coroner’s inquiry. I deduced a ventilator.”

“But what harm can there be in that?”

“Well, there is at least a curious coincidence of dates. A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and a lady who sleeps in the bed dies. Does not that strike you?”

“I cannot as yet see any connection.”

“Did you observe anything very peculiar about that bed?”

“No.”

“It was clamped to the floor. Did you ever see a bed fastened like that before?”

“I cannot say that I have.”

“The lady could not move her bed. It must always be in the same relative position to the ventilator and to the rope—or so we may call it, since it was clearly never meant for a bell-pull.”

“Holmes,” I cried, “I seem to see dimly what you are hinting at. We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible crime.”

“Subtle enough, and horrible enough. When a doctor does go wrong, he is the first of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge. Palmer³⁴ and Pritchard³⁵ were among the heads of their profession.³⁶ This man strikes even deeper, but I think, Watson, that we shall be able to strike deeper still. But we shall have

horrors enough before the night is over; for goodness' sake let us have a quiet pipe, and turn our minds for a few hours to something more cheerful."

About nine o'clock the light among the trees was extinguished, and all was dark in the direction of the Manor House. Two hours passed slowly away, and then, suddenly, just at the stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out right in front of us.

"That is our signal," said Holmes, springing to his feet; "it comes from the middle window."

As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord, explaining that we were going on a late visit to an acquaintance, and that it was possible that we might spend the night there. A moment later we were out on the dark road, a chill wind blowing in our faces, and one yellow light twinkling in front of us through the gloom to guide us on our sombre errand.

There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall.³⁷ Making our way among the trees, we reached the lawn, crossed it, and were about to enter through the window, when out from a clump of laurel bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself upon the grass with writhing limbs and then ran swiftly across the lawn into the darkness.

"My God!" I whispered; "did you see it?" Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vise upon my wrist in his agitation. Then he broke into a low laugh and put his lips to my ear.

"It is a nice household," he murmured. "That is the baboon."

I had forgotten the strange pets which the Doctor affected. There was a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find it upon our shoulders at any moment. I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes's example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom.

My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp onto the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the day-time. Then creeping up to me and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words—

"The least sound would be fatal to our plans."

I nodded to show that I had heard.

"We must sit without a light. He would see it through the ventilator."

I nodded again.

"Do not go asleep; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair."

I took out my revolver and laid it on the corner of the table.

Holmes had brought up a long thin cane, and this he placed upon the bed

beside him. By it he laid the box of matches and the stump of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp, and we were left in darkness.

How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? I could not hear a sound, not even the drawing of a breath, and yet I knew that my companion sat open-eyed, within a few feet of me, in the same state of nervous tension in which I was myself. The shutters cut off the least ray of light, and we waited in absolute darkness. From outside came the occasional cry of a night bird, and once at our very window a long drawn, cat-like whine, which told us that the cheetah was indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, which boomed out every quarter of an hour. How long they seemed, those quarters! Twelve struck, and one, and two, and three, and still we sat waiting silently for whatever might befall.

Suddenly there was the momentary gleam of a light up in the direction of the ventilator, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Some one in the next room had lit a dark lantern. I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible—a very gentle, soothing sound, like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a kettle. The instant that we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

“You see it, Watson?” he yelled. “You see it?”

But I saw nothing.³⁸ At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes made it impossible for me to tell what it was at which my friend lashed so savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale and filled with horror and loathing.³⁹

He had ceased to strike, and was gazing up at the ventilator when suddenly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

“What can it mean?” I gasped.

“It means that it is all over,” Holmes answered. “And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we shall enter Dr. Roylott’s room.”

With a grave face he lit the lamp and led the way down the corridor. Twice he

struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand.



“Holmes lashed furiously.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

It was a singular sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr. Grimesby Roylott, clad in a long grey dressing-gown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upward, and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion.

“The band! the speckled band!” whispered Holmes.

I took a step forward. In an instant his strange headgear began to move, and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent. “It is a swamp adder!” cried Holmes—“the deadliest snake in India.⁴⁰ He has died within ten seconds of being bitten.⁴¹ Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit⁴² which he digs for another. Let us thrust this creature back into its den, and we can then remove Miss Stoner to some place of shelter, and let the county police know what has happened.”

As he spoke he drew the dog whip swiftly from the dead man’s lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile’s neck, he drew it from its horrid perch and, carrying it at arm’s length threw it into the iron safe which he closed upon it.⁴³

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran.⁴⁴ It is not necessary that I should prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length, by telling how we broke the sad news to the terrified girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, of how the slow process of official inquiry came to the conclusion that the Doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet. The little which I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes as we travelled back next day.



“He made neither sound nor motion.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I had,” said he, “come to an entirely erroneous conclusion which shows, my dear Watson, how dangerous it always is to reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gipsies, and the use of the word ‘band,’ which was used by the poor girl, no doubt, to explain the appearance which she had caught a hurried glimpse of by the light of her match, were sufficient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to me that whatever danger threatened an occupant of the room could not come either from the window or the door. My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell-rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the suspicion that the rope was there as a bridge for something passing through the hole, and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the Doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training. The rapidity with which such a poison

would take effect would also, from his point of view, be an advantage. It would be a sharp-eyed coroner indeed who could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of course, he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to return to him when summoned.⁴⁵ He would put it through this ventilator at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down the rope, and land on the bed. It might or might not bite the occupant, perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later she must fall a victim.

“I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room. An inspection of his chair showed me that he had been in the habit of standing on it, which, of course, would be necessary in order that he should reach the ventilator. The sight of the safe, the saucer of milk, and the loop of whipcord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by her stepfather hastily closing the door of his safe upon its terrible occupant. Having once made up my mind, you know the steps which I took in order to put the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss, as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the light and attacked it.”⁴⁶

“With the result of driving it through the ventilator.”

“And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other side. Some of the blows of my cane came home, and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott’s death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience.”⁴⁷ ■

“IT IS A SWAMP ADDER! . . . THE DEADLIEST SNAKE IN INDIA.”

THE IDENTITY of the breed of snake termed a “swamp adder” by Holmes—a name by which no snake is commonly known—is debated widely, and no candidate seems to possess all of the characteristics described. The key traits that must be considered are (a) a fast-acting (neurotoxic) venom, rather than a slow-acting (haemotoxic) venom, (b) an inclination to climb up and down a rope and to “rear,” (c) an appearance described as a “yellow band with brownish speckles,” a “squat, diamond-shaped” head, and a “puffed” neck, and (d) a

probable Indian origin. The following table considers the candidates:

Snake	Characteristics	Considered in:
Puff adder (<i>Bitis arietans</i>)	(a) Slow-acting venom, (b) lethargic nature, (c) physical appearance unlike “swamp adder,” (d) African in origin	<i>Catalogue of the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition</i> ; Roger Mortimore, “Hiss!” (proposes a cross between the puff adder and green mamba)
River-jack vipers (<i>Bitis nasicornis</i> , <i>Bitis Gabonica</i>)	Same	<i>Catalogue</i>

Snake	Characteristics	Considered in:
Russell's viper (<i>Vipera Russellii</i> or <i>Tic polonga</i>)	(a) Slow-acting venom, (b) lethargic nature, (c) appropriately shaped head but lacks "speckled" markings, (d) Indian in origin	<i>Catalogue</i> . Rolfe Boswell, in "Dr.Roylott's Wily Phillip: With a Proem on Veneration of Vipers," disputes speed of venom but admits that the snake is unlikely to climb down a rope. Douglas Lawson, in "The Speckled Band—What Is It?," contends that a Russell's viper has frequently been reported as tree-climbing and concludes that Julia Stoner was killed by a Russell's viper but that Roylott died of a heart attack just before attack by a saw-scaled viper (<i>Echis carinatus</i>)
Saw-scaled viper (<i>Echis carinatus</i>)	(a) Slow-acting venom, (b) lethargic nature, (c) appropriately shaped head and speckled markings, (d) Indian in origin	<i>Catalogue</i>
Temple vipers (<i>Trimeresurus. . .</i>)	(a) Slow-acting venom, (b) active climbers, (c) inappropriate colouring, (d) Indian in origin	<i>Catalogue</i>
Krait (<i>Bungarus mangimaculatus</i>)	(a) Rapid-acting (neurotoxic) venom, (b) no known behaviour matching descriptions, (c) appearance does not match description, (d) Indian in origin	<i>Catalogue</i> ; Larry Waggoner, "The Final Solution" (Indian banded krait)

Snake	Characteristics	Considered in:
Cobra (<i>Naja naja</i>)	(a) Rapid-acting venom, (b) known to climb and rear, (c) common varieties with brown speckles on yellow background, diamond-shaped head, puffed neck, (d) Indian in origin	<i>Catalogue</i> ; Lionel Needleman, "Unravelling <i>The Speckled Band</i> " (yellow cobra, <i>Naja nivea</i>)
Skink (a lizard of the family <i>Scincidae</i>)	Specially bred by Roylott to obtain rapid-acting venom and desired behaviour	Lawrence M. Klauber, "The Truth About the Speckled Band"
Gila monster (<i>Sampoderma</i>)	Same	Warren Randall, "Leapin' Lizards: An Irregular and Unnatural History of the Speckled Band," which refers to an article by Charles Borgert and Rafael Martin del Campo, "The Gila Monster and Its Allies," appearing in the <i>Bulletin of the Museum of Natural History</i> , which identifies this new genus based on the work of Klauber, <i>supra</i> .
Constrictor or choke snake	Only analyses characteristic movement	"De Vergissing van Sherlock Holmes" ["Sherlock Holmes's Error"]
Western Taipan (<i>Oxyuranus Micloepitodus</i>)	(a) Very rapidly acting venom, (b) known to climb, (c) creamy yellow belly, freely speckled, diamond-shaped head, puffed neck, (d) Australian in	Philip Cornell, "A Fresh Bite at The Speckled Band"

origin

THE GUNS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND JOHN H. WATSON, M.D.

“GUNS,” “pistols,” and “revolvers” are frequently mentioned in the Canon, often in the possession of Holmes or Watson. However, the weapons are infrequently used by the pair and never actually fired at a “normal” target. In “The Musgrave Ritual,” we witness Holmes target shooting. In *The Sign of Four* Holmes and Watson fire upon a fleeing pygmy; in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and “The Copper Beeches,” the guns are used to defend against vicious dogs. Nonetheless, gun enthusiasts argue over the precise weaponry of the detective and his companion.



An Adams .450.

Stephen A. Shalet contends that both Holmes and Watson carried Webleys in their various marks as their “major arm.” While the Webley is large as a pocket pistol, “in those days pockets were made far more generously than today,” states Shalet.

Contrary to the view of the editors of the *Catalogue of the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition*, who contend that Watson carried a Webley No. 2, Charles A. Meyer argues that Watson’s pistol was a Webley-Pryse revolver, also known as the Webley No. 4. Garry James, in “Shooting the Guns of Sherlock Holmes,” identifies Holmes’s gun as the Webley Metropolitan Police revolver, a version of the popular RIC (Royal Irish Constabulary) revolver introduced in 1867, and, on the basis of the “No. 2” reference, concludes that Watson’s revolver is a Mark II Adams, which fired “No. 2” or “II” ammunition.

In “Firearms in the Canon: The Guns of Sherlock Holmes and John H. Watson,” Dante M. Torese persuasively argues that Watson’s service revolver was an Adams No. 3 but that his *pocket* pistol was a Webley Metro-Police.

William Ballew makes an excellent case for Watson owning only one gun, a Webley of the “Bull Dog” variety.

The multi-gun approach is also espoused by Daniel P. King, who concurs with William S. Baring-Gould’s assessment that Watson’s *service* revolver was an Adams .450 calibre centre-fire Model 1872 Mark III, but by the time of “The Speckled Band,” Watson was carrying a Webley’s Solid-Frame Civilian Pocket Model. Later, in “Thor Bridge,” Watson had switched to a more modern weapon, the W.P. (Webley Pocket) Hammerless Model 1898. As to Holmes, King agrees with Gary James’s identification of the Webley Metropolitan Police revolver.

A similar view—of a varied armoury—is expressed by Harald Curjel, in “Some Further Thoughts on Canonical Weaponry,” who identifies either the .450/455 Tranter Army pistol or the Adams Central Fire Breech-loading revolver as Watson’s “service” revolver, the Webley “bulldog” as another weapon of Watson’s, yet a third (unidentified) revolver in “Thor Bridge,” and finally a different weapon altogether in “The Speckled Band,” for the “Eley No. 2,” Curjel contends, would fit none of these.

1 “The Speckled Band” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in February 1892.

2 Frank Waters estimates (“Upon the Probable Number of Cases of Mr. Sherlock Holmes”) that by the time of his retirement in late October 1903, Holmes had handled some 1,700 cases.

3 A small town on the river Mole, Leatherhead is one of the claimants to be “Highbury,” the “large and populous village, almost amounting to a town” of Jane Austen’s 1816 novel *Emma*. In that novel, Highbury’s drawing rooms and gardens provide a genteel setting for Emma Woodhouse’s machinations, although she does fear “the horror of being in danger of falling in with the second-rate and third-rate of Highbury, who were calling on them for ever . . .”

4 Roger T. Clapp, in “The Curious Problem of the Railway Timetables,” refers to a *Bradshaw* of the period and the *A B C Railway Guide* in discovering that Holmes’s new client could not, in fact, have followed the route described here and still reached Baker Street by seven. The earliest train from Leatherhead to Waterloo left at 7:22, arriving at 8:11. Even the earlier train to London Bridge did not leave Leatherhead until 7:13. In short, Watson must have altered the location of “Stoke Moran” (presumably to protect the confidentiality of Holmes’s client) without correcting the train times. Clapp notes that there is only one correct train time given in the entire Canon.

5 “A month or six weeks” in the *Strand Magazine* and American editions.

6 Because the case of Mrs. Farintosh preceded Watson’s shared residence with Holmes and therefore Holmes’s residence at Baker Street, Howard Collins considers how Helen Stoner got the Baker Street address. If Holmes presented his bill to Mrs. Farintosh *after* moving to Baker Street, however, the mystery is solved.

7 Apparently Holmes has progressed in his career; compare his statement to Watson in *A Study in Scarlet* that “I listen to [my clients’] story, they listen to my comments, and then I pocket my fee.”

8 Michael Harrison, in *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*, surmises that “Stoke Moran” seems an obvious alias for the village of Stoke D’Abernon, located three miles from Leatherhead.

9 Also known as “Berks,” this county (broken up in 1998) is home to Windsor Castle and Eton College, the famed boys’ boarding school that educated such luminaries as Prime Minister William Gladstone, economist John Maynard Keynes, and author Aldous Huxley.

10 Hampshire county’s most notable literary residents were Jane Austen, who lived there for most of her life and was buried there in 1817 at Winchester Cathedral, and Arthur Conan Doyle, who first established a medical practice at Southsea, Hampshire, only to turn to writing as a sideline. Winchester also houses in its Great Hall what has long been regarded as the legendary Round Table of King Arthur fame—although it has now been established that the table was built in the late thirteenth or fourteenth century, in contrast to the supposed period of Arthur’s reign in the late fifth or early sixth century. (Adding to the confusion is Sir Thomas Malory’s identification, in his 1485 book *Le Morte D’Arthur*, of Winchester as the original Camelot, an assertion since widely discounted.) 11 That is, the last nine years of the reign of George III, 1811–1820. It was during this period that the king’s insanity rendered him unfit to rule, and the Prince of Wales (later George IV) acted as regent in his father’s stead; the conclusion of the War of 1812 and the Napoleonic wars saw Britain plunge into a period of economic depression and social unrest.

12 Then capital of British India and a glittering manifestation of British rule, its population has exploded from around 1 million at the beginning of the twentieth century to over 11 million today. The population is expected to increase by another 50 percent in the next ten to fifteen years. Victorian architecture is still notably present throughout Calcutta today. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, British India was beginning to echo with calls for reform. Following the bloody Indian Mutiny of 1857 (see the appendix on page 605), the East India Company—which had run India for nearly a century, since shortly after one of its military officials, Robert Clive, recaptured Calcutta from the nawab of Bengal—was abolished and power transferred to the Crown. Steps were made in the early 1860s toward allowing Indians to participate in government, and the Indian National Congress, a political party, was formed to further that goal in 1885. Yet despite such stirrings of change, India remained wholly a British subject (Queen Victoria was named empress in 1877) until 1947. Calcutta is the site of the opulent Victoria Memorial, commissioned to honour the queen by viceroy Lord Curzon and constructed in 1905–1921. The building now houses an extensive museum collection showcasing the history of British India.

13 The strength of the Bengal Artillery immediately preceding the Indian Mutiny was twelve battalions, out of twenty-four artillery battalions in the entire Indian Army. As a result of the uprising—largely credited with being the first major manifestation of Indian nationalism and discontent—the Indian Army went through several reforms. The proportion of Europeans to Indians in the armed forces was raised to about one to two (60,000 Europeans to 120,000 Indians), and the artillery battalions were all transferred to the Royal Artillery, that is, to the British Army. Major-General Stoner, no doubt a beneficiary of such rulings, would not only have had no Indians in his battalion but also would not have known any Indians of comparable rank: It was not until 1919 that Indians were allowed into the Royal Military Academy in England for training as officers.

14 Compare the situation of Mary Sutherland, in “A Case of Identity,” whose inheritance from her father was under her own control but who also had a stepfather who would lose the use of his stepdaughter’s funds. Roylott had apparently not sought legal advice, for even after the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882, a husband had control of his wife’s money received *before* enactment of the Act. Roylott could presumably have overridden his wife’s wishes about the daughters’ £250 a year each, points out F. D.

Bryan-Brown, making unnecessary the crimes that were to ensue.

15 In light of later events and the revealed character of Roylott, this saved the doctor “the trouble and danger of killing her himself,” cynically comments Michael Harrison, in *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*. Others, even more cynical, wonder whether the “accident” was in fact accidental.

16 F. D. Bryan-Brown points out that a murder charge would presumably be a grievous enough offence to cost Dr. Roylott his licence; therefore, setting up a London practice should have been well nigh impossible.

17 D. Martin Dakin observes that this seems a somewhat optimistic—perhaps naively so—comment considering her stepfather’s murder conviction, imprisonment, and the heritage of violent anger in his family, which she will describe as “approaching to mania.”

18 Gypsies (or their preferred name, Roma) began migrating to Europe from northern India in the fourteenth century, their various ethnicities and languages melding together with outside influences to form a common language (Romany) and ethnic group. The stereotype of the gypsy was that of a free-spirited, criminally minded wanderer—gypsies were often accused of stealing babies and even spreading disease—and while there certainly were nomadic gypsies, such characteristics are more fiction than fact. Several nineteenth-century novels, including Emily Brontë’s 1847 *Wuthering Heights* (Lockwood describes Heathcliff as a “dark-skinned gipsy in aspect”) and George Eliot’s 1868 *The Spanish Gypsy*, used gypsy characters to convey a certain unconventionality and otherness, both racial and cultural. Deborah Epstein Nord writes in *Victorian Studies*, “[I]nto the midst of English reserve, decorousness, and control, the gypsy—or suspected gypsy—could inject impetuosity, brooding, and passion.” Nomadic gypsies appear as convenient bystanders in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and “The Priory School,” and the unconventional John Clay’s ears (“The Red-Headed League”) had been pierced by gypsies.

19 If Dr. Roylott had acquired the cheetah for purposes of guarding his estate, then it appears that he made a poor choice, for cheetahs are by nature extremely gentle and easily domesticated. James Edward Holroyd, in “The Egg Spoon,” refers to J. A. Hunter’s *African Hunter* in noting that Indian rajahs would train cheetahs to assist them in hunting antelope, and that even an adult cheetah could be trained without trouble. Hunter declares, “I do not believe that in the entire history of Africa there has been a single case of a cheetah attacking a human being.” Of course, as Holroyd concedes, a cheetah transported from its native environment to England might behave altogether differently in its new home.

20 Apart from the small black baboon of Celebes, baboons are confined to Africa and the Arabian peninsula. Either Dr. Roylott’s “Indian correspondent” was acquiring animals abroad or Miss Stoner’s identification of the animals is mistaken.

21 This London borough is the home of the eminent Harrow School, the alma mater of notable Britons including poet George Gordon, Lord Byron; Sir Robert Peel, founder of the Metropolitan Police; and Prime Minister Henry Palmerston.

22 Reduced pay, for officers not on active service. Watson was described as being on “half-pay” in *The Sign of Four*.

23 Paul Scholten, M.D., states that in Victorian times, brandy was used “to restore one to normal after loss of blood, in convalescence and after serious injury, in cases where one felt faint and in actual faintings.” Watson makes liberal use of it in his medical care.

24 “[W]ith which hand did she unlock the door?” asks F. D. Bryan-Brown.

25 Any relationship to James Armitage of “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” is speculative.

26 While Helen Stoner may be somewhat too advanced in age for her stepfather’s rough treatment of her to

qualify as child abuse, one wonders how long such behaviour had been going on. In Victorian England, the plight of abused children went largely unaddressed until the late 1880s, when the Reverend Benjamin Waugh, who had witnessed neglect and mistreatment of children firsthand while working as a minister in the East End slums, founded a national society dedicated to the cause. The problems were certainly well known, for the victimized child is a recurrent figure in nineteenth-century fiction, especially that of Charles Dickens. Scholar E. D. H. Johnson notes of Dickens's mature novels that "the all but universal neglect or abuse of children by their parents is systematically elaborated as one of the signs of the times."

It was the pioneering case of young Mary Ellen McCormack in New York that precipitated the formation of societies dedicated to the welfare of children. Mary Ellen had been found tied to a bed in 1874, having been neglected and beaten by her foster parents. She would testify, "I am never allowed to play with any children or have any company whatever. Mamma has been in the habit of whipping and beating me almost every day." But while animals were protected from acts of cruelty under the law, children at the time were not; and so the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had to come to Mary Ellen's defence, arguing her case successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court. After the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded in 1875, similar organisations sprang up in England, and the London society founded in 1884 by Waugh became England's National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in 1889. Queen Victoria became its Royal Patron. The NSPCC's inspectors patrolled the streets on foot and bicycle, seeking out children who might need aid, handling 3,937 cases of child abuse in 1889 alone. That same year, England's first Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act was passed, thanks largely to the lobbying efforts of Waugh and his supporters.

[27](#) Coverings of cloth or leather for the lower leg (as contrasted with "regular" gaiters, which cover only the ankle—called "spats," short for "spatterdashes," by Americans), high gaiters were favoured by farmers and country landowners.

[28](#) A pretentious, petty official. Jonathan Small uses the same expression in *The Sign of Four*.

[29](#) The familiar name for the College of Advocates and Doctors of Law, where ecclesiastical courts were held and wills were recorded and stored. Charles Dickens, in Chapter 8 of his *Sketches by Boz* (1836), described it thus: "Now Doctors' Commons [is] familiar by name to everybody, as the place where they grant marriage-licenses to love-sick couples, and divorces to unfaithful ones; register the wills of people who have any property to leave, and punish hasty gentlemen who call ladies by unpleasant names . . ."

The Will Office was transferred to the Probate Registry in Somerset House, The Strand, in 1874. Holmes may have acquired the habit of the old name in his studies or may have visited the Will Office in the course of some of his earliest cases.

[30](#) From 1873 to 1894, prices for agricultural products dropped to less than half their former amounts and ruined many English farmers. These factors were compounded by long spells of bad weather, livestock epidemics, and rising labour costs (due principally to the enactment of compulsory education laws for children, decreasing substantially the number of people available to work).

[31](#) As Eley was a manufacturer of ammunition rather than actual weaponry, such a make of gun did not in fact exist. The editors of the Catalogue of the 1951 Sherlock Holmes Exhibition suggest that Holmes probably meant to refer to a .320-bore Webley's No. 2, a small "pocket pistol." Perhaps the labelling of the box—which would have read "Eley" above "for the Webley Pistol, No. 2"—may have contributed to Holmes's confusion on the make of gun. The Catalogue editors described the .320 bore Webley No. 2 as taking up little space but as being "adequate for dealing with the most determined criminal. It was the smallest really practicable weapon of its time." See "The Guns of Sherlock Holmes and John H. Watson, M.D.," page 262, for a more complete discussion.

[32](#) A "counterpane" is a bedspread.

33 This is the third time Helen Stoner has told Holmes about the cheetah and the baboon. What strange fixation did she have on these animals—except perhaps that they “wander freely” and she does not?

34 William Palmer (1824–1856) was an infamous British poisoner who lived in Rugeley, Staffordshire. A member of the Royal College of Surgeons who had studied at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, he was hanged for the poisoning of his wife, his brother, and an associate for their insurance money. He is rumoured to have poisoned at least fifteen people.

35 Edward William Pritchard (1825–1865) was an English surgeon who purchased his M.D. in Germany and was hanged in Glasgow for the poisoning of his wife and mother-in-law.

36 D. Martin Dakin disputes this characterisation, suggesting that Holmes was either being sarcastic or was simply mistaken: “Palmer . . . and Pritchard . . . were only general practitioners of mediocre qualifications . . . who got into trouble by their gallantries and extravagances, and would never have been heard of had not their egregiously bungled crimes brought them notoriety in the courts.”

37 If Roylott’s cheetah and baboon “wandered freely,” these breaches would seem likely to have assured their immediate departure from the premises.

38 In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson was able to discern a boy’s figure at a distance of “several miles” with the naked eye. Yet that was an isolated case, and more often Watson professes an inability to see as clearly as Holmes. Several scholars conclude that Watson suffered from various visual deficiencies: night blindness resulting from a deficiency of Vitamin A, extreme nearsightedness, and color-blindness, caused by the “glare of the sun” (“The Cardboard Box”).

39 Holmes’s only other comparable expression of horror is the result of a drug-induced vision, in “The Devil’s Foot.” Perhaps Holmes shared a deep-seated phobia with Indiana Jones: “Snakes! Why did it have to be snakes?” (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*, 1981).

40 An adder, synonymous with the term “viper,” is the name given to any number of poisonous snakes found throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. They range in length anywhere from one to six feet and are often decorated with diamond or zigzag patterns. The common viper (*vipera berus*), the only poisonous snake in Britain, is also referred to as the “adder,” but its venom is not usually fatal to humans. There is, in fact, no known “swamp adder.” See page 259 for a discussion of the identity of the breed of the snake.

41 “Although cobra venom acts comparatively quickly, no victim could possibly die within ten seconds of being bitten, as Holmes asserted,” D. Martin Dakin points out. Julia Stoner “slowly sank and died,” presumably taking an hour or two to expire; it then seems likely, Dakin continues, that Dr. Roylott was still alive upon Holmes and Watson’s entrance. Assuming that Watson has disclosed all of the events that occurred, he was surely negligent in failing to check Roylott’s vital signs or administer any sort of treatment.

42 “He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him” (Ecclesiastes, 10:8).

43 Commentators note that the safe had no ventilator holes (otherwise Holmes surely would have commented upon them) and therefore must have been a most inhospitable habitat for a snake, even one so apparently malleable as Roylott’s.

44 There are revisionist theories respecting “The Speckled Band.” Several argue that Helen Stoner murdered Julia and Dr. Roylott, and probably her mother as well. Vivian Darkbloom, in the self-described “somewhat revisionist” essay “Holmes Is Where the Heart Is, or Tooth-Tooth, Tootsie,” suggests that Holmes murdered Dr. Roylott, to clear the way for an illicit liaison with Helen Stoner. Roylott’s behaviour,

the essay contends, was not that of a murderer but of a man attempting to scare off a suitor. The essay appeared in the December 1976 issue of the Sherlockian journal *Baker Street Miscellanea*, and the editors reported that “the anagrammatically pseudonymous Vivian Darkbloom has not seen fit to furnish us with any personal data, and considering the scandalously iconoclastic thrust of her principal thesis, we are not surprised. The author appears to be California-based, also engaged in medical studies, and a student of the works of Vladimir Nabokov as well as John H. Watson’s . . .” A character named “Vivian Darkbloom” appeared in Stanley Kubrick’s 1961 film version of Nabokov’s *Lolita*, for which Nabokov wrote the screenplay, and in “Vladimir Nabokov: In Tribute to Sherlock Holmes,” Andrew Page analyses references and images in Nabokov’s *Lolita*, *The Defense*, *Invitation to a Beheading*, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, *Invitation of a Beheading*, and *Pale Fire* that demonstrate the author’s familiarity with and affection for the Canon.

However, in “On the Sinister Affair of the Darkbloom Paper,” Wayne B. Swift refutes the conclusions of the “alleged person named Vivian Darkbloom,” pointing the finger of guilt at Helen Stoner and denouncing the published account as a Moriarty plot to discredit Holmes. Another scholar proposes that Holmes murdered Julia Stoner and helped Helen murder Dr. Roylott. In *Sherlock and the Ladies*, Brad Keefauver concludes that Helen Stoner schemed to create a situation in which Watson ended up killing the hot-headed Dr. Roylott in self-defence.

[45](#) Lionel Needleman observes in puzzlement that the whistle was heard just before Holmes “lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull,” meaning that the snake was on its way down to the bed. Hence it is incongruous that Dr. Roylott, presuming he intended to murder Helen Stoner, should summon the snake to return *before* it had had time to bite her. The lighting of a match alone would not have triggered a premature recall, Needleman muses, for Julia Stoner had similarly lit a match upon seeing the snake, but the whistle that night had not sounded until *after* her screams indicated the snake’s success.

[46](#) D. Martin Dakin criticizes Holmes’s pre-selection of the cane as a defensive weapon, unless one assumes that he *wanted* to drive the snake to attack Dr. Roylott.

[47](#) Arthur Conan Doyle evidently liked Watson’s story so much that he licensed its use for a play, *The Speckled Band*, which he wrote and produced at the Adelphi Theatre in London on June 4, 1910. The plot and characters differ considerably from those in Watson’s account.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ENGINEER'S THUMB1

“The Engineer’s Thumb” is the only case ever brought to Holmes by Dr. Watson himself. When a late-night call from a thumb-deprived patient rouses Watson, he displays good sense (if not good doctoring) in whisking his patient over to see Holmes. Here, a strange tale of German counterfeiters unfolds, in which we meet the first of the many corrupt colonels who populate the Canon. There is little actual detection in the tale, and Holmes appears to take scant interest in catching the crooks. The physical evidence of the titular amputation seems incongruous with the explanation offered by the young Victor Hatherley, and we may be left to wonder whether he is covering up for his own criminal activities.

OF ALL THE problems which have been submitted to my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes for solution during the years of our intimacy, there were only two which

I was the means of introducing to his notice, that of Mr. Hatherley's thumb and that of Colonel Warburton's madness.² Of these the latter may have afforded a finer field for an acute and original observer, but the other was so strange in its inception and so dramatic in its details, that it may be the more worthy of being placed upon record, even if it gave my friend fewer openings for those deductive methods of reasoning by which he achieved such remarkable results. The story has, I believe, been told more than once in the newspapers, but, like all such narratives, its effect is much less striking when set forth *en bloc* in a single half-column of print than when the facts slowly evolve before your own eyes and the mystery clears gradually away as each new discovery furnishes a step which leads on to the complete truth. At the time the circumstances made a deep impression upon me, and the lapse of two years has hardly served to weaken the effect.

It was in the summer of '89, not long after my marriage,³ that the events occurred which I am now about to summarise. I had returned to civil practice,⁴ and had finally abandoned Holmes in his Baker Street rooms, although I continually visited him, and occasionally even persuaded him to forego his Bohemian habits so far as to come and visit us. My practice had steadily increased, and as I happened to live at no very great distance from Paddington Station, I got a few patients from among the officials.⁵ One of these, whom I had cured of a painful and lingering disease, was never weary of advertising my virtues, and of endeavouring to send me on every sufferer over whom he might have any influence.

One morning, at a little before seven o'clock, I was awakened by the maid tapping at the door, to announce that two men had come from Paddington, and were waiting in the consulting room. I dressed hurriedly, for I knew by experience that railway cases were seldom trivial, and hastened downstairs. As I descended, my old ally, the guard, came out of the room, and closed the door tightly behind him.

"I've got him here," he whispered, jerking his thumb over his shoulder; "he's all right."

"What is it, then?" I asked, for his manner suggested that it was some strange creature which he had caged up in my room.

"It's a new patient," he whispered. "I thought I'd bring him round myself; then he couldn't slip away. There he is, all safe and sound. I must go now, Doctor; I have my dooties, just the same as you." And off he went, this trusty tout, without even giving me time to thank him.

I entered my consulting room and found a gentleman seated by the table. He

was quietly dressed in a suit of heather tweed, with a soft cloth cap, which he had laid down upon my books. Round one of his hands he had a handkerchief wrapped, which was mottled all over with bloodstains. He was young, not more than five-and-twenty, I should say, with a strong masculine face; but he was exceedingly pale and gave me the impression of a man who was suffering from some strong agitation, which it took all his strength of mind to control.

“I am sorry to knock you up so early, Doctor,” said he. “But I have had a very serious accident during the night. I came in by train this morning, and on inquiring at Paddington as to where I might find a doctor a worthy fellow very kindly escorted me here. I gave the maid a card, but I see that she has left it upon the side table.”

I took it up and glanced at it. “Mr. Victor Hatherley, hydraulic engineer,⁶ 16A, Victoria Street (3rd floor).” That was the name, style, and abode of my morning visitor. “I regret that I have kept you waiting,” said I, sitting down in my library chair. “You are fresh from a night journey,⁷ I understand, which is in itself a monotonous occupation.”

“Oh, my night could not be called monotonous,” said he, and laughed. He laughed very heartily, with a high ringing note, leaning back in his chair, and shaking his sides. All my medical instincts rose up against that laugh.

“Stop it!” I cried. “Pull yourself together!” and I poured out some water from a carafe.

It was useless, however. He was off in one of those hysterical outbursts which come upon a strong nature when some great crisis is over and gone. Presently he came to himself once more, very weary and blushing hotly.⁸

“I have been making a fool of myself,” he gasped.

“Not at all. Drink this!” I dashed some brandy into the water, and the colour began to come back to his bloodless cheeks.

“That’s better!” said he. “And now, Doctor, perhaps you would kindly attend to my thumb,⁹ or rather to the place where my thumb used to be.” He unwound the handkerchief and held out his hand. It gave even my hardened nerves a shudder to look at it. There were four protruding fingers and a horrid red spongy surface where the thumb should have been. It had been hacked or torn right out from the roots.¹⁰

“Good heavens!” I cried, “this is a terrible injury. It must have bled considerably.”

“Yes, it did. I fainted when it was done; and I think that I must have been senseless for a long time. When I came to I found that it was still bleeding, so I tied one end of my handkerchief very tightly round the wrist, and braced it up

with a twig.”

“Excellent! You should have been a surgeon.”

“It is a question of hydraulics, you see, and came within my own province.”



“He unwound the handkerchief, and held out his hand.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“This has been done,” said I, examining the wound, “by a very heavy and sharp instrument.”

“A thing like a cleaver,” said he.

“An accident, I presume?”

“By no means.”

“What, a murderous attack!”

“Very murderous indeed.”

“You horrify me.”

I sponged the wound, cleaned it, dressed it; and finally covered it over with cotton wadding and carbolized bandages.¹¹ He lay back without wincing, though he bit his lip from time to time.

“How is that?” I asked, when I had finished.¹²

“Capital! Between your brandy and your bandage, I feel a new man. I was very weak, but I have had a good deal to go through.”

“Perhaps you had better not speak of the matter. It is evidently trying to your nerves.”

“Oh, no; not now. I shall have to tell my tale to the police; but, between ourselves, if it were not for the convincing evidence of this wound of mine, I should be surprised if they believed my statement; for it is a very extraordinary one, and I have not much in the way of proof with which to back it up. And, even if they believe me, the clues which I can give them are so vague that it is a

question whether justice will be done.”

“Ha!” cried I, “if it is anything in the nature of a problem which you desire to see solved, I should strongly recommend you to come to my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes before you go to the official police.”

“Oh, I have heard of that fellow,”¹³ answered my visitor, “and I should be very glad if he would take the matter up, though of course I must use the official police as well. Would you give me an introduction to him?”

“I’ll do better. I’ll take you round to him myself.”

“I should be immensely obliged to you.”

“We’ll call a cab and go together. We shall just be in time to have a little breakfast with him.¹⁴ Do you feel equal to it?”

“Yes, I shall not feel easy until I have told my story.”

“Then my servant will call a cab, and I shall be with you in an instant.” I rushed upstairs, explained the matter shortly to my wife, and in five minutes was inside a hansom, driving with my new acquaintance to Baker Street.

Sherlock Holmes was, as I expected, lounging about his sitting-room in his dressing-gown, reading the agony column of *The Times*¹⁵ and smoking his before-breakfast pipe, which was composed of all the plugs and dottles¹⁶ left from his smokes of the day before, all carefully dried and collected on the corner of the mantelpiece. He received us in his quietly genial fashion, ordered fresh rashers¹⁷ and eggs, and joined us in a hearty meal. When it was concluded he settled our new acquaintance upon the sofa, placed a pillow beneath his head, and laid a glass of brandy and water within his reach.

“It is easy to see that your experience has been no common one, Mr. Hatherley,” said he. “Pray lie down there and make yourself absolutely at home. Tell us what you can, but stop when you are tired, and keep up your strength with a little stimulant.”

“Thank you,” said my patient, “but I have felt another man since the doctor bandaged me, and I think that your breakfast has completed the cure. I shall take up as little of your valuable time as possible, so I shall start at once upon my peculiar experiences.”



“He settled our new acquaintance on the sofa.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

Holmes sat in his big armchair with the weary, heavy-lidded expression which veiled his keen and eager nature, while I sat opposite to him, and we listened in silence to the strange story which our visitor detailed to us.

“You must know,” said he, “that I am an orphan and a bachelor, residing alone in lodgings in London. By profession I am a hydraulic engineer, and I have had considerable experience of my work during the seven years that I was apprenticed to Venner and Matheson, the well-known firm, of Greenwich. Two years ago, having served my time, and having also come into a fair sum of money through my poor father’s death, I determined to start in business for myself, and took professional chambers in Victoria Street.

“I suppose that every one finds his first independent start in business a dreary experience. To me it has been exceptionally so. During two years I have had three consultations and one small job, and that is absolutely all that my profession has brought me. My gross takings amount to twenty-seven pounds ten. Every day, from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon, I waited in my little den, until at last my heart began to sink, and I came to believe that I should never have any practice at all.

“Yesterday, however, just as I was thinking of leaving the office, my clerk entered to say there was a gentleman waiting who wished to see me upon business. He brought up a card, too, with the name of ‘Colonel Lysander Stark’ engraved upon it. Close at his heels came the Colonel himself, a man rather over the middle size but of an exceeding thinness. I do not think that I have ever seen so thin a man. His whole face sharpened away into nose and chin, and the skin of his cheeks was drawn quite tense over his outstanding bones. Yet this emaciation seemed to be his natural habit, and due to no disease, for his eye was bright, his step brisk, and his bearing assured. He was plainly but neatly dressed, and his

age, I should judge, would be nearer forty than thirty.



“Colonel Lysander Stark.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘Mr. Hatherley?’ said he, with something of a German accent. ‘You have been recommended to me, Mr. Hatherley, as being a man who is not only proficient in his profession, but is also discreet and capable of preserving a secret.’

“I bowed, feeling as flattered as any young man would at such an address. ‘May I ask who it was who gave me so good a character?’

“ ‘Well, perhaps it is better that I should not tell you that just at this moment. I have it from the same source that you are both an orphan and a bachelor, and are residing alone in London.’

“ ‘That is quite correct,’ I answered, ‘but you will excuse me if I say that I cannot see how all this bears upon my professional qualifications. I understand that it was on a professional matter that you wished to speak to me?’

“ ‘Undoubtedly so. But you will find that all I say is really to the point. I have a professional commission for you, but absolute secrecy is quite essential—*absolute* secrecy, you understand, and of course we may expect that more from a man who is alone than from one who lives in the bosom of his family.’

“ ‘If I promise to keep a secret,’ said I, ‘you may absolutely depend upon my doing so.’

“He looked very hard at me as I spoke, and it seemed to me that I had never

seen so suspicious and questioning an eye.

“ ‘You do promise, then?’ said he at last.

“ ‘Yes, I promise.’

“ ‘Absolute and complete silence before, during, and after? No reference to the matter at all, either in word or writing?’

“ ‘I have already given you my word.’

“ ‘Very good.’ He suddenly sprang up, and darting like lightning across the room he flung open the door. The passage outside was empty.

“ ‘That’s all right,’ said he, coming back. ‘I know the clerks are sometimes curious as to their master’s affairs. Now we can talk in safety.’ He drew up his chair very close to mine, and began to stare at me again with the same questioning and thoughtful look.

“A feeling of repulsion, and of something akin to fear had begun to rise within me at the strange antics of this fleshless man. Even my dread of losing a client could not restrain me from showing my impatience.

“ ‘I beg that you will state your business, sir,’ said I; ‘my time is of value.’ Heaven forgive me for that last sentence, but the words came to my lips.

“ ‘How would fifty guineas for a night’s work suit you?’ he asked.

“ ‘Most admirably.’

“ ‘I say a night’s work, but an hour’s would be nearer the mark. I simply want your opinion about a hydraulic stamping machine which has got out of gear. If you show us what is wrong we shall soon set it right ourselves. What do you think of such a commission as that?’

“ ‘The work appears to be light and the pay munificent.’

“ ‘Precisely so. We shall want you to come to-night by the last train.’

“ ‘Where to?’

“ ‘To Eyford, in Berkshire.¹⁸ It is a little place near the borders of Oxfordshire, and within seven miles of Reading. There is a train from Paddington which would bring you in there at about eleven fifteen.’

“ ‘Very good.’

“ ‘I shall come down in a carriage to meet you.’

“ ‘There is a drive, then?’

“ ‘Yes, our little place is quite out in the country. It is a good seven miles from Eyford Station.’

“ ‘Then we can hardly get there before midnight. I suppose there would be no chance of a train back. I should be compelled to stop the night.’

“ ‘Yes, we could easily give you a shake down.’¹⁹

“ ‘That is very awkward. Could I not come at some more convenient hour?’

“ ‘We have judged it best that you should come late. It is to recompense you for any inconvenience that we are paying to you, a young and unknown man, a fee which would buy an opinion from the very heads of your profession. Still, of course, if you would like to draw out of the business, there is plenty of time to do so.’

“ ‘I thought of the fifty guineas, and of how very useful they would be to me. ‘Not at all,’ said I, ‘I shall be very happy to accommodate myself to your wishes. I should like, however, to understand a little more clearly what it is that you wish me to do.’

“ ‘Quite so. It is very natural that the pledge of secrecy which we have exacted from you should have aroused your curiosity. I have no wish to commit you to anything without your having it all laid before you. I suppose that we are absolutely safe from eavesdroppers?’

“ ‘Entirely.’

“ ‘Then the matter stands thus. You are probably aware that fuller’s earth²⁰ is a valuable product, and that it is only found in one or two places in England?’²¹

“ ‘I have heard so.’

“ ‘Some little time ago I bought a small place—a very small place—within ten miles of Reading. I was fortunate enough to discover that there was a deposit of fuller’s-earth in one of my fields. On examining it, however, I found that this deposit was a comparatively small one, and that it formed a link between two very much larger ones upon the right and left—both of them, however, in the grounds of my neighbours. These good people were absolutely ignorant that their land contained that which was quite as valuable as a gold mine. Naturally, it was to my interest to buy their land before they discovered its true value; but unfortunately, I had no capital by which I could do this. I took a few of my friends into the secret, however, and they suggested that we should quietly and secretly work our own little deposit, and that in this way we should earn the money which would enable us to buy the neighbouring fields. This we have now been doing for some time, and in order to help us in our operations we erected a hydraulic press.²² This press, as I have already explained, has got out of order, and we wish your advice upon the subject. We guard our secret very jealously, however, and if it once became known that we had hydraulic engineers coming to our little house, it would soon rouse inquiry, and then, if the facts came out, it would be good-bye to any chance of getting these fields and carrying out our plans. That is why I have made you promise me that you will not tell a human being that you are going to Eyford to-night. I hope that I make it all plain?’

“ ‘I quite follow you,’ said I. ‘The only point which I could not quite

understand, was what use you could make of a hydraulic press in excavating fuller's earth, which, as I understand, is dug out like gravel from a pit.'

" 'Ah!' said he, carelessly, 'we have our own process. We compress the earth into bricks, so as to remove them without revealing what they are. But that is a mere detail. I have taken you fully into my confidence now, Mr. Hatherley, and I have shown you how I trust you.' He rose as he spoke. 'I shall expect you, then, at Eyford at 11.15.'

" 'I shall certainly be there.'

" 'And not a word to a soul.' He looked at me with a last, long, questioning gaze, and then, pressing my hand in a cold, dank grasp, he hurried from the room.

"Well, when I came to think it all over in cool blood I was very much astonished, as you may both think, at this sudden commission which had been intrusted to me. On the one hand, of course, I was glad, for the fee was at least tenfold what I should have asked had I set a price upon my own services, and it was possible that this order might lead to other ones. On the other hand, the face and manner of my patron had made an unpleasant impression upon me, and I could not think that his explanation of the fuller's earth was sufficient to explain the necessity for my coming at midnight, and his extreme anxiety lest I should tell any one of my errand. However, I threw all my fears to the winds, ate a hearty supper, drove to Paddington, and started off, having obeyed to the letter the injunction as to holding my tongue.



“ ‘Not a word to a soul!’ ”

“At Reading I had to change not only my carriage but my station. However, I was in time for the last train to Eyford, and I reached the little dim-lit station after eleven o’clock. I was the only passenger who got out there, and there was no one upon the platform save a single sleepy porter with a lantern. As I passed out through the wicket gate, however, I found my acquaintance of the morning waiting in the shadow upon the other side. Without a word he grasped my arm and hurried me into a carriage, the door of which was standing open. He drew up the windows on either side, tapped on the woodwork, and away we went as hard as the horse could go.”

“One horse?” interjected Holmes.

“Yes, only one.”

“Did you observe the colour?”

“Yes, I saw it by the sidelights when I was stepping into the carriage. It was a chestnut.”

“Tired-looking or fresh?”

“Oh, fresh and glossy.”

“Thank you. I am sorry to have interrupted you. Pray continue your most interesting statement.”

“Away we went then, and we drove for at least an hour. Colonel Lysander Stark had said that it was only seven miles, but I should think, from the rate that we seemed to go, and from the time that we took, that it must have been nearer twelve. He sat at my side in silence all the time, and I was aware, more than once when I glanced in his direction, that he was looking at me with great intensity. The country roads seem to be not very good in that part of the world, for we lurched and jolted terribly. I tried to look out of the windows to see something of where we were, but they were made of frosted glass, and I could make out nothing save the occasional blur of a passing light. Now and then I hazarded some remark to break the monotony of the journey, but the Colonel answered only in monosyllables, and the conversation soon flagged. At last, however, the bumping of the road was exchanged for the crisp smoothness of a gravel drive, and the carriage came to a stand. Colonel Lysander Stark sprang out, and, as I followed after him, pulled me swiftly into a porch which gaped in front of us. We stepped, as it were, right out of the carriage and into the hall, so that I failed to catch the most fleeting glance of the front of the house. The instant that I had crossed the threshold the door slammed heavily behind us, and I heard faintly the rattle of the wheels as the carriage drove away.

“It was pitch dark inside the house, and the Colonel fumbled about looking for

matches and muttering under his breath. Suddenly a door opened at the other end of the passage, and a long, golden bar of light shot out in our direction. It grew broader, and a woman appeared with a lamp in her hand, which she held above her head, pushing her face forward and peering at us. I could see that she was pretty, and from the gloss with which the light shone upon her dark dress I knew that it was a rich material. She spoke a few words in a foreign tongue in a tone as though asking a question, and when my companion answered in a gruff monosyllable she gave such a start that the lamp nearly fell from her hand. Colonel Stark went up to her, whispered something in her ear, and then, pushing her back into the room from whence she had come, he walked towards me again with the lamp in his hand.

“ ‘Perhaps you will have the kindness to wait in this room for a few minutes,’ said he, throwing open another door. It was a quiet little, plainly furnished room, with a round table in the centre, on which several German books were scattered. Colonel Stark laid down the lamp on the top of a harmonium²³ beside the door. ‘I shall not keep you waiting an instant,’ said he, and vanished into the darkness.

“I glanced at the books upon the table, and in spite of my ignorance of German I could see that two of them were treatises on science, the others being volumes of poetry. Then I walked across to the window, hoping that I might catch some glimpse of the country side, but an oak shutter, heavily barred, was folded across it. It was a wonderfully silent house. There was an old clock ticking loudly somewhere in the passage, but otherwise everything was deadly still. A vague feeling of uneasiness began to steal over me. Who were these German people, and what were they doing living in this strange, out-of-the-way place? And where was the place? I was ten miles or so from Eyford, that was all I knew, but whether north, south, east, or west I had no idea. For that matter Reading, and possibly other large towns, were within that radius, so the place might not be so secluded after all. Yet it was quite certain, from the absolute stillness, that we were in the country. I paced up and down the room, humming a tune under my breath to keep up my spirits, and feeling that I was thoroughly earning my fifty-guinea fee.

“Suddenly, without any preliminary sound in the midst of the utter stillness, the door of my room swung slowly open. The woman was standing in the aperture, the darkness of the hall behind her, the yellow light from my lamp beating upon her eager and beautiful face. I could see at a glance that she was sick with fear, and the sight sent a chill to my own heart. She held up one shaking finger to warn me to be silent, and she shot a few whispered words of broken English at me, her eyes glancing back, like those of a frightened horse, into the gloom behind her.

“ ‘I would go,’ said she, trying hard, as it seemed to me, to speak calmly; ‘I would go. I should not stay here. There is no good for you to do.’

“ ‘But, madam,’ said I, ‘I have not yet done what I came for. I cannot possibly leave until I have seen the machine.’

“ ‘It is not worth your while to wait,’ she went on. ‘You can pass through the door; no one hinders.’ And then, seeing that I smiled and shook my head, she suddenly threw aside her constraint, and made a step forward, with her hands wrung together. ‘For the love of Heaven!’ she whispered, ‘get away from here before it is too late!’

“But I am somewhat headstrong by nature, and the more ready to engage in an affair when there is some obstacle in the way. I thought of my fifty-guinea fee, of my wearisome journey, and of the unpleasant night which seemed to be before me. Was it all to go for nothing? Why should I slink away without having carried out my commission, and without the payment which was my due? This woman might, for all I knew, be a monomaniac.²⁴ With a stout bearing, therefore, though her manner had shaken me more than I cared to confess, I still shook my head, and declared my intention of remaining where I was. She was about to renew her entreaties when a door slammed overhead, and the sound of several footsteps was heard upon the stair. She listened for an instant, threw up her hands with a despairing gesture, and vanished as suddenly and as noiselessly as she had come.



“ ‘Get away from here before it is too late!’ ”

“The new-comers were Colonel Lysander Stark, and a short thick man with a chinchilla beard²⁵ growing out of the creases of his double chin, who was introduced to me as Mr. Ferguson.

“ ‘This is my secretary and manager,’ said the Colonel. ‘By the way, I was under the impression that I left this door shut just now. I fear that you have felt the draught.’

“ ‘On the contrary,’ said I, ‘I opened the door myself, because I felt the room to be a little close.’

“He shot one of his suspicious glances at me. ‘Perhaps we had better proceed to business, then,’ said he. ‘Mr. Ferguson and I will take you up to see the machine.’

“ ‘I had better put my hat on, I suppose.’

“ ‘Oh no, it is in the house.’

“ ‘What, do you dig fuller’s earth in the house?’

“ ‘No, no. This is only where we compress it. But never mind that! All we wish you to do is to examine the machine, and to let us know what is wrong with it.’

“We went upstairs together, the Colonel first with the lamp, the fat manager and I behind him. It was a labyrinth of an old house, with corridors, passages, narrow winding staircases, and little low doors, the thresholds of which were hollowed out by the generations who had crossed them. There were no carpets and no signs of any furniture above the ground floor, while the plaster was peeling off the walls, and the damp was breaking through in green, unhealthy blotches. I tried to put on as unconcerned an air as possible, but I had not forgotten the warnings of the lady, even though I disregarded them, and I kept a keen eye upon my two companions. Ferguson appeared to be a morose and silent man, but I could see from the little that he said that he was at least a fellow-countryman.²⁶

“Colonel Lysander Stark stopped at last before a low door, which he unlocked. Within was a small square room, in which the three of us could hardly get at one time.²⁷ Ferguson remained outside, and the Colonel ushered me in.

“ ‘We are now,’ said he, ‘actually within the hydraulic press, and it would be a particularly unpleasant thing for us if any one were to turn it on. The ceiling of this small chamber is really the end of the descending piston, and it comes down with the force of many tons upon this metal floor. There are small lateral columns of water outside which receive the force, and which transmit and multiply it in the manner which is familiar to you. The machine goes readily

enough, but there is some stiffness in the working of it, and it has lost a little of its force. Perhaps you will have the goodness to look it over, and to show us how we can set it right.'

"I took the lamp from him, and I examined the machine very thoroughly. It was indeed a gigantic one,²⁸ and capable of exercising enormous pressure. When I passed outside, however, and pressed down the levers which controlled it, I knew at once by the whishing sound that there was a slight leakage, which allowed a regurgitation of water through one of the side cylinders. An examination showed that one of the indiarubber²⁹ bands which was round the head of a driving rod had shrunk so as not quite to fill the socket along which it worked. This was clearly the cause of the loss of power, and I pointed it out to my companions, who followed my remarks very carefully, and asked several practical questions as to how they should proceed to set it right. When I had made it clear to them, I returned to the main chamber of the machine, and took a good look at it to satisfy my own curiosity. It was obvious at a glance that the story of the fuller's earth was the merest fabrication, for it would be absurd to suppose that so powerful an engine could be designed for so inadequate a purpose. The walls were of wood, but the floor consisted of a large iron trough, and when I came to examine it I could see a crust of metallic deposit all over it. I had stooped and was scraping at this to see exactly what it was, when I heard a muttered exclamation in German, and saw the cadaverous face of the Colonel looking down at me.

" 'What are you doing there?' he asked.

"I felt angry at having been tricked by so elaborate a story as that which he had told me. 'I was admiring your fuller's-earth,' said I; 'I think that I should be better able to advise you as to your machine if I knew what the exact purpose was for which it was used.'

"The instant that I uttered the words I regretted the rashness of my speech. His face set hard, and a baleful light sprang up in his grey eyes.

" 'Very well,' said he, 'you shall know all about the machine.' He took a step backward, slammed the little door, and turned the key in the lock. I rushed towards it and pulled at the handle, but it was quite secure, and did not give in the least to my kicks and shoves. 'Hullo!' I yelled. 'Hullo! Colonel! Let me out!'

"And then suddenly in the silence I heard a sound which sent my heart into my mouth. It was the clank of the levers, and the swish of the leaking cylinder. He had set the engine at work. The lamp still stood upon the floor where I had placed it when examining the trough. By its light I saw that the black ceiling was coming down upon me, slowly, jerkily, but, as none knew better than myself,

with a force which must within a minute grind me to a shapeless pulp. I threw myself, screaming, against the door, and dragged with my nails at the lock. I implored the Colonel to let me out, but the remorseless clanking of the levers drowned my cries. The ceiling was only a foot or two above my head, and with my hand upraised I could feel its hard, rough surface. Then it flashed through my mind that the pain of my death would depend very much upon the position in which I met it. If I lay on my face the weight would come upon my spine, and I shuddered to think of that dreadful snap. Easier the other way, perhaps, and yet had I the nerve to lie and look up at that deadly black shadow wavering down upon me? Already I was unable to stand erect, when my eye caught something which brought a gush of hope back to my heart.



“I rushed to the door.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I have said that though floor and ceiling were of iron, the walls were of wood. As I gave a last hurried glance around, I saw a thin line of yellow light between two of the boards, which broadened and broadened as a small panel was pushed backwards.³⁰ For an instant I could hardly believe that here was indeed a door which led away from death. The next I threw myself through, and lay half-fainting upon the other side. The panel had closed again behind me, but the crash of the lamp, and a few moments afterwards the clang of the two slabs of metal, told me how narrow had been my escape.

“I was recalled to myself by a frantic plucking at my wrist, and I found myself lying upon the stone floor of a narrow corridor, while a woman bent over me and

tugged at me with her left hand, while she held a candle in her right. It was the same good friend whose warning I had so foolishly rejected.

“ ‘Come! come!’ she cried, breathlessly. ‘They will be here in a moment. They will see that you are not there. Oh, do not waste the so precious time, but come!’



A woman bent over me . . . a candle in her right hand.

Dan Smith, *Sunday Portland Oregonian*, August 27, 1905

“This time, at least, I did not scorn her advice. I staggered to my feet, and ran with her along the corridor and down a winding stair. The latter led to another broad passage, and, just as we reached it, we heard the sound of running feet, and the shouting of two voices—one answering the other—from the floor on which we were and from the one beneath. My guide stopped, and looked about her like one who is at her wit’s end. Then she threw open a door which led into a bedroom, through the window of which the moon was shining brightly.

“ ‘It is your only chance,’ said she. ‘It is high, but it may be that you can jump it.’

“As she spoke a light sprang into view at the further end of the passage, and I saw the lean figure of Colonel Lysander Stark rushing forward with a lantern in one hand, and a weapon like a butcher’s cleaver in the other. I rushed across the bedroom, flung open the window, and looked out. How quiet and sweet and wholesome the garden looked in the moonlight, and it could not be more than thirty feet down. I clambered out upon the sill, but I hesitated to jump, until I should have heard what passed between my saviour and the ruffian who pursued me. If she were ill-used, then at any risks I was determined to go back to her assistance. The thought had hardly flashed through my mind before he was at the

door, pushing his way past her; but she threw her arms round him, and tried to hold him back.

“ ‘Fritz! Fritz!’³¹ she cried in English, ‘remember your promise after the last time. You said it should not be again. He will be silent! Oh, he will be silent!’

“ ‘You are mad, Elise!’ he shouted, struggling to break away from her. ‘You will be the ruin of us. He has seen too much. Let me pass, I say!’ He dashed her to one side, and, rushing to the window, cut at me with his heavy weapon. I had let myself go, and was hanging with my fingers in the window slot and my hands across the sill,³² when his blow fell. I was conscious of a dull pain, my grip loosened, and I fell into the garden below.

“I was shaken, but not hurt by the fall; so I picked myself up, and rushed off among the bushes as hard as I could run, for I understood that I was far from being out of danger yet. Suddenly, however, as I ran, a deadly dizziness and sickness came over me. I glanced down at my hand, which was throbbing painfully, and then, for the first time, saw that my thumb had been cut off, and that the blood was pouring from my wound. I endeavoured to tie my handkerchief round it, but there came a sudden buzzing in my ears, and next moment I fell in a dead faint among the rose-bushes.



“He cut at me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“How long I remained unconscious I cannot tell. It must have been a very long time, for the moon had sunk, and a bright morning was breaking when I came to myself. My clothes were all sodden with dew, and my coat-sleeve was

drenched with blood from my wounded thumb.³³ The smarting of it recalled in an instant all the particulars of my night's adventure, and I sprang to my feet with the feeling that I might hardly yet be safe from my pursuers. But, to my astonishment, when I came to look round me, neither house nor garden were to be seen. I had been lying in an angle of the hedge close by the highroad, and just a little lower down was a long building, which proved, upon my approaching it, to be the very station at which I had arrived upon the previous night. Were it not for the ugly wound upon my hand, all that had passed during those dreadful hours might have been an evil dream.

"Half dazed, I went into the station, and asked about the morning train. There would be one to Reading in less than an hour. The same porter was on duty, I found, as had been there when I arrived. I inquired of him whether he had ever heard of Colonel Lysander Stark. The name was strange to him. Had he observed a carriage the night before waiting for me? No, he had not. Was there a police-station anywhere near? There was one about three miles off.

"It was too far for me to go, weak and ill as I was. I determined to wait until I got back to town before telling my story to the police. It was a little past six when I arrived, so I went first to have my wound dressed, and then the doctor was kind enough to bring me along here. I put the case into your hands, and shall do exactly what you advise."

We both sat in silence for some little time after listening to this extraordinary narrative. Then Sherlock Holmes pulled down from the shelf one of the ponderous commonplace books in which he placed his cuttings.

"Here is an advertisement which will interest you," said he. "It appeared in all the papers about a year ago. Listen to this:—

Lost, on the 9th inst., Mr. Jeremiah Hayling, aged 26, a hydraulic engineer. Left his lodgings at ten o'clock at night, and has not been heard of since. Was dressed in, &c., &c.

"Ha! That represents the last time that the Colonel needed to have his machine overhauled, I fancy."

"Good heavens!" cried my patient. "then that explains what the girl said."

"Undoubtedly. It is quite clear that the Colonel was a cool and desperate man, who was absolutely determined that nothing should stand in the way of his little game, like those out-and-out pirates who will leave no survivor from a captured ship. Well, every moment now is precious, so, if you feel equal to it, we shall go down to Scotland Yard at once as a preliminary to starting for Eyford."

Some three hours or so afterwards we were all in the train together, bound

from Reading to the little Berkshire village. There were Sherlock Holmes, the hydraulic engineer, Inspector Bradstreet of Scotland Yard, a plain-clothes man, and myself. Bradstreet had spread an ordnance map³⁴ of the county out upon the seat, and was busy with his compasses drawing a circle with Eyford for its centre.

“There you are,” said he. “That circle is drawn at a radius of ten miles from the village. The place we want must be somewhere near that line. You said ten miles, I think, sir.”

“It was an hour’s good drive.”

“And you think that they brought you back all that way when you were unconscious?”

“They must have done so. I have a confused memory, too, of having been lifted and conveyed somewhere.”

“What I cannot understand,” said I, “is why they should have spared you when they found you lying fainting in the garden. Perhaps the villain was softened by the woman’s entreaties.”

“I hardly think that likely. I never saw a more inexorable face in my life.”

“Oh, we shall soon clear up all that,” said Bradstreet. “Well, I have drawn my circle, and I only wish I knew at what point upon it the folk that we are in search of are to be found.”

“I think I could lay my finger on it,” said Holmes, quietly.

“Really, now!” cried the Inspector, “you have formed your opinion! Come now, we shall see who agrees with you. I say it is south, for the country is more deserted there.”

“And I say east,” said my patient.

“I am for west,” remarked the plain-clothes man. “There are several quiet little villages up there.”

“And I am for north,” said I; “because there are no hills there, and our friend says that he did not notice the carriage go up any.”

“Come,” cried the Inspector, laughing; “it’s a very pretty diversity of opinion. We have boxed the compass³⁵ among us. Who do you give your casting vote to?”

“You are all wrong.”

“But we can’t all be.”

“Oh yes, you can. This is my point.” He placed his finger in the centre of the circle. “This is where we shall find them.”

“But the twelve-mile drive?” gasped Hatherley.

“Six out and six back. Nothing simpler. You say yourself that the horse was

fresh and glossy when you got in. How could it be that, if it had gone twelve miles over heavy roads?"

"Indeed, it is a likely ruse enough," observed Bradstreet, thoughtfully. "Of course there can be no doubt as to the nature of this gang."

"None at all," said Holmes. "They are coiners³⁶ on a large scale, and have used the machine to form the amalgam³⁷ which has taken the place of silver."

"We have known for some time that a clever gang was at work," said the inspector.

"They have been turning out half-crowns by the thousand. We even traced them as far as Reading, but could get no farther; for they had covered their traces in a way that showed that they were very old hands. But now, thanks to this lucky chance, I think that we have got them right enough."

But the Inspector was mistaken, for those criminals were not destined to fall into the hands of justice. As we rolled into Eyford Station we saw a gigantic column of smoke which streamed up from behind a small clump of trees in the neighbourhood, and hung like an immense ostrich feather over the landscape.

"A house on fire?" asked Bradstreet, as the train steamed off again on its way.

"Yes, sir!" said the station-master.

"When did it break out?"

"I hear that it was during the night, sir, but it has got worse, and the whole place is in a blaze."

"Whose house is it?"

"Dr. Becher's."

"Tell me," broke in the engineer, "is Dr. Becher a German, very thin, with a long sharp nose?"

The station-master laughed heartily. "No, sir, Dr. Becher is an Englishman, and there isn't a man in the parish who has a better-lined waistcoat. But he has a gentleman staying with him, a patient, as I understand, who is a foreigner, and he looks as if a little good Berkshire beef would do him no harm."

The station-master had not finished his speech before we were all hastening in the direction of the fire. The road topped a low hill, and there was a great widespread white-washed building in front of us, spouting fire at every chink and window, while in the garden in front three fire-engines were vainly striving to keep the flames under.



“A house on fire?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“That’s it!” cried Hatherley, in intense excitement. “There is the gravel drive, and there are the rose-bushes where I lay. That second window is the one that I jumped from.”

“Well, at least,” said Holmes, “You have had your revenge upon them. There can be no question that it was your oil lamp which, when it was crushed in the press, set fire to the wooden walls, though no doubt they were too excited in the chase after you to observe it at the time. Now keep your eyes open in this crowd for your friends of last night, though I very much fear that they are a good hundred miles off by now.”

And Holmes’s fear came to be realised, for from that day to this no word has ever been heard either of the beautiful woman, the sinister German, or the morose Englishman. Early that morning a peasant had met a cart, containing several people and some very bulky boxes driving rapidly in the direction of Reading, but there all traces of the fugitives disappeared, and even Holmes’s ingenuity failed ever to discover the least clue to their whereabouts.

The firemen had been much perturbed at the strange arrangements which they had found within, and still more so by discovering a newly severed human thumb upon a window-sill of the second floor. About sunset, however, their efforts were at last successful, and they subdued the flames,³⁸ but not before the roof had fallen in, and the whole place been reduced to such absolute ruin that, save some twisted cylinders and iron piping, not a trace remained of the machinery which had cost our unfortunate acquaintance so dearly. Large masses

of nickel and of tin were discovered stored in an out house, but no coins were to be found, which may have explained the presence of those bulky boxes which have been already referred to.

How our hydraulic engineer had been conveyed from the garden to the spot where he recovered his senses³⁹ might have remained for ever a mystery were it not for the soft mould, which told us a very plain tale. He had evidently been carried down by two persons, one of whom had remarkably small feet and the other unusually large ones. On the whole, it was most probable that the silent Englishman, being less bold or less murderous than his companion, had assisted the woman to bear the unconscious man out of the way of danger.



Fire brigade, *ca.* 1890.

Past Positive

“Well,” said our engineer, ruefully, as we took our seats to return once more to London, “it has been a pretty business for me! I have lost my thumb, and I have lost a fifty-guinea fee, and what have I gained?”

“Experience,” said Holmes, laughing.⁴⁰ “Indirectly it may be of value, you know; you have only to put it into words to gain the reputation of being excellent company for the remainder of your existence.”

¹ “The Engineer’s Thumb” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in March 1892.

² Arthur Conan Doyle received his M.D. in 1885 at the University of Edinburgh together with one Colonel William Pleace Warburton. Although there is no record of William Pleace Warburton suffering any mental disturbance, it is possible that he is the subject of the matter brought to Holmes’s attention and was introduced through Conan Doyle’s relationship with Watson.

³ “The Blanched Soldier,” note 5, for the implications of this statement.

⁴ This statement implies that Watson engaged in the private practice of medicine (a “civil practice,” as contrasted with his service as an army surgeon, his “military practice”) *before* 1889. It may have been a practice based at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital (Bart’s), where Watson was a resident; in *A Study in Scarlet*,

Watson records no interval between his residency and his course of study at Netley. Arthur Conan Doyle's unproduced play *Angels of Darkness*, probably written in 1885, shares many character names and elements with Watson's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), leading to suspicions of collaboration. While the play identifies Dr. John Watson as a San Francisco practitioner, the absence of Sherlock Holmes from the cast of characters makes it suspect as an historical document.

5 Watson refers here to the station-master, porters, ticket-takers, and other station workers.

6 Hydraulic engineering was then a subset of mechanical engineering, which encompassed the design and building of machinery, mills, steam engines (including, of course, trains), iron ships, and agricultural implements. The Institution of Mechanical Engineers was founded by George Stephenson, builder (with his son Robert) of the famed *Rocket* locomotive (see "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," note 9), at Birmingham, England, in 1847 and registered under the Companies Act in 1878. Together with the Society of Engineers, founded in 1854, Stephenson's Institution brought a standard of professionalism to a loosely organised field of study. Hydraulic engineers concerned themselves with machines utilising hydraulic engines as well as the general manipulation of the flow of water and other fluids. Seven hydraulic engineering firms were listed in the 1885 directory of the London-based United Telephone System; at least one of those firms also billed itself as a specialist in gas and hot water, and five were also listed under "mechanical engineers."

7 Hatherley's statement contradicts this conclusion several times.

8 The editors of the Doubleday (American) edition of the Canon substitute the phrase "pale-looking" in place of "blushing hotly." This seems to fit better with the description of Hatherley's "bloodless cheeks."

9 Left or right? Bliss Austin argues for the left thumb, on the basis that if Hatherley were right handed (which is statistically probable) and had injured his right thumb, "he could hardly have been so dextrous in tying tourniquets or eating hearty breakfasts."

10 Philip Weller notes that this wound is not consistent with an attack by a heavy, sharp instrument that Watson later surmises and Hatherley describes. Instead, such an instrument would produce a clean cut, not a "spongy" surface.

11 Bandages impregnated with carbolic acid or phenol. The compound's use as an anti-septic was popularised by Joseph Lister (1827–1912), a physician who revolutionised medicine by applying Pasteur's theories (that infection was caused by bacteria) to the practise of surgery. Prior to Lister's innovation, surgeons in England generally used ether as an anaesthetic, which made surgery tolerable for the patient but did nothing to prevent the potentially fatal onset of gangrene. In 1865, Lister set a patient's leg fracture and successfully treated the wound with carbolic acid. By 1880, according to Oxford University Press's *A Dictionary of Scientists*, the Listerian method had become standard surgical procedure, drastically reducing postoperative fatalities and other complications. Lister—who taught at Edinburgh from 1869 to 1876, a decade before Arthur Conan Doyle studied there—became the first physician to be raised to the peerage when he was made a baron in 1897.

12 There is much criticism of Watson's medical treatment, with some suggesting that Watson should have stitched up the wound and then should have prescribed a narcotic to deaden the pain and a hypnotic to help his patient sleep.

13 "The Engineer's Thumb" likely occurred in 1889 (see *Chronological Table*). The only *published* account of Holmes's activities at that time was *A Study in Scarlet*. In light of the limited circulation of *A Study in Scarlet*, Hatherley probably heard about Holmes from some other source.

14 The breakfast habits of Holmes (and Watson) are mysterious. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson refers to his own "late habits" and confesses that "I get up at all sorts of ungodly hours"; Holmes generally had breakfast

and left his apartment before Watson rose. This was presumably before Watson went into “harness” in Paddington. In “The Speckled Band,” however, Watson describes himself as “regular in my habits” and Holmes as a “late riser as a rule.” Here, Watson expects to discover Holmes taking his breakfast shortly after seven o’clock.

15 The department of personal advertisements in newspapers, first made famous in *The Times* of London. Christopher Morley comments: “All such columns exhibit a weird or comic mixture of human perplexities, hence the appropriate nickname.”

16 Pieces of tobacco pressed into a hard section (plugs) and unburnt or semi-burnt pieces (dottles) retrieved from a half-smoked pipe.

17 A thin slice of bacon or ham, broiled or fried.

18 There is no Eyford in Berkshire or anywhere else in England, for that matter. Joseph H. Gillies identifies the town as “Twyford,” near the borders of Oxfordshire.

19 An improvised bed (as one made up on the floor).

20 A sandy clay then used for industrial and medical purposes. The earthy, hydrous aluminium silicate, of which it is composed, was used for the absorption of grease by “fullers,” persons who worked with cloth.

21 *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th Ed.) lists Surrey and Yorkshire in England and Morayshire in Scotland.

22 The hydraulic press, invented in 1796 by Yorkshireman Joseph Bramah—a machinist and prolific inventor—exerts pressure on a small piston, which compresses fluid against a larger piston. By transmitting the force to a larger surface area, the force is “multiplied” by the ratio of the surface areas. For example, exerting 100 pounds of force on a piston of 2-inch diameter, which compresses liquid against a 6-inch-diameter piston, results in multiplying the force to 900 pounds. In other words, the compression of a column of water can be used to exert tremendous pressure on a target (for example, to shape or stamp metals, as in coining).

23 A portable reed-organ, equipped with a keyboard and sounded by air propelled by foot-pedal–operated bellows past reeds rather than pipes. The harmonium, patented by Alexandre Debain in 1848, was used in chapels, small churches, and homes.

24 An obsession of the mind by one idea or interest (from the French: *monomanie*). Monomania was recognised as early as 1838, in Jean Étienne Dominique Esquirol’s *Des Maladies Mentales* (Paris, 1838); in W. A. Guy’s *Principles of Forensic Medicine* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1845), it is called “partial moral mania.” However, this was merely a classification, and Victorian medicine offered no definite idea as to the pathological character or cause of the disease.

25 A beard gathered into tufts, resembling the fur of the animal. While the origin of the phrase is unknown, this limerick has achieved popularity:

When they catch a chinchilla in Chile,
They cut off its beard, willy-nilly,
With a small razor blade,
Just to say that they’ve made
A Chilean chinchilla’s chin chilly.

26 Between 1860 and 1900, writes Karl Beckson, in *London in the 1890s: A Cultural History*, Londoners generally regarded Germany as both a potentially malevolent power and a formidable economic competitor

in empire building. When William II (Kaiser Wilhelm) took the throne of Germany in 1888, strong anti-British feelings were widespread in Berlin, and it was supposed that the party from which it proceeded had the patronage of the emperor. However, the kaiser visited England annually, commencing in 1889, as the guest of the queen, and there was hope of an *entente cordiale*. The incident of the Jameson Raid in 1895, four years after publication of “The Engineer’s Thumb,” an abortive English-led invasion of the Transvaal, sparked a sympathetic telegram by the kaiser to the president of the Transvaal and caused a long alienation from England.

[27](#) Based on his own experiments, W. T. Rabe concludes that the room was probably no larger than two-and-a-half feet square. Without explaining these experiments, Rabe further concludes that Hatherley was 3.5 feet tall, calling into question Rabe’s original researches.

[28](#) While Hatherley’s nighttime journey successfully eluded detection, the presence of a “gigantic” hydraulic press in this secretive location is somewhat harder to explain. Benjamin Clark asks, “[H]ow in the world, without alerting the entire neighbourhood, do you surreptitiously install a gigantic hydraulic press into the second storey of an old country house?”

[29](#) Natural rubber.

[30](#) The curious existence of a sliding panel that leads out of the hydraulic press and into a passage is addressed by D. Martin Dakin, who considers, “It could not be the same door that Hatherley entered by, as . . . the colonel must have been still outside that door, waiting to remove the remains.” He surmises that the room containing the hydraulic press, which would of necessity have had to be quite large, was fashioned from two or three of the house’s original rooms, one underneath the other. Fortunately for Hatherley, one of those rooms conveniently contained a secret panel (many houses at the time had one), which Colonel Stark either did not know about or failed to consider. Secret rooms, panels, or passages appear in other Canonical houses, notably, Hurlstone Manor, a manor house (“The Musgrave Ritual”), Yoxley Old Place, a “country house” (“The Golden Pince-Nez”), where Holmes describes the hidden recess as “common in old libraries,” and the “ancient Manor House of Birlstone” (*The Valley of Fear*).

[31](#) Was Elise also of German descent? And what was her relationship to the colonel? She called him “Fritz,” but was she his wife, his mistress, his sister? Or just another crook?

[32](#) The text here follows the English edition of the *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. In the *Strand Magazine*, the text appears as “was hanging by the hands to the sill.” This latter text also appears in American editions. Using that version as a basis, Jay Finley Christ argues, in “Thumbs Up Thumbs Down,” that a man hanging as Hatherley describes would actually have had his thumbs positioned “some two or three inches *below the edge* on the outside of the sill” [emphasis added]. Thus Colonel Stark’s cleaver would probably not have even touched Hatherley’s thumb, let alone cut it off, unless Stark had reached out well past the sill’s edge with his blow. Even then, Christ adds, severing a thumb would have been well nigh impossible, with nothing underneath to serve as a chopping block.

Stanley MacKenzie, in “The Engineer’s Thumb,” points out that this criticism is based on the *Strand Magazine* or American text. Referring to the English book text, MacKenzie writes, “Iwith whom the police have imagine the ‘slot’ to have been a recess, flush with the sill into which the bottom of the window dropped. If the sill was, say, 5” or more wide, and one’s fingers were in the slot, the palm of the hand and thumb would be flat on top of the sill. The thumb would, quite naturally, stick out sideways and be in a convenient position for amputation.”

Yet another conclusion is drawn by Bill Rabe, who envisions Hatherley clinging to a very broad sill, his torso “hanging outside the house, the forearms across the top of the sill, fingers curled around the inner sill, and the thumbs spread-eagled, as it were, on the chopping block of the sill.”

[33](#) Despite Hatherley’s bedraggled appearance here, he miraculously managed to turn up at Watson’s

office “quietly dressed in a suit of heather tweed.”

34 The Board of Ordnance—Britain’s defence ministry—began surveying southern Britain in 1791, in part to prepare for impending war with France. Its first map, a one-inch-to-one-mile map of Kent, was published in 1801. By the Victorian era, the Ordnance Survey was producing detailed maps of varying scales for Ireland as well as the whole of Great Britain.

35 To name the 32 points of the compass, originally a nautical term.

36 Coining (or the manufacture of forged coins) was a large criminal industry in Victorian England. “The up-to-date counterfeit-money coiner is one of the most difficult individuals with whom the police have to deal,” writes the *Strand Magazine* in “Crimes and Criminals: No. III—Coiners and Coining,” appearing in the April 1894 issue, two years after “The Engineer’s Thumb.” The article discusses at some length the use of melted pewter—usually derived from pewter-pots obtained from the local pub!—and the process of electroplating with silver but makes no mention of hydraulic presses. Apparently, the colonel was even more “up-to-date” than the author of the *Strand* article!

37 Any alloy of mercury and some other metal.

38 If the fire started when Hatherley dropped his lamp, that marks the genesis at sometime around 1:30 or 2:00 A.M. Hatherley arrived at the Eyford station after 11:00 P.M. and drove with the colonel for “at least an hour.” This places Hatherley at the house no earlier than 12:15 A.M. Allowing at least an hour for his wait in the darkened house, his “very thorough” examination of the press, and his confrontation with the colonel, the hour of Hatherley’s departure must have been around 1:30 or 2:00 A.M. When Hatherley came to himself he found that “the moon had sunk and a bright morning was breaking,” which would be no earlier than 4:00 A.M. in that latitude in summer. This is confirmed by Hatherley’s arrival at Paddington Station a little after 6:00 A.M. By the time Holmes and his crew arrived at midday, the fire was fully ablaze. Yet despite the efforts of firemen and three fire engines, the house continued to burn until around 8:00 P.M. (sunset)—in other words, a full twenty hours, incredibly, after the fire had begun.

39 Given that Hatherley awoke very near the house perhaps two and a half hours after he dropped the lamp, it is surprising that he smelled no smoke or saw any other evidence of a fire.

40 Jay Finley Christ suggests that Hatherley was in reality Mr. Jeremiah Hayling, the engineer who had disappeared a year earlier. He caught his hand in the press while operating it for the coiners. Hayling seized upon the fire (started in a manner unknown) as his best chance to escape. After attaining his freedom, he concocted the tale about the clever to avoid potentially embarrassing questions about his participation in the criminal enterprise.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE NOBLE BACHELOR¹

In “The Noble Bachelor,” Holmes meets society in the form of Lord Robert St. Simon. St. Simon is something of a fop, and middle-class British readers must have delighted in Holmes’s “putdown” of the young lord. English women complained of an American “invasion” of young (rich) women in search of husbands from among the poorer members of England’s upper crust. Here, Holmes is asked to trace a vanishing American bride. Correctly reading the signs, he finds her—and another man! Although some scholars insist that the beautiful heroine was a criminal, Holmes is forgiving; but his diplomacy fails when he tries to bring together the Old and New Worlds over breakfast. Holmes’s cheery, democratic attitude and his expression of faith in the future of the English-speaking peoples was copied in the utterly non-Canonical “Sherlock Holmes” films of Universal Pictures starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce.

THE LORD ST. SIMON marriage, and its curious termination, have long ceased to be a subject of interest in those exalted circles in which the unfortunate bridegroom moves. Fresh scandals have eclipsed it, and their more piquant details have drawn the gossips away from this four-year-old drama. As I have reason to believe, however, that the full facts have never been revealed to the general public, and as my friend Sherlock Holmes had a considerable share in clearing the matter up, I feel that no memoir of him would be complete without some little sketch of this remarkable episode.

It was a few weeks before my own marriage, during the days when I was still sharing rooms with Holmes in Baker Street, that he came home from an afternoon stroll to find a letter on the table waiting for him. I had remained indoors all day, for the weather had taken a sudden turn to rain, with high autumnal winds, and the Jezail bullet which I had brought back in one of my limbs² as a relic of my Afghan campaign, throbbed with dull persistence. With my body in one easy chair and my legs upon another, I had surrounded myself with a cloud of newspapers, until at last, saturated with the news of the day, I tossed them all aside and lay listless, watching the huge crest and monogram upon the envelope upon the table, and wondering lazily who my friend's noble correspondent could be.

"Here is a very fashionable epistle," I remarked as he entered. "Your morning letters, if I remember right, were from a fishmonger and a tide waiter."³

"Yes, my correspondence has certainly the charm of variety," he answered, smiling, "and the humbler are usually the more interesting. This looks like one of those unwelcome social summonses which call upon a man either to be bored or to lie."

He broke the seal, and glanced over the contents. "Oh, come, it may prove to be something of interest after all."

"Not social, then?"

"No, distinctly professional."

"And from a noble client?"

"One of the highest in England."

"My dear fellow, I congratulate you."

"I assure you, Watson, without affectation, that the status of my client is a matter of less moment to me than the interest of his case. It is just possible, however, that that also may not be wanting in this new investigation. You have been reading the papers diligently of late, have you not?"



“He broke the seal and glanced over the contents.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“It looks like it,” said I ruefully, pointing to a huge bundle in the corner. “I have had nothing else to do.”

“It is fortunate, for you will perhaps be able to post me up. I read nothing except the criminal news and the agony column. The latter is always instructive. But if you have followed recent events so closely you must have read about Lord St. Simon⁴ and his wedding?”

“Oh, yes, with the deepest interest.”

“That is well. The letter which I hold in my hand is from Lord St. Simon. I will read it to you, and in return you must turn over these papers and let me have whatever bears upon the matter. This is what he says:

My dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,

Lord Backwater⁵ tells me that I may place implicit reliance upon your judgment and discretion. I have determined, therefore, to call upon you, and to consult you in reference to the very painful event which has occurred in connection with my wedding. Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, is acting already in the matter, but he assures me that he sees no objection to your co-operation, and that he even thinks that it might be

of some assistance. I will call at four o'clock in the afternoon, and, should you have any other engagement at that time, I hope that you will postpone it, as this matter is of paramount importance.

Yours faithfully,
Robert St. Simon.⁶

“It is dated from Grosvenor Mansions,⁷ written with a quill pen, and the noble lord has had the misfortune to get a smear of ink upon the outer side of his right little finger,” remarked Holmes, as he folded up the epistle.

“He says four o'clock. It is three now. He will be here in an hour.”

“Then I have just time, with your assistance, to get clear upon the subject. Turn over those papers, and arrange the extracts in their order of time, while I take a glance as to who our client is.” He picked a red-covered volume⁸ from a line of books of reference beside the mantelpiece. “Here he is,” said he, sitting down and flattening it out upon his knee. “ ‘Lord Robert Walsingham de Vere St. Simon, second son of the Duke of Balmoral—Hum! Arms: Azure, three caltrops⁹ in chief over a fess sable.¹⁰ Born in 1846.’ He’s forty-one years of age, which is mature for marriage. Was Under-Secretary for the Colonies in a late Administration. The Duke, his father, was at one time Secretary for Foreign Affairs. They inherit Plantagenet¹¹ blood by direct descent, and Tudor¹² on the distaff side. Ha! Well there is nothing very instructive in all this. I think that I must turn to you, Watson, for something more solid.”

“I have very little difficulty in finding what I want,” said I, “for the facts are quite recent, and the matter struck me as remarkable. I feared to refer them to you, however, as I knew that you had an inquiry on hand and that you disliked the intrusion of other matters.”

“Oh, you mean the little problem of the Grosvenor Square¹³ furniture van. That is quite cleared up now—though, indeed, it was obvious from the first. Pray give me the results of your newspaper selections.”

“Here is the first notice which I can find. It is in the personal column of *The Morning Post*,¹⁴ and dates, as you see, some weeks back.

A marriage has been arranged [it says] and will, if rumour is correct, very shortly take place, between Lord Robert St. Simon, second son of the Duke of Balmoral, and Miss Hatty Doran, the only daughter of Aloysius Doran, Esq., of San Francisco, Cal., U.S.A.

That is all.”

“Terse and to the point,” remarked Holmes, stretching his long, thin legs towards the fire.

“There was a paragraph amplifying this in one of the society papers of the same week. Ah, here it is.”

There will soon be a call for protection in the marriage market, for the present free-trade principle appears to tell heavily against our home product. One by one the management of the noble houses of Great Britain is passing into the hands of our fair cousins from across the Atlantic. An important addition has been made during the last week to the list of the prizes which have been borne away by these charming invaders. Lord St. Simon, who has shown himself for over twenty years proof against the little god’s arrows, has now definitely announced his approaching marriage with Miss Hatty Doran, the fascinating daughter of a California millionaire. Miss Doran, whose graceful figure and striking face attracted much attention at the Westbury House¹⁵ festivities, is an only child, and it is currently reported that her dowry will run to considerably over the six figures, with expectancies for the future. As it is an open secret that the Duke of Balmoral has been compelled to sell his pictures within the last few years, and as Lord St. Simon has no property of his own, save the small estate of Birchmoor, it is obvious that the Californian heiress is not the only gainer by an alliance which will enable her to make the easy and common transition from a Republican lady to a British title.¹⁶

“Anything else?” asked Holmes, yawning.

“Oh, yes; plenty. Then there is another note in *The Morning Post* to say that the marriage would be an absolutely quiet one, that it would be at St. George’s, Hanover Square,¹⁷ that only half a dozen intimate friends would be invited, and that the party would return to the furnished house at Lancaster Gate¹⁸ which has been taken by Mr. Aloysius Doran. Two days later—that is, on Wednesday last—there is a curt announcement that the wedding had taken place, and that the honeymoon would be passed at Lord Backwater’s place, near Petersfield. Those are all the notices which appeared before the disappearance of the bride.”

“Before the what?” asked Holmes, with a start.

“The vanishing of the lady.”

“When did she vanish, then?”

“At the wedding breakfast.”¹⁹

“Indeed. This is more interesting than it promised to be; quite dramatic, in fact.”

“Yes; it struck me as being a little out of the common.”

“They often vanish before the ceremony, and occasionally during the honeymoon; but I cannot call to mind anything quite so prompt as this. Pray let me have the details.”

“I warn you that they are very incomplete.”

“Perhaps we may make them less so.”

“Such as they are, they are set forth in a single article of a morning paper of yesterday, which I will read to you. It is headed, ‘Singular Occurrence at a Fashionable Wedding’:

The family of Lord Robert St. Simon has been thrown into the greatest consternation by the strange and painful episodes which have taken place in connection with his wedding. The ceremony, as shortly announced in the papers of yesterday, occurred on the previous morning; but it is only now that it has been possible to confirm the strange rumours which have been so persistently floating about. In spite of the attempts of the friends to hush the matter up, so much public attention has now been drawn to it that no good purpose can be served by affecting to disregard what is a common subject for conversation.

The ceremony, which was performed at St.

George's, Hanover Square, was a very quiet one,²⁰ no one being present save the father of the bride, Mr. Aloysius Doran, the Duchess of Balmoral,²¹ Lord Backwater, Lord Eustace and Lady Clara St. Simon (the younger brother and sister of the bridegroom), and Lady Alicia Whittington. The whole party proceeded afterwards to the house of Mr. Aloysius Doran, at Lancaster Gate, where breakfast had been prepared. It appears that some little trouble was caused by a woman, whose name has not been ascertained, who endeavoured to force her way into the house after the bridal party, alleging that she had some claim upon Lord St. Simon. It was only after a painful and prolonged scene that she was ejected by the butler and the footman. The bride, who had fortunately entered the house before this unpleasant interruption, had sat down to breakfast with the rest, when she complained of a sudden indisposition, and retired to her room. Her prolonged absence having caused some comment, her father followed her; but learned from her maid that she had only come up to her chamber for an instant, caught up an ulster and bonnet, and hurried down to the passage. One of the footmen declared that he had seen a lady leave the house thus apparelled; but had refused to credit that it was his mistress, believing her to be

with the company. On ascertaining that his daughter had disappeared, Mr. Aloysius Doran, in conjunction with the bridegroom, instantly put themselves into communication with the police,²² and very energetic inquiries are being made, which will probably result in a speedy clearing up of this very singular business. Up to a late hour last night, however, nothing had transpired as to the whereabouts of the missing lady. There are rumours of foul play in the matter, and it is said that the police have caused the arrest of the woman who had caused the original disturbance, in the belief that, from jealousy or some other motive, she may have been concerned in the strange disappearance of the bride.



“She was ejected by the butler and the footman.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“And is that all?”

“Only one little item in another of the morning papers, but it is a suggestive one.”

“And it is?”

“That Miss Flora Millar, the lady who had caused the disturbance, has actually been arrested. It appears that she was formerly a *danseuse* at the Allegro,²³ and that she has known the bridegroom for some years. There are no further particulars, and the whole case is in your hands now—so far as it has been set forth in the public press.”

“And an exceedingly interesting case it appears to be, I would not have missed it for worlds. But there is a ring at the bell, Watson, and as the clock makes it a few minutes after four, I have no doubt that this will prove to be our noble client. Do not dream of going, Watson, for I very much prefer having a witness, if only as a check to my own memory.”²⁴

“Lord Robert St. Simon,” announced our page boy, throwing open the door. A gentleman entered, with a pleasant, cultured face, high-nosed and pale, with something perhaps of petulance about the mouth, and with the steady, well-opened eye of a man whose pleasant lot it had ever been to command and to be obeyed. His manner was brisk, and yet his general appearance gave an undue impression of age, for he had a slight forward stoop, and a little bend of the knees as he walked. His hair, too, as he swept off his very curly-brimmed hat, was grizzled round the edges, and thin upon the top. As to his dress, it was careful to the verge of foppishness, with high collar, black frock coat, white waistcoat, yellow gloves, patent-leather shoes, and light-coloured gaiters. He advanced slowly into the room, turning his head from left to right, and swinging in his right hand the cord which held his golden eyeglasses.



“Lord Robert St. Simon.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Good-day, Lord St. Simon,” said Holmes, rising and bowing.²⁵ “Pray take the basket chair.²⁶ This is my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson. Draw up a little to the fire, and we will talk this matter over.”

“A most painful matter to me, as you can most readily imagine, Mr. Holmes. I have been cut to the quick. I understand that you have already managed several delicate cases of this sort, sir, though I presume that they were hardly from the same class of society.”

“No, I am descending.”

“I beg pardon?”

“My last client of the sort was a king.”

“Oh, really! I had no idea. And which king?”

“The King of Scandinavia.”

“What! Had he lost his wife?”²⁷

“You can understand,” said Holmes, suavely, “that I extend to the affairs of my other clients the same secrecy which I promise to you in yours.”

“Of course! Very right! very right! I’m sure I beg pardon. As to my own case, I am ready to give you any information which may assist you in forming an opinion.”

“Thank you. I have already learned all that is in the public prints, nothing more. I presume that I may take it as correct—this article, for example, as to the

disappearance of the bride.”



Lord Robert St. Simon.

J. C. Drake, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, March 13, 1892

Lord St. Simon glanced over it. “Yes, it is correct, as far as it goes.”

“But it needs a great deal of supplementing before any one could offer an opinion. I think that I may arrive at my facts most directly by questioning you.”

“Pray do so.”

“When did you first meet Miss Hatty Doran?”

“In San Francisco, a year ago.”

“You were travelling in the States?”

“Yes.”

“Did you become engaged then?”

“No.”

“But you were on a friendly footing?”

“I was amused by her society, and she could see that I was amused.”

“Her father is very rich?”

“He is said to be the richest man on the Pacific slope.”

“And how did he make his money?”

“In mining. He had nothing a few years ago. Then he struck gold, invested it, and came up by leaps and bounds.”

“Now, what is your own impression as to the young lady’s—your wife’s character?”

The nobleman swung his glasses a little faster and stared down into the fire. “You see, Mr. Holmes,” said he, “my wife was twenty before her father became a rich man. During that time she ran free in a mining camp, and wandered through woods or mountains, so that her education has come from Nature rather than from the schoolmaster. She is what we call in England a tomboy, with a strong nature, wild and free, unfettered by any sort of traditions. She is impetuous—volcanic, I was about to say. She is swift in making up her mind, and fearless in carrying out her resolutions. On the other hand, I would not have given her the name which I have the honour to bear” (he gave a little stately cough) “had not I thought her to be at bottom a noble woman. I believe that she is capable of heroic self-sacrifice, and that anything dishonourable would be repugnant to her.”

“Have you her photograph?”

“I brought this with me.” He opened a locket, and showed us the full face of a very lovely woman. It was not a photograph, but an ivory miniature, and the artist had brought out the full effect of the lustrous black hair, the large dark eyes, and the exquisite mouth. Holmes gazed long and earnestly at it. Then he closed the locket and handed it back to Lord St. Simon.

“The young lady came to London, then, and you renewed your acquaintance?”

“Yes, her father brought her over for this last London season.²⁸ I met her several times, became engaged to her, and have now married her.”

“She brought, I understand, a considerable dowry?”

“A fair dowry. Not more than is usual in my family.”

“And this, of course, remains to you, since the marriage is a *fait accompli*?”

“I really have made no inquiries on the subject.”

“Very naturally not. Did you see Miss Doran on the day before the wedding?”

“Yes.”

“Was she in good spirits?”

“Never better. She kept talking of what we should do in our future lives.”

“Indeed! That is very interesting. And on the morning of the wedding?”

“She was as bright as possible—at least, until after the ceremony.”

“And did you observe any change in her then?”

“Well, to tell the truth, I saw then the first signs that I had ever seen that her temper was just a little sharp. The incident, however, was too trivial to relate and can have no possible bearing upon the case.”

“Pray let us have it, for all that.”

“Oh, it is childish. She dropped her bouquet as we went towards the vestry. She was passing the front pew at the time, and it fell over into the pew. There was a moment’s delay, but the gentleman in the pew handed it up to her again and it did not appear to be the worse for the fall. Yet, when I spoke to her of the matter, she answered me abruptly; and in the carriage, on our way home, she seemed absurdly agitated over this trifling cause.”

“Indeed. You say that there was a gentleman in the pew. Some of the general public were present, then?”



“The gentleman in the pew handed it up to her.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Oh yes. It is impossible to exclude them when the church is open.”

“This gentleman was not one of your wife’s friends?”

“No, no; I call him a gentleman by courtesy, but he was quite a common-looking person. I hardly noticed his appearance. But really I think that we are wandering rather far from the point.”

“Lady St. Simon, then, returned from the wedding in a less cheerful frame of mind than she had gone to it. What did she do on reentering her father’s house?”

“I saw her in conversation with her maid.”

“And who is her maid?”

“Alice is her name. She is an American and came from California with her.”

“A confidential servant?”

“A little too much so. It seemed to me that her mistress allowed her to take great liberties. Still, of course, in America they look upon these things in a different way.”

“How long did she speak to this Alice?”

“Oh, a few minutes. I had something else to think of.”

“You did not overhear what they said?”

“Lady St. Simon said something about ‘jumping a claim.’ She was accustomed to use slang of the kind. I have no idea what she meant.”

“American slang is very expressive sometimes. And what did your wife do when she finished speaking to her maid?”

“She walked into the breakfast-room.”

“On your arm?”

“No, alone. She was very independent in little matters like that. Then, after we had sat down for ten minutes or so, she rose hurriedly, muttered some words of apology, and left the room. She never came back.”

“But this maid, Alice, as I understand, deposes that she went to her room, covered her bride’s dress with a long ulster, put on a bonnet, and went out.”

“Quite so. And she was afterwards seen walking into Hyde Park in company with Flora Millar, a woman who is now in custody, and who had already made a disturbance at Mr. Doran’s house that morning.”

“Ah, yes. I should like a few particulars as to this young lady, and your relations to her.”

Lord St. Simon shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyebrows. “We have been on a friendly footing for some years—I may say on a very friendly footing. She used to be at the Allegro. I have not treated her ungenerously, and she has no just cause of complaint against me, but you know what women are, Mr. Holmes. Flora was a dear little thing, but exceedingly hot-headed and devotedly attached to me.²⁹ She wrote me dreadful letters when she heard that I was about to be married, and to tell the truth the reason why I had the marriage celebrated so quietly was that I feared lest there might be a scandal in the church. She came to Mr. Doran’s door just after we returned, and she endeavoured to push her way in, uttering very abusive expressions towards my wife, and even threatening her, but I had foreseen the possibility of something of the sort, and I had given instructions to the servants,³⁰ who soon pushed her out again. She was quiet

when she saw that there was no good in making a row.”

“Did your wife hear all this?”

“No, thank goodness, she did not.”

“And she was seen walking with this very woman afterwards?”

“Yes. That is what Mr. Lestrade, of Scotland Yard, looks upon as so serious. It is thought that Flora decoyed my wife out, and laid some terrible trap for her.”

“Well, it is a possible supposition.”

“You think so, too?”

“I did not say a probable one. But you do not yourself look upon this as likely?”

“I do not think Flora would hurt a fly.”

“Still, jealousy is a strange transformer of characters. Pray what is your own theory as to what took place?”

“Well, really, I came to seek a theory, not to propound one. I have given you all the facts. Since you ask me, however, I may say that it has occurred to me as possible that the excitement of this affair, the consciousness that she had made so immense a social stride, had the effect of causing some little nervous disturbance in my wife.”

“In short, that she had become suddenly deranged?”

“Well, really, when I consider that she has turned her back—I will not say upon me, but upon so much that many have aspired to without success—I can hardly explain it in any other fashion.”

“Well, certainly that is also a conceivable hypothesis,” said Holmes, smiling. “And now, Lord St. Simon, I think that I have nearly all my data. May I ask whether you were seated at the breakfast-table so that you could see out of the window?”

“We could see the other side of the road, and the Park.”

“Quite so. Then I do not think that I need detain you longer. I shall communicate with you.”

“Should you be fortunate enough to solve this problem,” said our client, rising.

“I have solved it.”

“Eh? What was that?”

“I say that I have solved it.”

“Where, then, is my wife?”

“That is a detail which I shall speedily supply.”

Lord St. Simon shook his head. “I am afraid that it will take wiser heads than yours or mine,” he remarked, and bowing in a stately, old-fashioned manner, he departed.

“It is very good of Lord St. Simon to honour my head by putting it on a level with his own,” said Sherlock Holmes, laughing. “I think that I shall have a whisky and soda and a cigar after all this cross-questioning. I had formed my conclusion as to the case before our client came into the room.”

“My dear Holmes!”

“I have notes of several similar cases, though none, as I remarked before, which were quite as prompt. My whole examination served to turn my conjecture into a certainty. Circumstantial evidence is occasionally very convincing, as when you find a trout in the milk,³¹ to quote Thoreau’s example.”³²

“But I have heard all that you have heard.”

“Without, however, the knowledge of pre-existing cases which serves me so well. There was a parallel instance in Aberdeen some years back, and something on very much the same lines at Munich the year after the Franco-Prussian War.³³ It is one of these cases—but, hullo, here is Lestrade! Good afternoon, Lestrade! You will find an extra tumbler upon the sideboard, and there are cigars in the box.”

The official detective was attired in a pea-jacket and cravat, which gave him a decidedly nautical appearance, and he carried a black canvas bag in his hand. With a short greeting he seated himself, and lit the cigar which had been offered to him.

“What’s up, then?” asked Holmes with a twinkle in his eye. “You look dissatisfied.”

“And I feel dissatisfied. It is this infernal St. Simon marriage case. I can make neither head nor tail of the business.”

“Really! You surprise me.”

“Who ever heard of such a mixed affair? Every clue seems to slip through my fingers. I have been at work upon it all day.”

“And very wet it seems to have made you,” said Holmes, laying his hand upon the arm of the pea-jacket.

“Yes, I have been dragging the Serpentine.”³⁴

“In heaven’s name, what for?”

“In search of the body of Lady St. Simon.”

Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily.



The Serpentine.

The Queen's London (1897) "Have you dragged the basin of Trafalgar Square fountain?"³⁵ he asked.

"Why? What do you mean?"

"Because you have just as good a chance of finding this lady in the one as in the other."

Lestrade shot an angry glance at my companion. "I suppose you know all about it," he snarled.

"Well, I have only just heard the facts, but my mind is made up."

"Oh, indeed! Then you think that the Serpentine plays no part in the matter?"

"I think it very unlikely."

"Then perhaps you will kindly explain how it is that we found this in it?" He opened his bag as he spoke, and tumbled onto the floor a wedding dress of watered silk, a pair of white satin shoes, and a bride's wreath and veil, all discoloured and soaked in water. "There," said he, putting a new wedding-ring upon the top of the pile. "There is a little nut for you to crack, Master Holmes."

"Oh, indeed," said my friend, blowing blue rings into the air. "You dragged them from the Serpentine?"

"No. They were found floating near the margin by a park-keeper. They have been identified as her clothes, and it seemed to me that if the clothes were there the body would not be far off."

"By the same brilliant reasoning, every man's body is to be found in the neighbourhood of his wardrobe. And pray what did you hope to arrive at through this?"

"At some evidence implicating Flora Millar in the disappearance."

"I am afraid that you will find it difficult."

"Are you, indeed, now?" cried Lestrade with some bitterness. "I am afraid, Holmes, that you are not very practical with your deductions and your inferences. You have made two blunders in as many minutes. This dress does

implicate Miss Flora Millar.”

“And how?”

“In the dress is a pocket. In the pocket is a card-case. In the card-case is a note. And here is the very note.” He slapped it down upon the table in front of him. “Listen to this.”

You will see me when all is ready. Come at once.

F.H.M.



Trafalgar Square.

The Queen's London (1897) “Now my theory all along has been that Lady St. Simon was decoyed away by Flora Millar, and that she, with confederates, no doubt, was responsible for her disappearance. Here, signed with her initials, is the very note which was no doubt quietly slipped into her hand at the door, and which lured her within their reach.”



“ ‘There,’ said he.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Very good, Lestrade,” said Holmes, laughing. “You really are very fine indeed. Let me see it.” He took up the paper in a listless way, but his attention instantly became riveted, and he gave a little cry of satisfaction. “This is indeed important,” said he.

“Ha, you find it so?”

“Extremely so. I congratulate you warmly.”

Lestrade rose in his triumph and bent his head to look. “Why,” he shrieked, “you’re looking at the wrong side!”

“On the contrary, this is the right side.”

“The right side? You’re mad! Here is the note written in pencil over here.”

“And over here is what appears to be the fragment of a hotel bill, which interests me deeply.”

“There’s nothing in it. I looked at it before,” said Lestrade. “ ‘Oct 4th, rooms 8s., breakfast 2s. 6d., cocktail 1s., lunch 2s. 6d., glass sherry, 8d.’ I see nothing in that.”

“Very likely not. It is most important, all the same. As to the note, it is important also, or at least the initials are, so I congratulate you again.”

“I’ve wasted time enough,” said Lestrade, rising. “I believe in hard work, and not in sitting by the fire spinning fine theories. Good-day, Mr. Holmes, and we shall see which gets to the bottom of the matter first.” He gathered up the garments, thrust them into the bag, and made for the door.

“Just one hint to you, Lestrade,” drawled Holmes, before his rival vanished; “I will tell you the true solution of the matter. Lady St. Simon is a myth. There is not, and there never has been, any such person.”

Lestrade looked sadly at my companion. Then he turned to me, tapped his forehead three times, shook his head solemnly, and hurried away.

He had hardly shut the door behind him when Holmes rose and put on his overcoat. “There is something in what the fellow says about outdoor work,” he remarked, “so I think, Watson, that I must leave you to your papers for a little.”

It was after five o’clock when Sherlock Holmes left me, but I had no time to be lonely, for within an hour there arrived a confectioner’s man with a very large flat box. This he unpacked with the help of a youth whom he had brought with him, and presently, to my very great astonishment, a quite epicurean little cold supper began to be laid out upon our humble lodging-house mahogany. There were a couple of brace of cold woodcock, a pheasant, a *pâté de foie gras* pie,³⁶ with a group of ancient and cobwebby bottles.³⁷ Having laid out all these luxuries, my two visitors vanished away, like the genii of the Arabian Nights,³⁸ with no explanation save that the things had been paid for and were ordered to

this address. Just before nine o'clock Sherlock Holmes stepped briskly into the room. His features were gravely set, but there was a light in his eye which made me think that he had not been disappointed in his conclusions.

"They have laid the supper, then," he said, rubbing his hands.

"You seem to expect company. They have laid for five."

"Yes, I fancy we may have some company dropping in," said he. "I am surprised that Lord St. Simon has not already arrived. Ha! I fancy that I hear his step now upon the stairs."

It was indeed our visitor of the afternoon³⁹ who came bustling in, dangling his glasses more vigorously than ever, and with a very perturbed expression upon his aristocratic features. "My messenger reached you, then?" asked Holmes.

"Yes, and I confess that the contents startled me beyond measure. Have you good authority for what you say?"

"The best possible."

Lord St. Simon sank into a chair, and passed his hand over his forehead. "What will the Duke say," he murmured, "when he hears that one of the family has been subjected to such a humiliation?"

"It is the purest accident. I cannot allow that there is any humiliation."

"Ah, you look on these things from another standpoint."

"I fail to see that any one is to blame. I can hardly see how the lady could have acted otherwise, though her abrupt method of doing it was undoubtedly to be regretted. Having no mother she had no one to advise her at such a crisis."

"It was a slight, sir, a public slight," said Lord St. Simon, tapping his finger upon the table.

"You must make allowance for this poor girl, placed in so unprecedented a position."

"I will make no allowance. I am very angry indeed, and I have been shamefully used."

"I think that I heard a ring," said Holmes. "Yes, there are steps on the landing. If I cannot persuade you to take a lenient view of the matter, Lord St. Simon, I have brought an advocate here who may be more successful." He opened the door and ushered in a lady and gentleman. "Lord St. Simon," said he, "allow me to introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Francis Hay Moulton. The lady, I think, you have already met."

At the sight of these new-comers our client had sprung from his seat, and stood very erect, with his eyes cast down and his hand thrust into the breast of his frock coat, a picture of offended dignity. The lady had taken a quick step forward, and had held out her hand to him, but he still refused to raise his eyes. It was as well for his resolution, perhaps, for her pleading face was one which it

was hard to resist.

“You’re angry, Robert,” said she. “Well, I guess you have every cause to be!”

“Pray make no apology to me,” said Lord St. Simon, bitterly.

“Oh, yes, I know that I have treated you real bad and that I should have spoken to you before I went; but I was kind of rattled, and from the time when I saw Frank here again, I just didn’t know what I was doing or saying. I only wonder that I didn’t fall down and do a faint right there before the altar.”



“A picture of offended dignity.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Perhaps, Mrs. Moulton, you would like my friend and me to leave the room while you explain this matter.”

“If I may give an opinion,” remarked the strange gentleman, “we’ve had just a little too much secrecy over this business already. For my part, I should like all Europe and America to hear the rights of it.” He was a small, wiry, sunburnt man,⁴⁰ with a sharp face and alert manner.

“Then I’ll tell our story right away,” said the lady. “Frank here and I met in ’81,⁴¹ in McQuire’s camp, near the Rockies,⁴² where Pa was working a claim. We were engaged to each other, Frank and I; but then one day father struck a rich pocket, and made a pile, while poor Frank here had a claim that petered out and came to nothing. The richer Pa grew, the poorer was Frank; so at last Pa wouldn’t hear of our engagement lasting any longer, and he took me away to ’Frisco.⁴³ Frank wouldn’t throw up his hand, though; so he followed me there, and he saw me without Pa knowing anything about it. It would only have made him mad to know, so we just fixed it all up for ourselves. Frank said that he would go and make his pile, too, and never come back to claim me until he had as much as Pa. So then I promised to wait for him to the end of time, and pledged myself not to marry any one else while he lived. ‘Why shouldn’t we be married right away, then,’ said he, ‘and then I will feel sure of you; and I won’t

claim to be your husband until I come back.’ Well, we talked it over, and he had fixed it all up so nicely, with a clergyman all ready in waiting, that we just did it right there; and then Frank went off to seek his fortune and I went back to Pa.



“You’re angry, Robert!”

J. C. Drake, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, March 13, 1892

“The next I heard of Frank was that he was in Montana, and then he went prospecting into Arizona, and then I heard of him from New Mexico. After that came a long newspaper story about how a miners’ camp had been attacked by Apache Indians, and there was my Frank’s name among the killed.⁴⁴ I fainted dead away, and I was very sick for months after. Pa thought I had a decline, and took me to half the doctors in ’Frisco. Not a word of news came for a year and more, so that I never doubted that Frank was really dead. Then Lord St. Simon came to ’Frisco, and we came to London, and a marriage was arranged, and Pa was very pleased, but I felt all the time that no man on this earth would ever take the place in my heart that had been given to my poor Frank.

“Still, if I had married Lord St. Simon, of course I’d have done my duty by him. We can’t command our love, but we can our actions. I went to the altar with him with the intention that I would make him just as good a wife as it was in me to be. But you may imagine what I felt when, just as I came to the altar rails, I glanced back and saw Frank standing looking at me out of the first pew. I thought it was his ghost at first; but, when I looked again, there he was still, with a kind of question in his eyes, as if to ask me whether I were glad or sorry to see him. I wonder I didn’t drop. I know that everything was turning round, and the words of the clergyman were just like the buzz of a bee in my ear. I didn’t know what to do. Should I stop the service and make a scene in the church?⁴⁵ I glanced

at him again, and he seemed to know what I was thinking, for he raised his finger to his lips to tell me to be still. Then I saw him scribble on a piece of paper, and I knew that he was writing me a note. As I passed his pew on the way out I dropped my bouquet over to him, and he slipped the note into my hand when he returned me the flowers. It was only a line asking me to join him when he made the sign to me to do so. Of course I never doubted for a moment that my first duty now was to him, and I determined to do just whatever he might direct.

“When I got back I told my maid, who had known him in California, and had always been his friend. I ordered her to say nothing, but to get a few things packed and my ulster ready. I know I ought to have spoken to Lord St. Simon, but it was dreadful hard before his mother and all those great people. I just made up my mind to run away, and explain afterwards. I hadn’t been at the table ten minutes before I saw Frank out of the window at the other side of the road. He beckoned to me, and then began walking into the Park. I slipped out, put on my things, and followed him. Some woman came talking something or other about Lord St. Simon to me—seemed to me from the little I heard as if he had a little secret of his own before marriage also—but I managed to get away from her and soon overtook Frank. We got into a cab together, and away we drove to some lodgings he had taken in Gordon Square, and that was my true wedding after all those years of waiting. Frank had been a prisoner among the Apaches, had escaped, came on to ’Frisco, found that I had given him up for dead and had gone to England, followed me there, and had come upon me at last on the very morning of my second wedding.”



“Some woman came talking about Lord St. Simon.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I saw it in a paper,” explained the American. “It gave the name and the church, but not where the lady lived.”

“Then we had a talk as to what we should do, and Frank was all for openness, but I was so ashamed of it all that I felt as if I should like to vanish away and never see any of them again, just sending a line to Pa, perhaps, to show him that I was alive. It was awful to me to think of all those lords and ladies sitting round that breakfast table and waiting for me to come back. So Frank took my wedding clothes and things, and made a bundle of them, so that I should not be traced, and dropped them away somewhere where no one could find them. It is likely that we should have gone on to Paris to-morrow, only that this good gentleman, Mr. Holmes, came round to us this evening, though how he found us is more than I can think, and he showed us very clearly and kindly that I was wrong and that Frank was right, and that we should put ourselves in the wrong if we were so secret. Then he offered to give us a chance of talking to Lord St. Simon alone, and so we came right away round to his rooms at once. Now, Robert, you have heard it all, and I am very sorry if I have given you pain, and I hope that you do not think very meanly of me.”

Lord St. Simon had by no means relaxed his rigid attitude, but had listened with a frowning brow and a compressed lip to this long narrative.

“Excuse me,” he said, “but it is not my custom to discuss my most intimate personal affairs in this public manner.”

“Then you won’t forgive me? You won’t shake hands before I go?”

“Oh, certainly, if it would give you any pleasure.” He put out his hand and coldly grasped that which she extended to him.



“I will wish you all a very good night.”

“I had hoped,” suggested Holmes, “that you would have joined us in a friendly supper.”

“I think that there you ask a little too much,” responded his Lordship. “I may be forced to acquiesce in these recent developments, but I can hardly be expected to make merry over them. I think that, with your permission, I will now wish you all a very good-night.” He included us all in a sweeping bow and stalked out of the room.

“Then I trust that you at least will honour me with your company,” said Sherlock Holmes. “It is always a joy to meet an American, Mr. Moulton, for I am one of those who believe that the folly of a monarch⁴⁶ and the blundering of a Minister⁴⁷ in far gone years will not prevent our children from being some day citizens of the same world-wide country under a flag which shall be a quartering of the Union Jack with the Stars and Stripes.”

“The case has been an interesting one,” remarked Holmes, when our visitors had left us, “because it serves to show very clearly how simple the explanation may be of an affair which at first sight seems to be almost inexplicable. Nothing could be more natural than the sequence of events as narrated by this lady, and nothing stranger than the result when viewed, for instance, by Mr. Lestrade of Scotland Yard.”

“You were not yourself at fault at all, then?”

“From the first, two facts were very obvious to me, the one that the lady had been quite willing to undergo the wedding ceremony, the other that she had repented of it within a few minutes of returning home. Obviously something had occurred during the morning, then, to cause her to change her mind. What could that something be? She could not have spoken to any one when she was out, for she had been in the company of the bridegroom. Had she seen some one, then? If she had, it must be some one from America because she had spent so short a time in this country that she could hardly have allowed any one to acquire so deep an influence over her that the mere sight of him would induce her to change her plans so completely. You see we have already arrived, by a process of exclusion, at the idea that she might have seen an American. Then who could this American be, and why should he possess so much influence over her? It might be a lover; it might be a husband. Her young womanhood had, I knew, been spent in rough scenes, and under strange conditions. So far I had got before I ever heard Lord St. Simon’s narrative. When he told us of a man in a pew, of the change in the bride’s manner, of so transparent a device of obtaining a note as the dropping of a bouquet, of her resort to her confidential maid, and of her

very significant allusion to claim-jumping, which in miners' parlance means taking possession of that which another person has a prior claim to, the whole situation became absolutely clear. She had gone off with a man, and the man was either a lover or was a previous husband, the chances being in favour of the latter."

"And how in the world did you find them?"

"It might have been difficult, but friend Lestrade held information in his hands the value of which he did not himself know. The initials were, of course, of the highest importance, but more valuable still was it to know that within a week he had settled his bill at one of the most select London hotels."

"How did you deduce the select?"

"By the select prices. Eight shillings for a bed and eightpence for a glass of sherry, pointed to one of the most expensive hotels.⁴⁸ There are not many in London which charge at that rate. In the second one which I visited in Northumberland Avenue,⁴⁹ I learned by an inspection of the book that Francis H. Moulton, an American gentleman, had left only the day before, and on looking over the entries against him, I came upon the very items which I had seen in the duplicate bill. His letters were to be forwarded to 226, Gordon Square; so thither I travelled, and being fortunate enough to find the loving couple at home, I ventured to give them some paternal advice, and to point out to them that it would be better in every way that they should make their position a little clearer, both to the general public and to Lord St. Simon in particular. I invited them to meet him here, and, as you see, I made him keep the appointment."

"But with no very good result," I remarked. "His conduct was certainly not very gracious."

"Ah! Watson," said Holmes, smiling, "perhaps you would not be very gracious either, if, after all the trouble of wooing and wedding, you found yourself deprived in an instant of wife and of fortune. I think that we may judge Lord St. Simon very mercifully, and thank our stars that we are never likely to find ourselves in the same position. Draw your chair up, and hand me my violin, for the only problem we have still to solve is how to while away these bleak autumnal evenings."⁵⁰

¹ "The Noble Bachelor" was published in the *Strand Magazine* in April 1892.

² In *A Study in Scarlet*, Chapter 1, Watson states that he was "struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery." Later in that volume Holmes describes Watson

as a man “[whose] left arm has been injured,” who holds the limb “in a stiff and unnatural manner.” Is this reconcilable with Watson’s description here? Note that he refers to a bullet “in one of [his] limbs.” Although his legs are propped on a chair, he *does not state* that the wound is in a leg. Yet the implication is hard to avoid. Elsewhere, in *The Sign of Four*, Chapter 1, Watson clearly states that he nursed his “wounded leg,” which had been struck by a Jezail bullet; in Chapter 7 of that book, Holmes questions the condition of Watson’s leg and specifically refers to his wounded “*tendo achillis*.” The only other reference to Watson’s wound or wounds is in “The Cardboard Box” (and “The Resident Patient” in some editions of the Canon), where Holmes observes that Watson’s hand “stole toward your old wound.” However, there is no indication there of the location of the wound.

3 A customs officer who awaited the arrival of ships (formerly coming in with the tide) and boarded them to prevent the avoidance of customs-house regulations.

4 As he is the second son of the Duke of Balmoral, the name should be “Lord Robert St. Simon,” not “Lord St. Simon.” His bride would not have been called Lady St. Simon, but rather Lady Robert St. Simon. Watson’s solecism was perhaps first noted by Andrew Lang, in “The Novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,” in the *Quarterly Review* of July 1904.

5 We hear of Lord Backwater again in “Silver Blaze”—his horse, Desborough, runs against Silver Blaze in the Wessex Cup (or Plate). “Silver Blaze,” for which Watson offers no date, appeared in the *Strand Magazine* in December 1892, eight months after publication of this story.

6 In the *Strand Magazine* and American editions, this signature is the erroneous “St. Simon.”

7 Michael Harrison writes, in *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*, “Victoria Streets, the seven-storied block of flats at the corner of Palace Street and Victoria Street, was begun in 1858, and flats therein were let at rentals of £300 per annum. The building was completely filled as soon as finished, so popular were the new flats . . .” One of Grosvenor Mansions’ residents was Arthur Sullivan, of Gilbert & Sullivan fame. For the impoverished Lord Robert St. Simon, then, a flat would have been a means of keeping up appearances. The name “Grosvenor Mansions” appears to have been a deliberate attempt on the part of the developers to call to mind the Duke of Westminster’s “Grosvenor House,” his mansion near Hyde Park on Upper Grosvenor Street.

8 What book is this? Suggestions include Debrett’s *Peerage: The Official Baronage of England*, by James E. Doyle (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1886), the *Red Book: or Court and Fashionable Register*, and Thomas Robson’s *The British Herald, or Cabinet of Armorial Bearings* (Sunderland: Printed for the author, 1830). None contain the quotation.

9 A “caltrop” is an iron ball armed with four spikes, so arranged that three are embedded in the ground and one always stands upright. The device was used to impede cavalry troops and horses in particular.

10 A “fess” is a horizontal band over the middle of a shield, usually taking up one-third of the shield’s surface. “Sable” means black. Therefore, according to Holmes, the coat of arms (or shield) consisted of a black horizontal band across the middle, with three caltrops in the top third of the shield.

11 A surname commonly applied to the royal house of England between Henry II’s ascension in 1154 and Richard III’s death in 1485. Members of the Plantagenet dynasty were descendants of Queen Matilda, daughter of Henry I, and Geoffrey, Count of Anjou. The name Plantagenet is said to derive from the sprig of broom-plant, or *planta genista*, that the Count of Anjou used to wear in his hat. The fifteenth century saw the Plantagenet line split into two factions, with the waging of the so-called Wars of the Roses between the House of York (whose emblem was a white rose) and the House of Lancaster (red rose), each of which had its own claim on the throne. Actual use of the Plantagenet name itself died with Yorkist Richard III; his successor, Henry VII—who was both a Lancastrian and a Tudor (see note 12, below)—united the duelling

houses by marrying Richard's niece, Elizabeth of York.

12 The Welsh family that from 1485 to 1603 gave five sovereigns to England, namely, Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. They were descended from Owen Tudor, who married Katherine of Valois, widow of Henry V. After Elizabeth's death in 1603, the throne passed to the House of Stuart.

13 Grosvenor Square, close to the Baker Street Station of the Metropolitan Line, comprised many aristocratic residences. It is now the site of the American Embassy.

14 Founded in 1772, it was the paper of record for the fashionable set for nearly a century. As such, it became popular among the servant classes of Victorian England as a means of following the doings of royalty. In 1881, it became a voice for the Conservative party. It merged with the *Daily Telegraph* in 1937.

15 There is a Westbury Hotel in London, but the Westbury House is not identified in *Baedeker*.

16 In the *Strand Magazine* and American editions, Miss Doran is reported instead to be making the transition to a British "peeress," or the wife of a peer. This is inaccurate. Peeress titles are, in descending order of rank, duchess, marchioness, countess, viscountess, and baroness. However, because Lord Robert was the *younger* son of a duke, he was *not* a peer but bore only a courtesy title. The eldest son is considered a peer and is addressed as if he held legally the second title of his father, typically that of a marquis or earl. That is, unless Lord Robert's father and elder brother died, Lord Robert would not be a "peer." His wife would also have only a courtesy title and would have been known as Lady Robert.

17 Designed and built by John James in 1721–1724, its interior restored by Sir Arthur Blomfield in 1894, the Anglican St. George's was "the most famous church in London for fashionable weddings," according to *Baedeker*. Nineteenth-century weddings held here included those of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1814), Benjamin Disraeli (1839), George Meredith (1844), George Eliot (1880), and Theodore Roosevelt (1886).

18 Then a range of balconied buildings, completed in 1866, in a well-to-do residential quarter north of Hyde Park.

19 The "wedding breakfast" arose as the time of celebration because pre-1887 English law required that weddings be performed before noon. Even after the legislative change, the tradition continued.

20 The Reverend Otis R. Rice observes how astonishing it is that the solemnisation of such a high-profile marriage was left to the vicar or even one of his curates and not an archbishop or at least the Bishop of London. He suggests that perhaps neither Hatty nor her father found time to have her baptised. Rice also considers it unusual that the "clergyman" (as Hatty Doran refers to the officiant) did not have his name mentioned in the press notice; nor was he invited to the wedding breakfast.

21 Note that the Duke of Balmoral and his eldest son, Lord Robert's older brother, are conspicuously missing. Carol Whitlam proposes that the duke disapproved of his son's marriage to an uncultured American, and that his eldest son, keen not to offend his father in any way, followed his example and also boycotted the wedding.

22 How is it that Aloysius Doran failed to mention to the police that Francis Hay Moulton appeared at the wedding? Could this involve Lord Backwater's horse Desborough and the running of the Wessex Cup (Plate) in "Silver Blaze"?

23 There was no Allegro in London; however, the Alhambra was a large, popular music-hall/theatre in Leicester Square that featured ballet and spectacle. It burned virtually to the ground in 1882, and although it reopened in December 1883, Miss Millar may have seized that opportunity to take up other sources of income.

[24](#) The reference to Watson's presumed departure suggests that this case occurred early in Holmes and Watson's relationship.

[25](#) Holmes's undue deference to Lord Robert and his misuse of aristocratic titles have been cited by several scholars as "evidence" that Holmes may have lied about his country squire forbears (mentioned in "The Greek Interpreter") and demonstrate at the minimum that Holmes was no "gentleman." His subsequent subtle belittling of Lord Robert is characteristic of Holmes's reverse snobbery about wealth and position.

[26](#) A wicker armchair. The basket chair is also mentioned in "The Blue Carbuncle" and "The Man with the Twisted Lip."

[27](#) There are several reasons the King of Scandinavia (at this time Oscar II) might have needed Holmes's help. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," the king of Bohemia advises Holmes of his impending marriage to the second daughter of the King of Scandinavia, Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen. Perhaps Holmes was asked to arrange this delicate business. Holmes's ties to the Royal Family of Scandinavia are also mentioned in "The Final Problem." As Norway did not sever her connection with Sweden until 1905, it is possible that Holmes's visit to Norway in "Black Peter" was also connected with a mission for Oscar II. Despite these clues, however, Christopher Redmond discounts the entire reference as "bombast." "If the case had been genuine," he writes, in *In Bed with Sherlock Holmes*, "Holmes's concern for 'secrecy' in 'the affairs of my other clients' would lead him to keep the client's name confidential, even if he revealed some of the events, rather than vice-versa."

[28](#) According to *Baedeker*, the "London Season" consisted of the months of May, June, and July, "when Parliament is sitting, the aristocracy are at their town residences, the greatest artistes in the world are performing at the Opera, and the Picture Exhibitions open."

[29](#) Neither Holmes nor Watson seems to have thought to censure Lord Robert for his abominable treatment of poor Flora Millar, whom he discarded after allowing her to become "devotedly attached" to him. Of course, Holmes himself is no slave to chivalry, as evidenced by his similarly casual use and subsequent dropping of the maid Agatha in "Charles Augustus Milverton."

[30](#) In the *Strand Magazine* and American editions, the phrase "given instructions to the servants" does not appear, and instead Lord Robert states that he had "two police fellows there in private clothes." The newspaper article quoted by Watson had reported that the butler and footman escorted Flora Millar out, and he apparently made this correction when the first book edition of "The Noble Bachelor" appeared.

[31](#) This may be a reference to a farmer's practice of adding water to his milk, to increase his earnings.

[32](#) Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), American naturalist and essayist. Thoreau's *Excursions* (Boston, 1863) included a biographical sketch by Emerson that incorporated sentences from Thoreau's unpublished writings, including the remark that "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk" (*Journal*, 1850).

[33](#) The war ended on January 28, 1871, when Paris fell to a German siege. At that time, Munich was the capital of the German state of Bavaria, which in the Victorian era had the misfortune to be ruled by two kings who were mentally ill. Louis II, king during the Franco-Prussian War (and patron of composer Richard Wagner) was confined to a chateau at Lake Starnberger in 1886; he drowned himself there that year. His successor, his brother Otto I, was also insane but ruled Bavaria under the regency of an uncle and a cousin until 1916.

[34](#) The Serpentine, an artificial lake in Hyde Park used for boating and swimming, was created as part of Queen Caroline's efforts to improve the park in the 1730s. It was originally fed by the Westbourne, a small stream whose source was in Bayswater, but is now supplied from the Thames.

[35](#) Trafalgar Square in Westminster is dedicated to Lord Nelson, commemorating his death at the battle of Trafalgar on October 22, 1805. Toward the north side of the square are two fountains, described in *Dickens's Dictionary of London* (London, 1891–1892) as having a “ridiculous insufficiency of . . . jets of water”; between the fountains is a statue of General Gordon, Watson’s hero (1833–1885), erected in 1888. The statue has since been moved to the Embankment. The fountains are proximate to each other and so may be referred to casually as a single fountain.

[36](#) Frederic H. Sonnenschmidt, culinary dean of the Culinary Institute of America, and Julia Carlson Rosenblatt take gentle issue with the name of this dish, writing in *Dining with Sherlock Holmes*: “Much as we would like to vouch for Watson’s accuracy in this matter, the painful truth is that in culinary terms, one does not speak of *pâté de foie gras* ‘pie.’ ” They go on to explain that a *pâté*, according to its original French definition, consists of meat, fish, vegetables, or fruit encased in pastry—that is, a pie. It is only recently that *pâté* has come to mean the meat or fish variety alone. It is likely, Sonnenschmidt and Rosenblatt surmise, that the diligent Watson added the word “pie” to clarify a term that was starting to become ambiguous. The authors further note that they found two American cookbooks of the Victorian era that listed *pâté de foie gras* as a pie filling, leading them to conclude that Watson was familiar with American cookbooks and had spent time in the United States.

[37](#) That Holmes enjoyed good wine is indisputable. The Canon records Holmes drinking claret (“The Cardboard Box” and “The Dying Detective”), port (“The ‘Gloria Scott’,” *The Sign of Four*, and “The Creeping Man”), Imperial Tokay (“His Last Bow”), wine (“Shoscombe Old Place”), “something a little choice in white wines” (*The Sign of Four*), and Montrachet (“The Veiled Lodger”). Sherlockians who appreciate wine have nominated many bottles for this meal, and Patricia Guy, in her *Bacchus at Baker Street: Observations on the Bibulous Preferences of Mr. Sherlock Holmes and his Contemporaries*, considers the issue in some detail and identifies the “group of . . . bottles” as an 1878 Corton (a red Burgundy and a fine match for the partridge), an 1811 Chateau Haut Brion (red Bordeaux to complement the woodcock), a 1790 Imperial Tokay (coupled with the *pâté de foie gras* pie), an 1874 Perrier-Jouet Champagne, with which to toast the occasion, and, after the cloth was removed, a 1789 Bual Madeira.

[38](#) That is, the *Thousand and One Nights*, of which Sir Richard Francis Burton published a sixteen-volume unabridged translation from 1885 to 1888. Other English translations of the period include E. W. Lane’s abridged version (1840) and John Payne’s nine-volume effort (1882–1884).

[39](#) The *Strand Magazine* and American texts say “morning,” which is plainly wrong.

[40](#) Mysteriously, the *Strand Magazine* and American editions add the description “clean shaven.”

[41](#) The *Strand Magazine* and American editions report the meeting as occurring in ’84.

[42](#) “Near the Rockies” is a loose description covering numerous places. Silver, gold, lead, and zinc mines occur in Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Montana, and Arizona. The latter three states may be ruled out because Hattie specifically mentions that Frank has travelled to those states. Although there is little evidence with which to locate “McQuire’s camp,” there was a large discovery of gold in 1881 in Spring Valley, Nevada, and Doran’s claim may have been there. Another possibility, suggested by John Girand, is McGuire’s camp, which was situated two and a half miles east of Strong, in Huerfanos County, Colorado, one of the richest gold-producing areas in the Colorado Rockies, although there is no record of a large discovery there in 1881 (or 1884, for that matter).

[43](#) “Frisco,” a name guaranteed to boil the blood of any current resident of the City, is a common nickname for San Francisco and appeared in contemporary literature as recently as Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957).

[44](#) The late nineteenth century was indeed a time of great conflict between Apaches and settlers in the

south-western United States. American settlers flocked to New Mexico and surrounding areas in the mid-to late-1800s, whether lured by the prospect of gold in the West, encouraged by the designation of New Mexico as an official territory in 1850 (the U.S. acquired the land in the Mexican War), or drawn to cattle ranching after the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s. The nomadic Apache had engaged in raids on Pueblo and Spanish settlements since the late 1600s; now pressured by regional governments to colonise and relocate to centralised reservations, they frequently struck back with violence. Vendettas against whites were pursued throughout the South-west by Apache chiefs such as Mangas Coloradas in south-western New Mexico, who was humiliated by his flogging at the hands of miners in 1851; Cochise, his son-in-law, whose friendly relations with American settlers ended when several of his relatives were hanged by soldiers on false robbery and kidnapping charges in Arizona in 1861; Victorio, a former Mangas Coloradas lieutenant; Geronimo, who took over leadership of the Chiricahua Apache after Cochise's death in 1874, instigating raids on Arizona and Mexico until his surrender in 1886; and Nachis, even more feared than Geronimo because of the cruel and unusual tortures his victims received.

Richard E. Sloan's *History of Arizona* (Phoenix: Record Publishing Co., 1930) records that in February 1884, Geronimo started "the bloodiest in all the Indian Wars," and in April, he attacked the military outpost at Camp Goodwin, Arizona, routing the troopers stationed there and killing a few prospectors who had sought refuge. The murder of the prospectors was widely reported in western newspapers, and such a report was the probable source of Hatty Doran's belief that Frank Moulton had perished.

[45](#) Richard Lancelyn Green writes, "[L]egal opinion suggests that she should have done so, as she otherwise laid herself open to a charge of bigamy (under the Offences against the Person Act, 1861) by marrying another man while aware that her husband was alive."

[46](#) Holmes means George III (1738–1820), during whose reign the American colonies achieved their independence.

[47](#) Holmes presumably means Lord North, who became prime minister in 1770 and pushed the king's anti-colonial policies through Parliament. When the Continental Army defeated Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1782, Lord North at once resigned office.

[48](#) In American funds of the era, the room cost \$2.00 (about \$48.00 in today's purchasing power), the breakfast and lunch some 62 ½ cents each, the cocktail 25 cents, the sherry, 16 cents.

[49](#) There were three large hotels on Northumberland Avenue at the time: the Grand, facing Trafalgar Square; the Victoria or Northumberland Avenue Hotel; and the Metropole.

[50](#) It is perhaps telling that the two men, despite their intimate acquaintance, felt little need to discuss Watson's impending marriage and necessary departure from 221B Baker Street. June Thomson, in her splendid biography *Holmes and Watson*, notes that *Holmes and Watson* shared "an essentially male friendship" in which personal matters were not generally shared (if such conversation did take place, she concedes, it was never recorded). Thomson continues, "Both men must have realized it [Watson's leaving] was inevitable but preferred not to speak of it, let alone openly express their feelings about such a parting or the immense changes it would bring to both their lives."

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BERYL CORONET¹

In a tale reminiscent of Wilkie Collins's highly successful mystery The Moonstone, which involves a priceless gem kept in an unlocked cupboard, Holmes must recover a valuable national treasure put at risk by an unnamed peer (likely understood by the readers to be the Prince of Wales, the highly popular but slightly disreputable Albert Edward, oldest son of Queen Victoria). Set in a suburb of London, "The Beryl Coronet" features another one-legged man from Watson's casebook (the first appeared in The Sign of Four); meanwhile, Holmes reveals both his knowledge of the criminal underworld of London and his bank account balance.

HOLMES," SAID I as I stood one morning in our bow window² looking down the street, "here is a madman coming along. It seems rather sad that his relatives should allow him to come out alone."

My friend rose lazily from his armchair, and stood with his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown, looking over my shoulder. It was a bright, crisp February morning, and the snow of the day before still lay deep upon the ground,

shimmering brightly in the wintry sun. Down the centre of Baker Street it had been ploughed into a brown crumbly band by the traffic, but at either side and on the heaped-up edges of the footpaths it still lay as white as when it fell. The grey pavement had been cleaned and scraped, but was still dangerously slippery, so that there were fewer passengers³ than usual. Indeed, from the direction of the Metropolitan Station no one was coming save the single gentleman whose eccentric conduct had drawn my attention.

He was a man of about fifty, tall, portly, and imposing, with a massive, strongly marked face and a commanding figure. He was dressed in a sombre yet rich style, in black frock coat, shining hat, neat brown gaiters, and well-cut pearl-grey trousers. Yet his actions were in absurd contrast to the dignity of his dress and features, for he was running hard, with occasional little springs, such as a weary man gives who is little accustomed to set any tax upon his legs. As he ran he jerked his hands up and down, waggled his head, and writhed his face into the most extraordinary contortions.

“What on earth can be the matter with him?” I asked. “He is looking up at the numbers of the houses.”

“I believe that he is coming here,” said Holmes, rubbing his hands.

“Here?”

“Yes; I rather think he is coming to consult me professionally. I think that I recognize the symptoms. Ha! did I not tell you?” As he spoke, the man, puffing and blowing, rushed at our door, and pulled at our bell until the whole house resounded with the clanging.

A few moments later he was in our room, still puffing, still gesticulating, but with so fixed a look of grief and despair in his eyes that our smiles were turned in an instant to horror and pity. For a while he could not get his words out but swayed his body and plucked at his hair like one who has been driven to the extreme limits of his reason. Then, suddenly springing to his feet, he beat his head against the wall with such force that we both rushed upon him, and tore him away to the centre of the room.⁴ Sherlock Holmes pushed him down into the easy-chair, and, sitting beside him, patted his hand, and chatted with him in the easy, soothing tones which he knew so well how to employ.

“You have come to me to tell your story, have you not?” said he. “You are fatigued with your haste. Pray wait until you have recovered yourself, and then I shall be most happy to look into any little problem which you may submit to me.”

The man sat for a minute or more with a heaving chest, fighting against his emotion. Then he passed his handkerchief over his brow, set his lips tight, and

turned his face towards us.

“No doubt you think me mad?” said he.



“With a look of grief and despair.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I see that you have had some great trouble,” responded Holmes.

“God knows I have!—a trouble which is enough to unseat my reason, so sudden and so terrible is it. Public disgrace I might have faced, although I am a man whose character has never yet borne a stain. Private affliction also is the lot of every man; but the two coming together, and in so frightful a form, have been enough to shake my very soul. Besides, it is not I alone. The very noblest in the land may suffer, unless some way be found out of this horrible affair.”

“Pray compose yourself, sir,” said Holmes, “and let me have a clear account of who you are and what it is that has befallen you.”

“My name,” answered our visitor, “is probably familiar to your ears. I am Alexander Holder, of the banking firm of Holder & Stevenson, of Threadneedle Street.”

The name was indeed well known to us⁵ as belonging to the senior partner in the second largest private banking concern in the City of London. What could have happened, then, to bring one of the foremost citizens of London to this most pitiable pass? We waited, all curiosity, until with another effort he braced himself to tell his story.

“I feel that time is of value,” said he, “that is why I hastened here when the police inspector suggested that I should secure your co-operation. I came to Baker Street by the Underground, and hurried from there on foot, for the cabs go slowly through this snow.⁶ That is why I was so out of breath, for I am a man who takes very little exercise. I feel better now, and I will put the facts before you as shortly and yet as clearly as I can.

“It is, of course, well known to you that in a successful banking business as much depends upon our being able to find remunerative investments for our funds, as upon our increasing our connection and the number of our depositors. One of our most lucrative means of laying out money is in the shape of loans, where the security is unimpeachable. We have done a good deal in this direction during the last few years, and there are many noble families to whom we have advanced large sums upon the security of their pictures, libraries, or plate.

“Yesterday morning I was seated in my office at the bank when a card was brought in to me by one of the clerks. I started when I saw the name, for it was that of none other than—well, perhaps even to you I had better say no more than that it was a name which is a household word all over the earth—one of the highest, noblest, most exalted names in England.⁷ I was overwhelmed by the honour and attempted, when he entered, to say so, but he plunged at once into business with the air of a man who wishes to hurry quickly through a disagreeable task.

“ ‘Mr. Holder,’ said he, ‘I have been informed that you are in the habit of advancing money.’

“ ‘The firm do so when the security is good,’ I answered.

“ ‘It is absolutely essential to me,’ said he, ‘that I should have fifty thousand pounds⁸ at once. I could, of course, borrow so trifling a sum ten times over from my friends, but I much prefer to make it a matter of business, and to carry out that business myself. In my position you can readily understand that it is unwise to place one’s self under obligations.’

“ ‘For how long may I ask, do you want this sum?’ I asked.

“ ‘Next Monday I have a large sum due to me, and I shall then most certainly repay what you advance, with whatever interest you think it right to charge. But it is very essential to me that the money should be paid at once.’

“ ‘I should be happy to advance it without further parley from my own private purse,’ said I, ‘were it not that the strain would be rather more than it could bear. If, on the other hand, I am to do it in the name of the firm, then in justice to my partner I must insist that, even in your case, every business-like precaution should be taken.’

“ ‘I should much prefer to have it so,’ said he, raising up a square, black morocco⁹ case which he had laid beside his chair. ‘You have doubtless heard of the Beryl Coronet?’¹⁰

“ ‘One of the most precious public possessions of the empire,’ said I.

“ ‘Precisely.’ He opened the case and there, imbedded in soft, flesh-coloured velvet, lay the magnificent piece of jewellery which he had named. ‘There are

thirty-nine enormous beryls,'¹¹ said he, 'and the price of the gold chasing¹² is incalculable. The lowest estimate would put the worth of the coronet at double the sum which I have asked. I am prepared to leave it with you as my security.'

"I took the precious case into my hands and looked in some perplexity from it to my illustrious client.



“I took the precious case.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘You doubt its value?’ he asked.

“ ‘Not at all. I only doubt—’

“ ‘The propriety of my leaving it. You may set your mind at rest about that. I should not dream of doing so were it not absolutely certain that I should be able in four days to reclaim it. It is a pure matter of form. Is the security sufficient?’

“ ‘Ample.’

“ ‘You understand, Mr. Holder, that I am giving you a strong proof of the confidence which I have in you, founded upon all that I have heard of you. I rely upon you not only to be discreet and to refrain from all gossip upon the matter but, above all, to preserve this coronet with every possible precaution, because I need not say that a great public scandal would be caused if any harm were to befall it. Any injury to it would be almost as serious as its complete loss, for there are no beryls in the world to match these, and it would be impossible to replace them. I leave it with you, however, with every confidence, and I shall call for it in person on Monday morning.’

“Seeing that my client was anxious to leave, I said no more; but, calling for my cashier, I ordered him to pay over fifty thousand-pound notes. When I was alone once more, however, with the precious case lying upon the table in front of me, I could not but think with some misgiving of the immense responsibility

which it entailed upon me. There could be no doubt that, as it was a national possession, a horrible scandal would ensue if any misfortune should occur to it. I already regretted having ever consented to take charge of it. However, it was too late to alter the matter now, so I locked it up in my private safe, and turned once more to my work.

“When evening came I felt that it would be an imprudence to leave so precious a thing in the office behind me. Bankers’ safes had been forced before now, and why should not mine be? If so, how terrible would be the position in which I should find myself! I determined, therefore, that for the next few days I would always carry the case backward and forward with me, so that it might never be really out of my reach. With this intention, I called a cab and drove out to my house at Streatham,¹³ carrying the jewel with me. I did not breathe freely until I had taken it upstairs, and locked it in the bureau of my dressing-room.

“And now a word as to my household, Mr. Holmes, for I wish you to thoroughly understand the situation. My groom and my page sleep out of the house, and may be set aside altogether. I have three maid-servants who have been with me a number of years, and whose absolute reliability is quite above suspicion. Another, Lucy Parr, the second waiting-maid, has only been in my service a few months. She came with an excellent character, however, and has always given me satisfaction. She is a very pretty girl, and has attracted admirers who have occasionally hung about the place. That is the only drawback which we have found to her, but we believe her to be a thoroughly good girl in every way.

“So much for the servants. My family itself is so small that it will not take me long to describe it. I am a widower, and have an only son, Arthur. He has been a disappointment to me, Mr. Holmes—a grievous disappointment. I have no doubt that I am myself to blame. People tell me that I have spoiled him. Very likely I have. When my dear wife died I felt that he was all I had to love. I could not bear to see the smile fade even for a moment from his face. I have never denied him a wish. Perhaps it would have been better for both of us had I been sterner, but I meant it for the best.

“It was naturally my intention that he should succeed me in my business, but he was not of a business turn. He was wild, wayward, and, to speak the truth, I could not trust him in the handling of large sums of money. When he was young he became a member of an aristocratic club, and there, having charming manners, he was soon the intimate of a number of men with long purses and expensive habits. He learned to play heavily at cards and to squander money on the turf, until he had again and again to come to me and implore me to give him an advance upon his allowance, that he might settle his debts of honour. He tried

more than once to break away from the dangerous company which he was keeping, but each time the influence of his friend Sir George Burnwell was enough to draw him back again.

“And, indeed, I could not wonder that such a man as Sir George Burnwell should gain an influence over him, for he has frequently brought him to my house, and I have found myself that I could hardly resist the fascination of his manner. He is older than Arthur, a man of the world to his finger-tips, one who had been everywhere, seen everything, a brilliant talker, and a man of great personal beauty. Yet when I think of him in cold blood, far away from the glamour of his presence, I am convinced from his cynical speech, and the look which I have caught in his eyes, that he is one who should be deeply distrusted. So I think, and so, too, thinks my little Mary, who has a woman’s quick insight into character.

“And now there is only she to be described. She is my niece; but when my brother died five years ago and left her alone in the world I adopted her, and have looked upon her ever since as my daughter. She is a sunbeam in my house—sweet, loving, beautiful, a wonderful manager and housekeeper, yet as tender and quiet and gentle as a woman could be. She is my right hand. I do not know what I could do without her. In only one matter has she ever gone against my wishes. Twice my boy has asked her to marry him, for he loves her devotedly, but each time she has refused him.¹⁴ I think that if any one could have drawn him into the right path it would have been she, and that his marriage might have changed his whole life; but now, alas, it is too late—for ever too late!

“Now, Mr. Holmes, you know the people who live under my roof, and I shall continue with my miserable story.

“When we were taking coffee in the drawing room that night after dinner, I told Arthur and Mary my experience, and of the precious treasure which we had under our roof, suppressing only the name of my client. Lucy Parr, who had brought in the coffee, had, I am sure, left the room; but I cannot swear that the door was closed. Mary and Arthur were much interested and wished to see the famous coronet, but I thought it better not to disturb it.

“ ‘Where have you put it?’ asked Arthur.

“ ‘In my own bureau.’

“ ‘Well, I hope to goodness the house won’t be burgled during the night,’ said he.

“ ‘It is locked up,’ I answered.

“ ‘Oh, any old key will fit that bureau.’¹⁵ When I was a youngster I have opened it myself with the key of the box-room cupboard.’

“He often had a wild way of talking, so that I thought little of what he said. He followed me to my room, however, that night with a very grave face.

“ ‘Look here, dad,’ said he with his eyes cast down, ‘can you let me have two hundred pounds?’

“ ‘No, I cannot!’ I answered sharply. ‘I have been far too generous with you in money matters.’



“Oh, any old key will fit that bureau.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘You have been very kind,’ said he; ‘but I must have this money, or else I can never show my face inside the club again.’

“ ‘And a very good thing, too!’ I cried.

“ ‘Yes, but you would not have me leave it a dishonoured man,’ said he. ‘I could not bear the disgrace. I must raise the money in some way, and if you will not let me have it, then I must try other means.’

“I was very angry, for this was the third demand during the month. ‘You shall not have a farthing¹⁶ from me,’ I cried, on which he bowed and left the room without another word.

“When he was gone I unlocked my bureau, made sure that my treasure was safe, and locked it again. Then I started to go round the house to see that all was secure—a duty which I usually leave to Mary, but which I thought it well to perform myself that night. As I came down the stairs I saw Mary herself at the side window of the hall, which she closed and fastened as I approached.

“ ‘Tell me, dad,’ said she, looking, I thought, a little disturbed, ‘did you give Lucy, the maid, leave to go out to-night?’

“ ‘Certainly not.’

“ ‘She came in just now by the back door. I have no doubt that she has only been to the side gate to see some one, but I think that it is hardly safe, and should be stopped.’

“ ‘You must speak to her in the morning, or I will if you prefer it. Are you

sure that everything is fastened?’

“ ‘Quite sure, dad.’

“ ‘Then, good-night.’ I kissed her, and went up to my bedroom again, where I was soon asleep.

“I am endeavouring to tell you everything Mr. Holmes, which may have any bearing upon the case, but I beg that you will question me upon any point which I do not make clear.”

“On the contrary, your statement is singularly lucid.”

“I come to a part of my story now in which I should wish to be particularly so. I am not a very heavy sleeper, and the anxiety in my mind tended, no doubt, to make me even less so than usual. About two in the morning, then, I was awakened by some sound in the house. It had ceased ere I was wide awake, but it had left an impression behind it as though a window had gently closed somewhere. I lay listening with all my ears. Suddenly, to my horror, there was a distinct sound of footsteps moving softly in the next room. I slipped out of bed, all palpitating with fear, and peeped round the corner of my dressing-room door.

“ ‘Arthur!’ I screamed, ‘you villain! you thief! How dare you touch that coronet?’

“The gas was half up, as I had left it, and my unhappy boy, dressed only in his shirt and trousers, was standing beside the light, holding the coronet in his hands. He appeared to be wrenching at it, or bending it with all his strength. At my cry he dropped it from his grasp, and turned as pale as death. I snatched it up and examined it. One of the gold corners, with three of the beryls in it, was missing.

“ ‘You blackguard!’ I shouted, beside myself with rage. ‘You have destroyed it! You have dishonoured me for ever! Where are the jewels which you have stolen?’

“ ‘Stolen!’ he cried.

“ ‘Yes, thief!’ I roared, shaking him by the shoulder.

“ ‘There are none missing. There cannot be any missing,’ said he.

“ ‘There are three missing. And you know where they are. Must I call you a liar as well as a thief? Did I not see you trying to tear off another piece?’

“ ‘You have called me names enough,’ said he, ‘I will not stand it any longer. I shall not say another word about this business, since you have chosen to insult me. I will leave your house in the morning, and make my own way in the world.’



“You thief!”

J. C. Drake, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, April 17, 1892

“ ‘You shall leave it in the hands of the police!’ I cried, half mad with grief and rage. ‘I shall have this matter probed to the bottom.’

“ ‘You shall learn nothing from me,’ said he with a passion such as I should not have thought was in his nature. ‘If you choose to call the police, let the police find what they can.’

“By this time the whole house was astir, for I had raised my voice in my anger. Mary was the first to rush into my room, and, at the sight of the coronet and of Arthur’s face, she read the whole story, and, with a scream, fell down senseless on the ground. I sent the house-maid for the police and put the investigation into their hands at once. When the inspector and a constable entered the house, Arthur, who had stood sullenly with his arms folded, asked me whether it was my intention to charge him with theft. I answered that it had ceased to be a private matter, but had become a public one, since the ruined coronet was national property. I was determined that the law should have its way in everything.



“At my cry he dropped it.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘At least,’ said he, ‘you will not have me arrested at once. It would be to your advantage as well as mine if I might leave the house for five minutes.’

“ ‘That you may get away, or perhaps that you may conceal what you have stolen,’ said I. And then realizing the dreadful position in which I was placed, I implored him to remember that not only my honour, but that of one who was far greater than I was at stake; and that he threatened to raise a scandal which would convulse the nation. He might avert it all if he would but tell me what he had done with the three missing stones.

“ ‘You may as well face the matter,’ said I; ‘you have been caught in the act, and no confession could make your guilt more heinous. If you but make such reparation as is in your power, by telling us where the beryls are, all shall be forgiven and forgotten.’

“ ‘Keep your forgiveness for those who ask for it,’ he answered, turning away from me with a sneer. I saw that he was too hardened for any words of mine to influence him. There was but one way for it. I called in the inspector and gave him into custody. A search was made at once not only of his person, but of his room, and of every portion of the house where he could possibly have concealed the gems; but no trace of them could be found, nor would the wretched boy open his mouth for all our persuasions and our threats. This morning he was removed to a cell, and I, after going through all the police formalities, have hurried round to you, to implore you to use your skill in unravelling the matter. The police have openly confessed that they can at present make nothing of it. You may go

to any expense which you think necessary. I have already offered a reward of £1000. My God, what shall I do! I have lost my honour, my gems, and my son in one night. Oh, what shall I do!”

He put a hand on either side of his head and rocked himself to and fro, droning to himself like a child whose grief has got beyond words.

Sherlock Holmes sat silent for some few minutes, with his brows knitted and his eyes fixed upon the fire.

“Do you receive much company?” he asked.

“None, save my partner with his family, and an occasional friend of Arthur’s. Sir George Burnwell has been several times lately. No one else, I think.”

“Do you go out much in society?”

“Arthur does. Mary and I stay at home. We neither of us care for it.”

“That is unusual in a young girl.”

“She is of a quiet nature. Besides, she is not so very young. She is four-and-twenty.”

“This matter, from what you say, seems to have been a shock to her also.”

“Terrible! She is even more affected than I.”

“You have neither of you any doubt as to your son’s guilt?”

“How can we have, when I saw him with my own eyes with the coronet in his hands.”

“I hardly consider that a conclusive proof. Was the remainder of the coronet at all injured?”

“Yes, it was twisted.”

“Do you not think, then, that he might have been trying to straighten it?”

“God bless you! You are doing what you can for him and for me. But it is too heavy a task. What was he doing there at all? If his purpose were innocent, why did he not say so?”

“Precisely. And if he were guilty, why did he not invent a lie? His silence appears to me to cut both ways. There are several singular points about the case. What did the police think of the noise which awoke you from your sleep?”

“They considered that it might be caused by Arthur’s closing his bedroom door.”

“A likely story! As if a man bent on felony would slam his door so as to wake a household. What did they say, then, of the disappearance of these gems?”

“They are still sounding the planking and probing the furniture in the hope of finding them.”

“Have they thought of looking outside the house?”

“Yes, they have shown extraordinary energy. The whole garden has already been minutely examined.”

“Now, my dear sir,” said Holmes, “is it not obvious to you now that this matter really strikes very much deeper than either you or the police were at first inclined to think? It appeared to you to be a simple case; to me it seems exceedingly complex. Consider what is involved by your theory. You suppose that your son came down from his bed, went, at great risk, to your dressing-room, opened your bureau, took out your coronet, broke off by main force a small portion of it, went off to some other place, concealed three gems out of the thirty-nine, with such skill that nobody can find them, and then returned with the other thirty-six into the room in which he exposed himself to the greatest danger of being discovered. I ask you now, is such a theory tenable?”

“But what other is there?” cried the banker with a gesture of despair. “If his motives were innocent, why does he not explain them?”

“It is our task to find that out,” replied Holmes; “so now, if you please, Mr. Holder, we will set off for Streatham together, and devote an hour to glancing a little more closely into details.”

My friend insisted upon my accompanying them in their expedition, which I was eager enough to do, for my curiosity and sympathy were deeply stirred by the story to which we had listened. I confess that the guilt of the banker’s son appeared to me to be as obvious as it did to his unhappy father, but still I had such faith in Holmes’s judgment that I felt that there must be some grounds for hope as long as he was dissatisfied with the accepted explanation. He hardly spoke a word the whole way out to the southern suburb, but sat with his chin upon his breast, and his hat drawn over his eyes, sunk in the deepest thought. Our client appeared to have taken fresh heart at the little glimpse of hope which had been presented to him, and he even broke into a desultory chat with me over his business affairs. A short railway journey, and a shorter walk, brought us to Fairbank, the modest residence of the great financier.

Fairbank was a good-sized square house of white stone, standing back a little from the road. A double carriage sweep,¹⁷ with a snow-clad lawn, stretched down in front to two large iron gates which closed the entrance. On the right side was a small wooden thicket¹⁸ which led into a narrow path between two neat hedges stretching from the road to the kitchen door, and forming the tradesmen’s entrance. On the left ran a lane which led to the stables, and was not itself within the grounds at all, being a public, though little used, thoroughfare. Holmes left us standing at the door and walked slowly all round the house, across the front, down the tradesmen’s path, and so round by the garden behind into the stable lane. So long was he that Mr. Holder and I went into the dining-room, and waited by the fire until he should return. We were sitting there in silence when

the door opened, and a young lady came in. She was rather above the middle height, slim, with dark hair and eyes, which seemed the darker against the absolute pallor of her skin. I do not think that I have ever seen such a deadly paleness in a woman's face. Her lips, too, were bloodless, but her eyes were flushed with crying. As she swept silently into the room she impressed me with a greater sense of grief than the banker had done in the morning, and it was the more striking in her as she was evidently a woman of strong character, with immense capacity for self-restraint. Disregarding my presence, she went straight to her uncle, and passed her hand over his head with a sweet womanly caress.



“She went straight to her uncle.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“You have given orders that Arthur should be liberated, have you not, dad?” she asked.

“No, no, my girl, the matter must be probed to the bottom.”

“But I am so sure that he is innocent. You know what woman's instincts are. I know that he has done no harm, and that you will be sorry for having acted so harshly.”

“Why is he silent, then, if he is innocent?”

“Who knows? Perhaps because he was so angry that you should suspect him.”

“How could I help suspecting him when I actually saw him with the coronet in his hand?”

“Oh, but he had only picked it up to look at it. Oh, do, do take my word for it that he is innocent. Let the matter drop, and say no more. It is so dreadful to think of our dear Arthur in prison!”

“I shall never let it drop until the gems are found—never, Mary! Your affection for Arthur blinds you as to the awful consequences to me. Far from hushing the thing up, I have brought a gentleman down from London to inquire more deeply into it.”

“This gentleman?” she asked, facing round to me.

“No, his friend. He wished us to leave him alone. He is round in the stable lane now.”

“The stable lane?” she raised her dark eyebrows. “What can he hope to find there? Ah! this, I suppose, is he. I trust, sir, that you will succeed in proving, what I feel sure is the truth, that my cousin Arthur is innocent of this crime.”

“I fully share your opinion, and, I trust, with you, that we may prove it,” returned Holmes, going back to the mat to knock the snow from his shoes. “I believe I have the honour of addressing Miss Mary Holder. Might I ask you a question or two?”

“Pray do, sir, if it may help to clear this horrible affair up.”

“You heard nothing yourself last night?”

“Nothing, until my uncle here began to speak loudly. I heard that, and I came down.”

“You shut up the windows and doors the night before. Did you fasten all the windows?”



She placed her hand over his head.

J. C. Drake, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, April 17, 1892

“Yes.”

“Were they all fastened this morning?”

“Yes.”

“You have a maid who has a sweetheart? I think that you remarked to your uncle last night that she had been out to see him?”

“Yes, and she was the girl who waited in the drawing-room, and who may have heard uncle’s remarks about the coronet.”

“I see. You infer that she may have gone out to tell her sweetheart, and that the two may have planned the robbery.”

“But what is the good of all these vague theories,” cried the banker impatiently, when I have told you that I saw Arthur with the coronet in his hands?”

“Wait a little, Mr. Holder. We must come back to that. About this girl, Miss Holder. You saw her return by the kitchen door, I presume?”

“Yes; when I went to see if the door was fastened for the night I met her slipping in. I saw the man, too, in the gloom.”

“Do you know him?”

“Oh, yes; he is the greengrocer who brings our vegetables round. His name is Francis Prosper.”

“He stood,” said Holmes, “to the left of the door—that is to say, further up the path than is necessary to reach the door?”

“Yes, he did.”

“And he is a man with a wooden leg?”

Something like fear sprang up in the young lady’s expressive black eyes. “Why, you are like a magician,” said she. “How do you know that?” She smiled, but there was no answering smile in Holmes’s thin, eager face.

“I should be very glad now to go upstairs,” said he. “I shall probably wish to go over the outside of the house again. Perhaps I had better take a look at the lower windows before I go up.”

He walked swiftly round from one to the other, pausing only at the large one which looked from the hall onto the stable lane. This he opened, and made a very careful examination of the sill with his powerful magnifying lens. “Now we shall go upstairs,” said he, at last.

The banker’s dressing-room was a plainly furnished little chamber, with a grey carpet, a large bureau, and a long mirror. Holmes went to the bureau first, and looked hard at the lock.



“Something like fear sprang up in the young lady’s eyes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Which key was used to open it?” he asked.

“That which my son himself indicated—that of the cupboard of the lumber-room.”

“Have you it here?”

“That is it on the dressing-table.”

Sherlock Holmes took it up and opened the bureau.

“It is a noiseless lock,” said he. “It is no wonder that it did not wake you. This case, I presume, contains the coronet. We must have a look at it.” He opened the case, and, taking out the diadem, he laid it upon the table. It was a magnificent specimen of the jeweller’s art, and the thirty-six stones were the finest that I have ever seen. At one side of the coronet was a crooked cracked edge, where a corner holding three gems had been torn away.

“Now, Mr. Holder,” said Holmes; “here is the corner which corresponds to that which has been so unfortunately lost. Might I beg that you will break it off.”

The banker recoiled in horror. “I should not dream of trying,” said he.

“Then I will.” Holmes suddenly bent his strength upon it, but without result. “I feel it give a little,” said he; “but, though I am exceptionally strong in the fingers,¹⁹ it would take me all my time to break it. An ordinary man could not do it. Now, what do you think would happen if I did break it, Mr. Holder? There would be a noise like a pistol shot. Do you tell me that all this happened within a

few yards of your bed, and that you heard nothing of it?”

“I do not know what to think. It is all dark to me.”

“But perhaps it may grow lighter as we go. What do you think, Miss Holder?”

“I confess that I still share my uncle’s perplexity.”

“Your son had no shoes or slippers on when you saw him?”

“He had nothing on save only his trousers and shirt.”

“Thank you. We have certainly been favoured with extraordinary luck during this inquiry, and it will be entirely our own fault if we do not succeed in clearing the matter up. With your permission, Mr. Holder, I shall now continue my investigations outside.”

He went alone, at his own request, for he explained that any unnecessary footmarks might make his task more difficult. For an hour or more he was at work, returning at last with his feet heavy with snow and his features as inscrutable as ever.

“I think that I have seen now all that there is to see, Mr. Holder,” said he; “I can serve you best by returning to my rooms.”

“But the gems, Mr. Holmes. Where are they?”

“I cannot tell.”

The banker wrung his hands. “I shall never see them again!” he cried. “And my son? You give me hopes?”

“My opinion is in no way altered.”

“Then for God’s sake what was this dark business which was acted in my house last night?”



“Now, what do you think would happen if I did it, Mr.

Holder?"

J. C. Drake, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, April 24, 1892

"If you can call upon me at my Baker Street rooms tomorrow morning between nine and ten I shall be happy to do what I can to make it clearer. I understand that you give me *carte blanche* to act for you, provided only that I get back the gems, and that you place no limit on the sum I may draw."

"I would give my fortune to have them back."

"Very good. I shall look into the matter between this and then. Good-bye; it is just possible that I may have to come over here again before evening."

It was obvious to me that my companion's mind was now made up about the case, although what his conclusions were was more than I could even dimly imagine. Several times during our homeward journey I endeavoured to sound him upon the point, but he always glided away to some other topic, until at last I gave it over in despair. It was not yet three when we found ourselves in our room once more. He hurried to his chamber, and was down again in a few minutes dressed as a common loafer. With his collar turned up, his shiny, seedy coat, his red cravat, and his worn boots, he was a perfect sample of the class.

"I think that this should do," said he, glancing into the glass above the fireplace. "I only wish that you could come with me, Watson, but I fear that it won't do. I may be on the trail in this matter, or I may be following a will-o'-the-wisp, but I shall soon know which it is. I hope that I may be back in a few hours." He cut a slice of beef from the joint upon the sideboard, sandwiched it between two rounds of bread, and thrusting this rude meal into his pocket, he started off upon his expedition.



“Dressed as a common loafer.”

Sidney Paget, Strand Magazine, 1892

I had just finished my tea when he returned, evidently in excellent spirits, swinging an old elastic-sided boot in his hand. He chucked it down into a corner and helped himself to a cup of tea.

“I only looked in as I passed,” said he. “I am going right on.”

“Where to?”

“Oh, to the other side of the West End. It may be some time before I get back. Don’t wait up for me in case I should be late.”

“How are you getting on?”

“Oh, so so. Nothing to complain of. I have been out to Streatham since I saw you last, but I did not call at the house. It is a very sweet little problem, and I would not have missed it for a good deal. However, I must not sit gossiping here, but must get these disreputable clothes off and return to my highly respectable self.”

I could see by his manner that he had stronger reasons for satisfaction than his words alone would imply. His eyes twinkled, and there was even a touch of colour upon his sallow cheeks. He hastened upstairs, and a few minutes later I heard the slam of the hall door, which told me that he was off once more upon his congenial hunt.

I waited until midnight, but there was no sign of his return, so I retired to my room. It was no uncommon thing for him to be away for days and nights on end when he was hot upon a scent, so that his lateness caused me no surprise. I do not know at what hour he came in, but when I came down²⁰ to breakfast in the

morning, there he was with a cup of coffee in one hand and the paper in the other, as fresh and trim as possible.

“You will excuse my beginning without you, Watson,” said he; “but you remember that our client has rather an early appointment this morning.”

“Why, it is after nine now,” I answered. “I should not be surprised if that were he. I thought I heard a ring.”

It was, indeed, our friend the financier. I was shocked by the change which had come over him, for his face which was naturally of a broad and massive mould, was now pinched and fallen in, while his hair seemed to me at least a shade whiter. He entered with a weariness and lethargy which was even more painful than his violence of the morning before, and he dropped heavily into the armchair which I pushed forward for him.

“I do not know what I have done to be so severely tried,” said he. “Only two days ago I was a happy and prosperous man, without a care in the world. Now I am left to a lonely and dishonoured age. One sorrow comes close upon the heels of another. My niece Mary has deserted me.”

“Deserted you?”

“Yes. Her bed this morning had not been slept in, her room was empty, and a note for me lay upon the hall table. I had said to her last night, in sorrow and not in anger, that if she had married my boy all might have been well with him. Perhaps it was thoughtless of me to say so. It is to that remark that she refers in this note:

My dearest Uncle,—

I feel that I have brought trouble upon you, and that if I had acted differently this terrible misfortune might never have occurred. I cannot, with this thought in my mind, ever again be happy under your roof, and I feel that I must leave you for ever. Do not worry about my future, for that is provided for; and, above all, do not search for me, for it will be fruitless labour, and an ill service to me. In life or in death, I am ever

Your loving Mary.

“What could she mean by that note, Mr. Holmes? Do you think it points to suicide?”

“No, no, nothing of the kind. It is perhaps the best possible solution. I trust, Mr. Holder, that you are nearing the end of your troubles.”

“Ha! You say so! You have heard something, Mr. Holmes; you have learned something! Where are the gems?”

“You would not think a thousand pounds apiece an excessive sum for them?”

“I would pay ten.”

“That would be unnecessary. Three thousand will cover the matter. And there is a little reward, I fancy. Have you your cheque-book? Here is a pen. Better make it out for four thousand pounds.”

With a dazed face the banker made out the required cheque. Holmes walked over to his desk, took out a little triangular piece of gold with three gems in it, and threw it down upon the table.

With a shriek of joy our client clutched it up.

“You have it!” he gasped. “I am saved! I am saved!”

The reaction of joy was as passionate as his grief had been, and he hugged his recovered gems to his bosom.

“There is one other thing you owe, Mr. Holder,” said Sherlock Holmes rather sternly.

“Owe!” He caught up a pen. “Name the sum, and I will pay it.”

“No, the debt is not to me. You owe a very humble apology to that noble lad, your son, who has carried himself in this matter as I should be proud to see my own son do, ²¹ should I ever chance to have one.”

“Then it was not Arthur who took them?”

“I told you yesterday, and I repeat to-day, that it was not.”

“You are sure of it! Then let us hurry to him at once, to let him know that the truth is known.”

“He knows it already. When I had cleared it all up I had an interview with him, and, finding that he would not tell me the story, I told it to him, on which he had to confess that I was right, and to add the very few details which were not yet quite clear to me. Your news of this morning, however, may open his lips.”

“For heaven’s sake, tell me, then, what is this extraordinary mystery!”

“I will do so, and I will show you the steps by which I reached it. And let me say to you, first, that which it is hardest for me to say and for you to hear. There

has been an understanding between Sir George Burnwell and your niece Mary. They have now fled together.”

“My Mary? Impossible!”

“It is, unfortunately, more than possible; it is certain. Neither you nor your son knew the true character of this man when you admitted him into your family circle. He is one of the most dangerous men in England—a ruined gambler, an absolutely desperate villain; a man without heart or conscience.²² Your niece knew nothing of such men, when he breathed his vows to her, as he had done to a hundred before her, she flattered herself that she alone had touched his heart. The devil knows best what he said, but at last she became his tool, and was in the habit of seeing him nearly every evening.”

“I cannot, and I will not, believe it!” cried the banker, with an ashen face.

“I will tell you, then, what occurred in your house last night. Your niece, when you had, as she thought, gone to your room, slipped down and talked to her lover through the window which leads into the stable lane. His footmarks had pressed right through the snow, so long had he stood there. She told him of the coronet. His wicked lust for gold kindled at the news, and he bent her to his will. I have no doubt that she loved you, but there are women in whom the love of a lover extinguishes all other loves, and I think that she must have been one.²³ She had hardly listened to his instructions when she saw you coming downstairs, on which she closed the window rapidly, and told you about one of the servants’ escapade with her wooden-legged lover, which was all perfectly true.

“Your boy, Arthur, went to bed after his interview with you, but he slept badly on account of his uneasiness about his club debts. In the middle of the night he heard a soft tread pass his door, so he rose, and looking out was surprised to see his cousin walking very stealthily along the passage until she disappeared into your dressing-room. Petrified with astonishment the lad slipped on some clothes and waited there in the dark to see what would come of this strange affair. Presently she emerged from the room again, and in the light of the passage lamp your son saw that she carried the precious coronet in her hands. She passed down the stairs, and he, thrilling with horror, ran along and slipped behind the curtain near your door, whence he could see what passed in the hall beneath. He saw her stealthily open the window, hand out the coronet to someone in the gloom, and then closing it once more hurry back to her room, passing quite close to where he stood hid behind the curtain.

“As long as she was on the scene he could not take any action without a horrible exposure of the woman whom he loved. But the instant that she was gone he realised how crushing a misfortune this would be for you, and how all-

important it was to set it right. He rushed down, just as he was, in his bare feet, opened the window, sprang out into the snow, and ran down the lane, where he could see a dark figure in the moonlight. Sir George Burnwell tried to get away, but Arthur caught him, and there was a struggle between them, your lad tugging at one side of the coronet, and his opponent at the other.²⁴ In the scuffle, your son struck Sir George and cut him over the eye. Then something suddenly snapped, and your son, finding that he had the coronet in his hands, rushed back, closed the window, ascended to your room, and had just observed that the coronet had been twisted in the struggle, and was endeavouring to straighten it, when you appeared upon the scene.”



“Arthur caught him.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Is it possible?” gasped the banker.

“You then roused his anger by calling him names at a moment when he felt that he had deserved your warmest thanks. He could not explain the true state of affairs without betraying one who certainly deserved little enough consideration at his hands. He took the more chivalrous view, however, and preserved her secret.”

“And that was why she shrieked and fainted when she saw the coronet,” cried Mr. Holder. “Oh, my God! what a blind fool I have been. And his asking to be allowed to go out for five minutes! The dear fellow wanted to see if the missing piece were at the scene of the struggle. How cruelly I have misjudged him!”

“When I arrived at the house,” continued Holmes, “I at once went very carefully round it to observe if there were any traces in the snow which might help me. I knew that none had fallen since the evening before, and also that there had been a strong frost to preserve impressions. I passed along the tradesmen’s path, but found it all trampled down and indistinguishable. Just beyond it, however, at the far side of the kitchen door, a woman had stood and talked with a man, whose round impressions on one side showed that he had a wooden leg. I could even tell that they had been disturbed, for the woman had run back swiftly to the door, as was shown by the deep toe and light heel-marks, while Wooden-leg had waited a little, and then had gone away. I thought at the time that this might be the maid and her sweetheart, of whom you had already spoken to me, and inquiry showed it was so. I passed round the garden without seeing anything more than random tracks, which I took to be the police; but when I got into the stable lane a very long and complex story was written in the snow in front of me.

“There was a double line of tracks of a booted man, and a second double line which I saw with delight belonged to a man with naked feet. I was at once convinced from what you had told me that the latter was your son. The first had walked both ways but the other had run swiftly, and, as his tread was marked in places over the depression of the boot, it was obvious that he had passed after the other. I followed them up and found they led to the hall window, where Boots had worn all the snow away while waiting. Then I walked to the other end, which was a hundred yards or more down the lane. I saw where Boots had faced round, where the snow was cut up as though there had been a struggle, and, finally, where a few drops of blood had fallen, to show me that I was not mistaken. Boots had then run down the lane, and another little smudge of blood showed that it was he who had been hurt. When he came to the highroad at the other end, I found that the pavement had been cleared, so there was an end to that clue.

“On entering the house, however, I examined, as you remember, the sill and framework of the hall window with my lens, and I could at once see that some one had passed out. I could distinguish the outline of an instep where the wet foot had been placed in coming in. I was then beginning to be able to form an opinion as to what had occurred. A man had waited outside the window, some one had brought the gems; the deed had been overseen by your son, he had pursued the thief, had struggled with him, they had each tugged at the coronet, their united strength causing injuries which neither alone could have effected. He had returned with the prize, but had left a fragment in the grasp of his opponent. So far I was clear. The question now was, who was the man, and who was it brought him the coronet?

“It is an old maxim of mine that when you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. Now, I knew that it was not you who had brought it down, so there only remained your niece and the maids. But if it were the maids, why should your son allow himself to be accused in their place? There could be no possible reason. As he loved his cousin, however, there was an excellent explanation why he should retain her secret—the more so as the secret was a disgraceful one. When I remembered that you had seen her at that window, and how she had fainted on seeing the coronet again, my conjecture became a certainty.

“And who could it be who was her confederate? A lover evidently, for who else could outweigh the love and gratitude which she must feel to you? I knew that you went out little, and that your circle of friends was a very limited one. But among them was Sir George Burnwell. I had heard of him before as being a man of evil reputation among women. It must have been he who wore those boots and retained the missing gems. Even though he knew that Arthur had discovered him, he might still flatter himself that he was safe, for the lad could not say a word without compromising his own family,

“Well, your own good sense will suggest what measures I took next. I went in the shape of a loafer to Sir George’s house, managed to pick up an acquaintance with his valet, learned that his master had cut his head the night before, and, finally, at the expense of six shillings, made all sure by buying a pair of his cast-off shoes.²⁵ With these I journeyed down to Streatham, and saw that they exactly fitted the tracks.”

“I saw an ill-dressed vagabond in the lane yesterday evening,” said Mr. Holder.

“Precisely. It was I. I found that I had my man, so I came home and changed my clothes. It was a delicate part which I had to play then, for I saw that a prosecution must be avoided to avert scandal, and I knew that so astute a villain would see that our hands were tied in the matter. I went and saw him. At first, of course, he denied everything. But when I gave him every particular that had occurred, he tried to bluster, and took down a life-preserver from the wall. I knew my man, however, and I clapped a pistol to his head²⁶ before he could strike. Then he became a little more reasonable. I told him that we would give him a price for the stones he held—a thousand pounds apiece. That brought out the first signs of grief that he had shown. ‘Why, dash it all!’ said he, ‘I’ve let them go at six hundred for the three!’ I soon managed to get the address of the receiver²⁷ who had them, on promising him that there would be no prosecution. Off I set to him, and after much chaffering²⁸ I got our stones at a thousand

apiece.²⁹ Then I looked in upon your son, told him that all was right, and eventually got to my bed about two o'clock, after what I may call a really hard day's work."



“I clapped a pistol to his head.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“A day which has saved England³⁰ from a great public scandal,” said the banker, rising. “Sir, I cannot find words to thank you, but you shall not find me ungrateful for what you have done. Your skill has indeed exceeded all that I have heard of it. And now I must fly to my dear boy to apologize to him for the wrong which I have done him. As to what you tell me of poor Mary, it goes to my very heart. Not even your skill can inform me where she is now.”

“I think that we may safely say,” returned Holmes, “that she is wherever Sir George Burnwell is. It is equally certain, too, that whatever her sins are,³¹ they will soon receive a more than sufficient punishment.”

¹ “The Beryl Coronet” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in May 1892.

² The “bow window” (or curved bay window) is also mentioned in “The Mazarin Stone,” but no bow windows of the late Victorian era are now visible in Baker Street.

³ This would mean passengers arriving at the Baker Street Station of the Metropolitan Railway, popularly known as the “Underground.” Passengers has also been used to mean “pedestrians.”

[4](#) The gentleman is subsequently revealed to be a banker of considerable renown, but such a reputation seems wildly at odds with his frenetic behaviour. Dr. Edward J. Van Liere muses that worry over his investments must have caused his “sensitive nervous system” and further speculates that the beleaguered financier “eventually developed hypertension or suffered from gastric ulcers.”

[5](#) While Holder & Stevenson is a fictional firm, it is not difficult to ascertain who Holder may have actually been. Julian Wolff conjectures (in his *Practical Handbook of Sherlockian Heraldry*) that he was one of the esteemed Glyns of Glyn, Mills & Co. (established 1753). The family was renowned both in banking and in the social world; founder Richard Glyn became Lord Mayor of London in 1758, and the bank itself not only acquired several other banking establishments but also was instrumental in preventing the collapse of the venerable Baring Brothers in 1890. The sensitivity and highly classified nature of the matter at hand required a discretion and authority that Glyn, Mills & Co. would certainly have been trusted to supply.

[6](#) Some have seized on this comment as indicating that 221 Baker Street must have been near the southern end of Baker Street, which was far enough from the Underground station to justify employing a cab. It is just as possible, however, that Holder meant that because of the weather, he did not travel *from Streatham* by cab but instead took the Underground and walked to Holmes’s lodging. The location of 221 Baker Street is discussed in depth in “The Empty House.”

[7](#) Edgar W. Smith and A. Carson Simpson both conclude that the “exalted name” is His Royal Highness, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, who, as the holder of the title of Duke of Rothesay (of Scotland), would have been the legitimate wearer of a duke’s coronet but who nonetheless had no right to put up a “public possession” as collateral for a personal loan.

[8](#) That is, \$250,000 in Victorian U.S. dollars, an immense sum in the late nineteenth century, the equivalent of over \$6 million in current purchasing power.

[9](#) A thin leather made from goatskin and tanned with sumac.

[10](#) A coronet was a type of head attire, similar in appearance to a wreath, often consisting of a string of jewels tied at the back with a ribbon or set in a band of gold. Of lesser significance than a crown, the coronet was worn by British peers (see “The Noble Bachelor,” note 16), typically at the coronation of a sovereign. Varying designs indicated the rank of peer. William D. Jenkins suggests that the coronet involved in the case was one made for George Villiers, created Duke of Buckingham by James I in 1623 and assassinated in 1628. Upon the death of Buckingham’s son in 1678, the coronet escheated to the Crown and was subsequently held in the national treasury (from which the Prince of Wales could have “borrowed” it).

[11](#) A beryl is actually a mineral, a silicate of beryllium and aluminum whose crystals are hexagonal. Its coloured form is considered a gemstone; emerald, the green variety of beryl, is the most valued, followed by aquamarine, which is blue-green. There is no evidence of the colour of the beryls in the Beryl Coronet.

[12](#) A design engraved on the surface.

[13](#) Streatham, seven miles south of St. Paul’s Cathedral, was home to numerous handsome villas and country seats of wealthy families and merchants engaged in business in the City.

[14](#) Despite the contemporary American taboo against marriage between first cousins (a taboo vigorously opposed by numerous advocacy groups), such unions were not uncommon in Victorian England. In fact, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were first cousins, as were Charles Darwin and his wife Emma Wedgwood.

[15](#) T. S. Blakeney questions whether this laxity reflected the security at the offices of Holder & Stevenson

as well. “John Clay [of “The Red-Headed League”] missed the chance of a lifetime when he went burrowing into the vaults of the City & Suburban Bank,” Blakeney remarks, “when he could, apparently, have just walked into Holder & Stevenson and helped himself.” The secreting of a precious jewel in an insecure bureau cabinet was not without precedent, however. In *The Moonstone*, a young woman named Rachel Verrinder receives a birthday present of a large yellow diamond that had been stolen from an Indian shrine. The young woman—unaware that the Moonstone was willed to her by her vengeful uncle to bring her bad luck—is depicted as displaying remarkably poor sense in thinking first that she will keep her valuable gem on her dressing table; then in an “Indian cabinet, for the purpose of permitting two beautiful native productions to admire each other.” After her mother expresses concern that the cabinet has no lock, Rachel indignantly replies, “Good Heavens, mamma! . . . is this an hotel?” Like Alexander Holder, Rachel comes to regret her carelessness almost immediately.

16 Originally a “fourthing,” a quarter-penny.

17 A curved driveway.

18 This should probably read “wicket” (in the sense of a gate) but is not corrected in the English book edition.

19 This is demonstrated by the “poker-straightening” reported by Watson in “The Speckled Band.”

20 These descriptions indicate that Holmes’s and Watson’s bedrooms were upstairs from the sitting room and apparently had direct access downward to the street.

21 Holmes was almost certainly speaking hypothetically here of his “own son,” but many speculate as to children Holmes may have fathered illegitimately. In fact, the purported offspring of Holmes are so numerous (and of such diverse maternity), including, for example, such luminaries as detective Nero Wolfe and boxer Larry Holmes, that one must be amazed that he actually found time to handle cases.

22 If the coronet was indeed “one of the most precious public possessions of the Empire,” Burnwell must have anticipated difficulty in disposing of it. Robert Patrick suggests that he had made an arrangement to do so with Professor Moriarty (see “The Final Problem”).

23 The wisdom of this observation belies Holmes’s view that “the fair sex is [Watson’s] department” (expressed in “The Second Stain”) and speaks of considerable experience on Holmes’s part.

24 Why did Burnwell leave the case behind?

25 Earlier, Watson recounts Holmes’s having returned from his investigation “swinging an old elastic-sided boot in his hand,” which he tosses in a corner—but there is no mention of its mate. Perhaps, finding both cumbersome, he discarded one along the way, keeping the other for evidence.

26 Robert Keith Leavitt observes, “Whenever [Holmes] had occasion to pull a gun on a really desperate character, he got as near as possible to his man before showing his weapon.” Aware of his own poor marksmanship, Leavitt argues, Holmes made it a practice to clap his pistol against his captive’s head. See “The Dancing Men” and “The Mazarin Stone” for other examples of this behaviour.

27 A receiver was a person who received stolen goods—a “fence,” in modern parlance—which, if done knowingly, constituted a felony under Victorian law.

28 Bargaining or haggling about terms or price.

29 Ian McQueen finds it remarkable that within a few short years of settling down in Baker Street, in rooms which he had to share for reasons of expense, Holmes was able to produce £3,000 of his own money

(\$15,000 in U.S. dollars, more than thirty times the annual income of Mary Sutherland, noted in “A Case of Identity”) to buy back the gems from the receiver.

The reader will recall that Holmes asked Holder for a check for *four* thousand pounds. Did he intend to pocket the extra £1,000 as a reward for keeping silent about the true facts of the matter? Richard Oldberg cynically suggests that Holder’s client selected Holder as his banker precisely because he expected Holder to be lax about security and discretion and conspired with Sir George Burnwell to steal the coronet and then blackmail Holder. To avoid a public scandal, which would ruin Holder’s reputation as a banker as well as besmirch the “exalted name,” Holmes went along with Holder’s explanation—for a price.

30 A. Carson Simpson ponders this denouement: “We are told that ‘any injury to [the coronet] would be almost as serious as its complete loss.’ But it was in fact injured, being twisted out of shape and having a piece broken off. How did Alexander Holder expect to get it made as good as new between Saturday morning, when he got back the missing piece, and the following Monday, when the borrower would return to reclaim it?” Holder must have realised this, for he made no move to seek out a goldsmith and instead rushed off to make amends with Arthur. Simpson concludes that Holder must have expected to apply a little “genteel blackmail” to the “exalted name” who used a national treasure as personal collateral.

31 John Hall believes that Sir George had no motive to steal the coronet and could not possibly have arranged the theft as Holmes suggests in the time allotted. Instead, he reasons, Mary must have masterminded the theft, and he interprets this remark of Holmes as indicating that Holmes, too, did not think that Sir George was exclusively guilty.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE COPPER BEECHES¹

Women in distress, especially governesses, constituted a large portion of Holmes's clientele. One of Conan Doyle's sisters was a governess, and it was a respectable employment for the emerging class of working women. Although Holmes scoffs that his practice is turning into "an agency for recovering lost lead pencils, and giving advice to young ladies from boarding-schools," he admits that the case of Miss Violet Hunter (the first of four Violets to cross his path) is an exceptional one. In "The Copper Beeches," the last tale of the series collected as the Adventures, the freckle-faced Miss Hunter calls upon Holmes for "backup" as she accepts a job that pays too much. Watson feels Hunter quite capable of taking care of herself, but Holmes uncharacteristically worries, muttering about "no sister of his" taking a situation such as Miss Hunter's. Scholars have (with little success) tried to make these remarks into background material about

Holmes's family. Others speculate that "Violet the Hunter" may have set her cap for Holmes, perhaps with encouragement from Dr. Watson. As the story concludes, Holmes dismisses Violet Hunter as merely one more "pretty problem," and Watson duly records her marriage to another, although a note of sadness—perhaps over Holmes's indifference to the charms of Miss Hunter—is evident in the Doctor's voice.

TO THE MAN who loves art for its own sake," remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of *The Daily Telegraph*,² "it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived. It is pleasant to me to observe, Watson, that you have so far grasped this truth that in these little records of our cases³ which you have been good enough to draw up, and, I am bound to say, occasionally to embellish, you have given prominence not so much to the many *causes célèbres* and sensational trials in which I have figured, but rather to those incidents which may have been trivial in themselves, but which have given room for those faculties of deduction and of logical synthesis which I have made my special province."

"And yet," said I, smiling, "I cannot quite hold myself absolved from the charge of sensationalism which has been urged against my records."

"You have erred, perhaps," he observed, taking up a glowing cinder with the tongs, and lighting with it the long cherrywood pipe which was wont to replace his clay when he was in a disputatious rather than a meditative mood—"you have erred perhaps in attempting to put colour and life into each of your statements, instead of confining yourself to the task of placing upon record that severe reasoning from cause to effect which is really the only notable feature about the thing."

“It seems to me that I have done you full justice in the matter,” I remarked, with some coldness, for I was repelled by the egotism which I had more than once observed to be a strong factor in my friend’s singular character.

“No, it is not selfishness or conceit,” said he, answering, as was his wont, my thoughts rather than my words. “If I claim full justice for my art, it is because it is an impersonal thing—a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell. You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales.”⁴



“Taking up a glowing cinder with the tongs.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

It was a cold morning of the early spring, and we sat after breakfast on either side of a cheery fire in the old room in Baker Street. A thick fog rolled down between the lines of dun-coloured houses, and the opposing windows loomed like dark, shapeless blurs through the heavy yellow wreaths. Our gas was lit, and shone on the white cloth and glimmer of china and metal, for the table had not been cleared yet. Sherlock Holmes had been silent all the morning, dipping continuously into the advertisement columns of a succession of papers, until at last, having apparently given up his search, he had emerged in no very sweet temper to lecture me upon my literary shortcomings.

“At the same time,” he remarked after a pause, during which he had sat puffing at his long pipe and gazing down into the fire, “you can hardly be open to a charge of sensationalism, for out of these cases which you have been so kind as to interest yourself in, a fair proportion do not treat of crime, in its legal sense, at all. The small matter in which I endeavoured to help the King of Bohemia, the singular experience of Miss Mary Sutherland, the problem connected with the man with the twisted lip, and the incident of the noble bachelor, were all matters which are outside the pale of the law. But in avoiding the sensational, I fear that

you may have bordered on the trivial.”

“The end may have been so,” I answered, “but the methods I hold to have been novel and of interest.”

“Pshaw, my dear fellow, what do the public, the great unobservant public, who could hardly tell a weaver by his tooth⁵ or a compositor by his left thumb,⁶ care about the finer shades of analysis and deduction! But, indeed, if you are trivial, I cannot blame you, for the days of the great cases are past. Man, or at least criminal man, has lost all enterprise and originality. As to my own little practice, it seems to be degenerating into an agency for recovering lost lead pencils, and giving advice to young ladies from boarding-schools. I think that I have touched bottom at last, however. This note I had this morning marks my zero-point, I fancy. Read it!” He tossed a crumpled letter across to me. It was dated from Montague Place upon the preceding evening, and ran thus:—

Dear Mr. Holmes,—

I am very anxious to consult you as to whether I should or should not accept a situation which has been offered to me as governess. I shall call at half-past ten to-morrow, if I do not inconvenience you—

Yours faithfully,
Violet⁷ Hunter.

“Do you know the young lady?” I asked.

“Not I.”

“It is half-past ten now.”

“Yes, and I have no doubt that is her ring.”

“It may turn out to be of more interest than you think. You remember that the affair of the blue carbuncle, which appeared to be a mere whim at first, developed into a serious investigation. It may be so in this case also.”

“Well, let us hope so! But our doubts will very soon be solved, for here, unless I am much mistaken, is the person in question.”

As he spoke the door opened, and a young lady entered the room. She was

plainly but neatly dressed, with a bright, quick face, freckled like a plover's egg, and with the brisk manner of a woman who has had her own way to make in the world.

"You will excuse my troubling you, I am sure," said she, as my companion rose to greet her, "but I have had a very strange experience, and as I have no parents or relations of any sort from whom I could ask advice, I thought that perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me what I should do."

"Pray take a seat, Miss Hunter. I shall be happy to do anything that I can to serve you."

I could see that Holmes was favourably impressed by the manner and speech of his new client. He looked her over in his searching fashion, and then composed himself, with his lids drooping and his finger-tips together to listen to her story.

"I have been a governess for five years," said she, "in the family of Colonel Spence Munro, but two months ago the Colonel received an appointment at Halifax, in Nova Scotia,⁸ and took his children over to America with him, so that I found myself without a situation.⁹ I advertised, and I answered advertisements, but without success. At last the little money which I had saved began to run short, and I was at my wit's end as to what I should do.

"There is a well-known agency for governesses in the West End called Westaway's, and there I used to call about once a week in order to see whether anything had turned up which might suit me. Westaway was the name of the founder of the business, but it is really managed by Miss Stoper. She sits in her own little office, and the ladies who are seeking employment wait in an ante-room, and are then shown in one by one, when she consults her ledgers, and sees whether she has anything which would suit them.

"Well, when I called last week I was shown into the little office as usual, but I found that Miss Stoper was not alone. A prodigiously stout man with a very smiling face and a great heavy chin which rolled down in fold upon fold over his throat sat at her elbow with a pair of glasses on his nose, looking very earnestly at the ladies who entered. As I came in he gave quite a jump in his chair, and turned quickly to Miss Stoper.

" 'That will do,' said he; 'I could not ask for anything better. Capital! capital!' He seemed quite enthusiastic, and rubbed his hands together in the most genial fashion. He was such a comfortable-looking man that it was quite a pleasure to look at him.

" 'You are looking for a situation, miss?' he asked.

" 'Yes, sir.'

“ ‘As governess?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘And what salary do you ask?’



“Capital.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘I had four pounds a month in my last place with Colonel Spence Munro.’

“ ‘Oh, tut, tut! sweating—rank sweating!’ he cried, throwing his fat hands out into the air like a man who is in a boiling passion. ‘How could any one offer so pitiful a sum to a lady with such attractions and accomplishments?’

“ ‘My accomplishments, sir, may be less than you imagine,’ said I. ‘A little French, a little German, music and drawing—’¹⁰

“ ‘Tut, tut!’ he cried. ‘This is all quite beside the question. The point is, have you or have you not the bearing and deportment of a lady? There it is in a nutshell. If you have not, you are not fitted for the rearing of a child who may some day play a considerable part in the history of the country. But if you have, why, then, how could any gentleman ask you to condescend to accept anything under the three figures? Your salary with me, madam, would commence at a hundred pounds a year.’

“You may imagine, Mr. Holmes, that to me, destitute as I was, such an offer seemed almost too good to be true. The gentleman, however, seeing perhaps the look of incredulity upon my face, opened a pocket-book and took out a note.

“ ‘It is also my custom,’ said he, smiling in the most pleasant fashion until his eyes were just two little shining slits amid the white creases of his face, ‘to advance to my young ladies half their salary beforehand, so that they may meet any little expenses of their journey and their wardrobe.’



Opened a pocket-book and took out a note.

Artist unknown, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, June 12, 1892

“It seemed to me that I had never met so fascinating and so thoughtful a man. As I was already in debt to my tradesmen the advance was a great convenience, and yet there was something unnatural about the whole transaction which made me wish to know a little more before I quite committed myself.

“ ‘May I ask where you live, sir?’ said I.

“ ‘Hampshire. Charming rural place. The Copper Beeches, five miles on the far side of Winchester. It is the most lovely country, my dear young lady, and the dearest old country house.’

“ ‘And my duties, sir? I should be glad to know what they would be.’

“ ‘One child—one dear little romper just six years old. Oh, if you could see him killing cockroaches with a slipper! Smack! smack! smack! Three gone before you could wink!’ He leaned back in his chair and laughed his eyes into his head again.

“I was a little startled at the nature of the child’s amusement, but the father’s laughter made me think that perhaps he was joking.

“ ‘My sole duties, then,’ I asked, ‘are to take charge of a single child?’

“ ‘No, no, not the sole, not the sole, my dear young lady,’ he cried. ‘Your duty would be, as I am sure your good sense would suggest, to obey any little commands which my wife might give, provided always that they were such commands as a lady might with propriety obey. You see no difficulty, heh?’

“ ‘I should be happy to make myself useful.’

“ ‘Quite so. In dress now, for example! We are faddy people, you know—

faddy but kind-hearted. If you were asked to wear any dress which we might give you, you would not object to our little whim. Heh?’

“ ‘No,’ said I, considerably astonished at his words.

“ ‘Or to sit here, or sit there, that would not be offensive to you?’¹¹

“ ‘Oh, no.’

“ ‘Or to cut your hair quite short before you come to us?’

“I could hardly believe my ears. As you may observe, Mr. Holmes, my hair is somewhat luxuriant, and of a rather peculiar tint of chestnut. It has been considered artistic.¹² I could not dream of sacrificing it in this off-hand fashion.

“ ‘I am afraid that that is quite impossible,’ said I. He had been watching me eagerly out of his small eyes, and I could see a shadow pass over his face as I spoke.

“ ‘I am afraid that it is quite essential,’ said he. ‘It is a little fancy of my wife’s, and ladies’ fancies, you know, madam, ladies’ fancies must be consulted. And so you won’t cut your hair?’

“ ‘No, sir, I really could not,’ I answered firmly.

“ ‘Ah, very well; then that quite settles the matter. It is a pity, because in other respects you would really have done very nicely. In that case, Miss Stoper, I had best inspect a few more of your young ladies.’

“The manageress had sat all this while busy with her papers without a word to either of us, but she glanced at me now with so much annoyance upon her face that I could not help suspecting that she had lost a handsome commission through my refusal.

“ ‘Do you desire your name to be kept upon the books?’ she asked.

“ ‘If you please, Miss Stoper.’

“ ‘Well, really, it seems rather useless, since you refuse the most excellent offers in this fashion,’ said she sharply. ‘You can hardly expect us to exert ourselves to find another such opening for you. Good-day to you, Miss Hunter.’ She struck a gong upon the table, and I was shown out by the page.

“Well, Mr. Holmes, when I got back to my lodgings and found little enough in the cupboard, and two or three bills upon the table, I began to ask myself whether I had not done a very foolish thing. After all, if these people had strange fads, and expected obedience on the most extraordinary matters, they were at least ready to pay for their eccentricity. Very few governesses in England are getting a hundred a year. Besides, what use was my hair to me? Many people are improved by wearing it short, and perhaps I should be among the number.¹³ Next day I was inclined to think that I had made a mistake, and by the day after I was sure of it. I had almost overcome my pride so far as to go back to the agency

and inquire whether the place was still open when I received this letter from the gentleman himself. I have it here, and I will read it to you:



A contemporary hairstyle, known as “Titus.”

Strand Magazine (December 1892)

The Copper Beeches, near Winchester.

Dear Miss Hunter,—

Miss Stoper has very kindly given me your address, and I write from here to ask you whether you have reconsidered your decision. My wife is

very anxious that you should come, for she has been much attracted by my description of you. We are willing to give thirty pounds a quarter, or £120 a year, so as to recompense you for any little inconvenience which our fads may cause you. They are not very exacting after all. My wife is fond of a particular shade of electric blue, and would like you to wear such a dress indoors in the morning. You need not, however, go to the expense of purchasing one, as we have one belonging to my dear daughter Alice (now in Philadelphia) which would, I should think, fit you very well. Then, as to sitting here or there, or amusing yourself in any manner indicated, that need cause you no inconvenience. As regards your hair, it is no doubt a pity, especially as I could not help remarking its beauty during our short interview, but I am afraid that I must remain firm upon this point, and I only hope that the increased salary may recompense you for the loss. Your duties, as far as the child is concerned, are very light. Now do try to come, and I shall meet you with the dog-cart at Winchester. Let me know your train—

Yours faithfully,
Jephro Rucastle.

“That is the letter which I have just received, Mr. Holmes, and my mind is made up that I will accept it.¹⁴ I thought, however, that before taking the final step, I should like to submit the whole matter to your consideration.”

“Well, Miss Hunter, if your mind is made up, that settles the question,” said Holmes, smiling.

“But you would not advise me to refuse?”

“I confess that it is not the situation which I should like to see a sister of mine apply for.”¹⁵

“What is the meaning of it all, Mr. Holmes?”

“Ah, I have no data. I cannot tell. Perhaps you have yourself formed some opinion?”

“Well, there seems to me to be only one possible solution. Mr. Rucastle seemed to be a very kind, good-natured man. Is it not possible that his wife is a lunatic, that he desires to keep the matter quiet for fear she should be taken to an asylum, and that he humours her fancies in every way in order to prevent an outbreak?”

“That is a possible solution—in fact, as matters stand, it is the most probable one. But in any case it does not seem to be a nice household for a young lady.”

“But the money, Mr. Holmes, the money!”

“Well, yes, of course the pay is good—too good. That is what makes me uneasy. Why should they give you £120 a year, when they could have their pick for £40? There must be some strong reason behind.”

“I thought that if I told you the circumstances you would understand afterwards if I wanted your help. I should feel so much stronger if I felt that you were at the back of me.”

“Oh, you may carry that feeling away with you. I assure you that your little problem promises to be the most interesting which has come my way for some months. There is something distinctly novel about some of the features. If you should find yourself in doubt or in danger—”

“Danger! What danger do you foresee?”

Holmes shook his head gravely. “It would cease to be a danger if we could define it,” said he. “But at any time, day or night, a telegram would bring me down to your help.”

“That is enough.” She rose briskly from her chair with the anxiety all swept from her face. “I shall go down to Hampshire quite easy in my mind now. I shall write to Mr. Rucastle at once, sacrifice my poor hair to-night, and start for Winchester to-morrow.” With a few grateful words to Holmes she bade us both good-night¹⁶ and bustled off upon her way.

“At least,” said I, as we heard her quick, firm steps descending the stairs, “she seems to be a young lady who is very well able to take care of herself.”

“And she would need to be,” said Holmes gravely. “I am much mistaken if we do not hear from her before many days are past.”



“Holmes shook his head gravely.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

It was not very long before my friend’s prediction was fulfilled. A fortnight went by, during which I frequently found my thoughts turning in her direction, and wondering what strange side-alley of human experience this lonely woman had strayed into. The unusual salary, the curious conditions, the light duties, all pointed to something abnormal, though whether a fad or a plot, or whether the man were a philanthropist or a villain, it was quite beyond my powers to determine. As to Holmes, I observed that he sat frequently for half an hour on end, with knitted brows and an abstracted air, but he swept the matter away with a wave of his hand when I mentioned it. “Data! data! data!” he cried impatiently. “I can’t make bricks without clay.” And yet he would always wind up by muttering that no sister of his should ever have accepted such a situation.

The telegram which we eventually received came late one night, just as I was thinking of turning in, and Holmes was settling down to one of those all-night chemical researches which he frequently indulged in, when I would leave him stooping over a retort and a test-tube at night, and find him in the same position when I came down to breakfast in the morning. He opened the yellow envelope, and then, glancing at the message, threw it across to me.

“Just look up the trains in Bradshaw,¹⁷” said he, and turned back to his chemical studies.

The summons was a brief and urgent one.

Please be at the “Black Swan” Hotel at Winchester at midday to-morrow. Do come! I am at my wit’s end.

Hunter.

“Will you come with me?” asked Holmes, glancing up.

“I should wish to.”

“Just look it up, then.”

“There is a train at half-past nine,” said I, glancing over my Bradshaw. “It is due at Winchester at 11.30.”

“That will do very nicely. Then perhaps I had better postpone my analysis of the acetones,¹⁸ as we may need to be at our best in the morning.”

By eleven o’clock the next day we were well upon our way to the old English capital.¹⁹ Holmes had been buried in the morning papers all the way down, but after we had passed the Hampshire border he threw them down and began to admire the scenery. It was an ideal spring day, a light blue sky, flecked with little fleecy white clouds drifting across from west to east. The sun was shining very brightly, and yet there was an exhilarating nip in the air, which set an edge to a man’s energy. All over the countryside, away to the rolling hills around Aldershot,²⁰ the little red and grey roofs of the farm-steadings peeped out from amid the light green of the new foliage.

“Are they not fresh and beautiful?” I cried with all the enthusiasm of a man fresh from the fogs of Baker Street.²¹

But Holmes shook his head gravely.

“Do you know, Watson,” said he, “that it is one of the curses of a mind with a turn like mine that I must look at everything with reference to my own special subject. You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation, and of the impunity with which crime may be committed there.”

“Good Heavens!” I cried. “Who would associate crime with these dear old homesteads?”

“They always fill me with a certain horror. It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside.”

“You horrify me!”

“But the reason is very obvious. The pressure of public opinion can do in the

town what the law cannot accomplish. There is no lane so vile that the scream of a tortured child, or the thud of a drunkard's blow, does not beget sympathy and indignation among the neighbours, and then the whole machinery of justice is ever so close that a word of complaint can set it going, and there is but a step between the crime and the dock. But look at these lonely houses, each in its own fields, filled for the most part with poor ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser.²² Had this lady who appeals to us for help gone to live in Winchester, I should never have had a fear for her. It is the five miles of country which makes the danger. Still, it is clear that she is not personally threatened."

"No. If she can come to Winchester to meet us she can get away."

"Quite so. She has her freedom."

"What *can* be the matter, then? Can you suggest no explanation?"

"I have devised seven separate explanations, each of which would cover the facts as far as we know them.²³ But which of these is correct can only be determined by the fresh information which we shall no doubt find waiting for us. Well, there is the tower of the cathedral, and we shall soon learn all that Miss Hunter has to tell."

The "Black Swan" is an inn of repute²⁴ in the High Street, at no distance from the station, and there we found the young lady waiting for us. She had engaged a sitting-room, and our lunch awaited us upon the table.

"I am so delighted that you have come," she said, earnestly. "It is so very kind of you both; but indeed I do not know what I should do. Your advice will be altogether invaluable to me."

"Pray tell us what has happened to you."

"I will do so, and I must be quick, for I have promised Mr. Rucastle to be back before three. I got his leave to come into town this morning, though he little knew for what purpose."

"Let us have everything in its due order." Holmes thrust his long thin legs out towards the fire, and composed himself to listen.



“I am so delighted that you have come.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“In the first place, I may say that I have met, on the whole, with no actual ill-treatment from Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle. It is only fair to them to say that. But I cannot understand them, and I am not easy in my mind about them.”



Mr. Rucastle drove me in his dog-cart to the Copper
Beeches.

Artist unknown, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, June 12, 1892

“What can you not understand?”

“Their reasons for their conduct. But you shall have it all just as it occurred. When I came down Mr. Rucastle met me here, and drove me in his dog-cart to

the Copper Beeches. It is, as he said, beautifully situated, but it is not beautiful in itself, for it is a large square block of a house, whitewashed, but all stained and streaked with damp and bad weather. There are grounds round it, woods on three sides, and on the fourth a field which slopes down to the Southampton highroad, which curves past about a hundred yards from the front door. This ground in front belongs to the house, but the woods all round are part of Lord Southerton's preserves. A clump of copper beeches immediately in front of the hall door has given its name to the place.

"I was driven over by my employer, who was as amiable as ever, and was introduced by him that evening to his wife and the child. There was no truth, Mr. Holmes, in the conjecture which seemed to us to be probable in your rooms at Baker Street. Mrs. Rucastle is not mad. I found her to be a silent, pale-faced woman, much younger than her husband, not more than thirty, I should think, while he can hardly be less than forty-five. From their conversation I have gathered that they have been married about seven years, that he was a widower, and that his only child by the first wife was the daughter who has gone to Philadelphia. Mr. Rucastle told me in private that the reason why she had left them was that she had an unreasoning aversion to her stepmother. As the daughter could not have been less than twenty, I can quite imagine that her position must have been uncomfortable with her father's young wife.

"Mrs. Rucastle seemed to me to be colourless in mind as well as in feature. She impressed me neither favourably nor the reverse. She was a nonentity. It was easy to see that she was passionately devoted both to her husband and to her little son. Her light grey eyes wandered continually from one to the other, noting every little want and forestalling it if possible. He was kind to her also in his bluff boisterous fashion, and on the whole they seemed to be a happy couple. And yet she had some secret sorrow, this woman. She would often be lost in deep thought, with the saddest look upon her face. More than once I have surprised her in tears. I have thought sometimes that it was the disposition of her child which weighed upon her mind, for I have never met so utterly spoilt and so ill-natured a little creature. He is small for his age, with a head which is quite disproportionately large. His whole life appears to be spent in an alternation between savage fits of passion and gloomy intervals of sulking. Giving pain to any creature weaker than himself seems to be his one idea of amusement, and he shows quite remarkable talent in planning the capture of mice, little birds, and insects. But I would rather not talk about the creature, Mr. Holmes, and, indeed, he has little to do with my story."

"I am glad of all details," remarked my friend, "whether they seem to you to be relevant or not."

“I shall try not to miss anything of importance. The one unpleasant thing about the house, which struck me at once, was the appearance and conduct of the servants. There are only two, a man and his wife. Toller, for that’s his name, is a rough, uncouth man, with grizzled hair and whiskers, and a perpetual smell of drink. Twice since I have been with them he has been quite drunk, and yet Mr. Rucastle seemed to take no notice of it. His wife is a very tall and strong woman with a sour face, as silent as Mrs. Rucastle, and much less amiable. They are a most unpleasant couple, but fortunately I spend most of my time in the nursery and my own room, which are next to each other in one corner of the building.

“For two days after my arrival at the Copper Beeches my life was very quiet; on the third, Mrs. Rucastle came down just after breakfast and whispered something to her husband.

“ ‘Oh yes,’ said he, turning to me; ‘we are very much obliged to you, Miss Hunter, for falling in with our whims so far as to cut your hair. I assure you that it has not detracted in the tiniest iota from your appearance. We shall now see how the electric blue dress will become you. You will find it laid out upon the bed in your room, and if you would be so good as to put it on we should both be extremely obliged.’

“The dress which I found waiting for me was of a peculiar shade of blue. It was of excellent material, a sort of beige,²⁵ but it bore unmistakable signs of having been worn before. It could not have been a better fit if I had been measured for it. Both Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle expressed a delight at the look of it which seemed quite exaggerated in its vehemence. They were waiting for me in the drawing-room, which is a very large room, stretching along the entire front of the house, with three long windows reaching down to the floor. A chair had been placed close to the central window, with its back turned towards it. In this I was asked to sit, and then Mr. Rucastle, walking up and down on the other side of the room, began to tell me a series of the funniest stories²⁶ that I have ever listened to. You cannot imagine how comical he was, and I laughed until I was quite weary. Mrs. Rucastle, however, who has evidently no sense of humour, never so much as smiled, but sat with her hands in her lap, and a sad, anxious look upon her face. After an hour or so, Mr. Rucastle suddenly remarked that it was time to commence the duties of the day, and that I might change my dress, and go to little Edward in the nursery.

“Two days later this same performance was gone through under exactly similar circumstances. Again I changed my dress, again I sat in the window, and again I laughed very heartily at the funny stories of which my employer had an immense *répertoire*, and which he told inimitably. Then he handed me a yellow-

backed novel, and, moving my chair a little sideways, that my own shadow might not fall upon the page, he begged me to read aloud to him. I read for about ten minutes, beginning in the heart of a chapter, and then suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, he ordered me to cease and to change my dress.

“You can easily imagine, Mr. Holmes, how curious I became as to what the meaning of this extraordinary performance could possibly be. They were always very careful, I observed, to turn my face away from the window, so that I became consumed with the desire to see what was going on behind my back. At first it seemed to be impossible, but I soon devised a means. My hand mirror had been broken, so a happy thought seized me, and I concealed a piece of the glass in my handkerchief. On the next occasion, in the midst of my laughter, I put my handkerchief up to my eyes, and was able with a little management to see all that there was behind me. I confess that I was disappointed. There was nothing. At least that was my first impression. At the second glance, however, I perceived that there was a man standing in the Southampton Road, a small bearded man in a grey suit, who seemed to be looking in my direction. The road is an important highway, and there are usually people there. This man, however, was leaning against the railings which bordered our field, and was looking earnestly up. I lowered my handkerchief, and glanced at Mrs. Rucastle to find her eyes fixed upon me with a most searching gaze. She said nothing, but I am convinced that she had divined that I had a mirror in my hand, and had seen what was behind me. She rose at once.



“I read for about ten minutes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘Jephro,’ said she, ‘there is an impertinent fellow upon the road there who stares up at Miss Hunter.’

“ ‘No friend of yours, Miss Hunter?’ he asked.

“ ‘No; I know no one in these parts.’

“ ‘Dear me! How very impertinent! Kindly turn round, and motion to him to go away!’

“ ‘Surely it would be better to take no notice.’

“ ‘No, no, we should have him loitering here always. Kindly turn round, and wave him away like that.’

“I did as I was told, and at the same instant Mrs. Rucastle drew down the blind. That was a week ago, and from that time I have not sat again in the window, nor have I worn the blue dress, nor seen the man in the road.”

“Pray continue,” said Holmes. “Your narrative promises to be a most interesting one.”

“You will find it rather disconnected, I fear, and there may prove to be little relation between the different incidents of which I speak. On the very first day that I was at the Copper Beeches, Mr. Rucastle took me to a small outhouse which stands near the kitchen door. As we approached it I heard the sharp rattling of a chain, and the sound as of a large animal moving about.

“ ‘Look in here!’ said Mr. Rucastle, showing me a slit between two planks. ‘Is he not a beauty?’

“I looked through, and was conscious of two glowing eyes, and of a vague figure huddled up in the darkness.

“ ‘Don’t be frightened,’ said my employer, laughing at the start which I had given. ‘It’s only Carlo,²⁷ my mastiff.²⁸ I call him mine, but really old Toller, my groom, is the only man who can do anything with him. We feed him once a day, and not too much then, so that he is always as keen as mustard. Toller lets him loose every night, and God help the trespasser whom he lays his fangs upon. For goodness’ sake don’t you ever on any pretext set your foot over the threshold at night, for it’s as much as your life is worth.’

“The warning was no idle one, for two nights later I happened to look out of my bedroom window about two o’clock in the morning. It was a beautiful moonlight night, and the lawn in front of the house was silvered over and almost as bright as day. I was standing, rapt in the peaceful beauty of the scene, when I was aware that something was moving under the shadow of the copper beeches. As it emerged into the moonshine I saw what it was. It was a giant dog, as large as a calf, tawny tinted, with hanging jowl, black muzzle, and huge projecting bones. It walked slowly across the lawn and vanished into the shadow upon the other side. That dreadful silent sentinel sent a chill to my heart which I do not

think that any burglar could have done.

“And now I have a very strange experience to tell you. I had, as you know, cut off my hair in London, and I had placed it in a great coil at the bottom of my trunk. One evening, after the child was in bed, I began to amuse myself by examining the furniture of my room, and by rearranging my own little things. There was an old chest of drawers in the room, the two upper ones empty and open, the lower one locked. I had filled the first two with my linen, and, as I had still much to pack away, I was naturally annoyed at not having the use of the third drawer. It struck me that it might have been fastened by a mere oversight, so I took out my bunch of keys and tried to open it. The very first key fitted to perfection, and I drew the drawer open. There was only one thing in it, but I am sure that you would never guess what it was. It was my coil of hair.

“I took it up and examined it. It was of the same peculiar tint, and the same thickness. But then the impossibility of the thing obtruded itself upon me. How *could* my hair have been locked in the drawer? With trembling hands I undid my trunk, turned out the contents, and drew from the bottom my own hair. I laid the two tresses together, and I assure you that they were identical. Was it not extraordinary? Puzzle as I would, I could make nothing at all of what it meant. I returned the strange hair to the drawer, and I said nothing of the matter to the Rucastles, as I felt that I had put myself in the wrong by opening a drawer which they had locked.

“I am naturally observant,²⁹ as you may have remarked, Mr. Holmes, and I soon had a pretty good plan of the whole house in my head. There was one wing, however, which appeared not to be inhabited at all. A door which faced that which led into the quarters of the Tollers opened into this suite, but it was invariably locked. One day, however, as I ascended the stair, I met Mr. Rucastle coming out through this door, his keys in his hand, and a look on his face which made him a very different person to the round jovial man to whom I was accustomed. His cheeks were red, his brow was all crinkled with anger, and the veins stood out at his temples with passion. He locked the door, and hurried past me without a word or a look.



“It was a coil of my hair.”

Dan Smith, Sunday *Portland Oregonian*, September 17, 1905

“This aroused my curiosity; so when I went out for a walk in the grounds with my charge, I strolled round to the side from which I could see the windows of this part of the house. There were four of them in a row, three of which were simply dirty, while the fourth was shuttered up. They were evidently all deserted. As I strolled up and down, glancing at them occasionally, Mr. Rucastle came out to me, looking as merry and jovial as ever.



“I took it up and examined it.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘Ah!’ said he, ‘you must not think me rude if I passed you without a word, my dear young lady. I was pre-occupied with business matters.’

“I assured him that I was not offended. ‘By the way,’ said I, ‘you seem to have quite a suite of spare rooms up there, and one of them has the shutters up.’

“He looked surprised and, as it seemed to me, a little startled at my remark.

“ ‘Photography is one of my hobbies,’ said he. ‘I have made my dark room up there. But, dear me! what an observant young lady we have come upon. Who would have believed it? Who would have ever believed it?’ He spoke in a jesting tone, but there was no jest in his eyes as he looked at me. I read suspicion there and annoyance, but no jest.

“Well, Mr. Holmes, from the moment that I understood that there was something about that suite of rooms which I was not to know, I was all on fire to go over them. It was not mere curiosity, though I have my share of that. It was more a feeling of duty—a feeling that some good might come from my penetrating to this place. They talk of woman’s instinct; perhaps it was woman’s instinct which gave me that feeling. At any rate, it was there; and I was keenly on the look-out for any chance to pass the forbidden door.

“It was only yesterday that the chance came. I may tell you that, besides Mr. Rucastle, both Toller and his wife find something to do in these deserted rooms, and I once saw him carrying a large black linen bag with him through the door. Recently he has been drinking hard, and yesterday evening he was very drunk; and when I came upstairs, there was the key in the door. I have no doubt at all that he had left it there. Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle were both downstairs, and the

child was with them, so that I had an admirable opportunity. I turned the key gently in the lock, opened the door, and slipped through.

“There was a little passage in front of me, unpapered and uncarpeted, which turned at a right angle at the further end. Round this corner were three doors in a line, the first and third of which were open. They each led into an empty room, dusty and cheerless, with two windows in the one, and one in the other, so thick with dirt that the evening light glimmered dimly through them. The centre door was closed, and across the outside of it had been fastened one of the broad bars of an iron bed, padlocked at one end to a ring in the wall, and fastened at the other with stout cord. The door itself was locked as well, and the key was not there. This barricaded door corresponded clearly with the shuttered window outside, and yet I could see by the glimmer from beneath it that the room was not in darkness. Evidently there was a skylight which let in light from above. As I stood in the passage gazing at the sinister door, and wondering what secret it might veil, I suddenly heard the sound of steps within the room, and saw a shadow pass backwards and forwards against the little slit of dim light which shone out from under the door. A mad, unreasoning terror rose up in me at the sight, Mr. Holmes. My overstrung nerves failed me suddenly, and I turned and ran—ran as though some dreadful hand were behind me, clutching at the skirt of my dress. I rushed down the passage, through the door, and straight into the arms of Mr. Rucastle, who was waiting outside.

“ ‘So,’ said he, smiling, ‘it was you, then. I thought that it must be when I saw the door open.’

“ ‘Oh, I am so frightened!’ I panted.

“ ‘My dear young lady! my dear young lady!’—you cannot think how caressing and soothing his manner was—‘and what has frightened you, my dear young lady?’

“But his voice was just a little too coaxing. He overdid it. I was keenly on my guard against him.

“‘I was foolish enough to go into the empty wing,’ I answered. ‘But it is so lonely and eerie in this dim light that I was frightened and ran out again. Oh, it is so dreadfully still in there!’

“ ‘Only that?’ said he, looking at me keenly.

“ ‘Why, what do you think?’ I asked.

“ ‘Why do you think that I lock this door?’

“ ‘I am sure that I do not know.’

“ ‘It is to keep people out who have no business there. Do you see?’ He was still smiling in the most amiable manner.

“ ‘I am sure if I had known—’

“ ‘Well, then, you know now. And if you ever put your foot over that threshold again’—here in an instant the smile hardened into a grin of rage, and he glared down at me with the face of a demon—‘I’ll throw you to the mastiff.’



“ ‘Oh! I am so frightened!’ I panted.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“I was so terrified that I do not know what I did. I suppose that I must have rushed past him into my room. I remember nothing until I found myself lying on my bed trembling all over. Then I thought of you, Mr. Holmes.³⁰ I could not live there longer without some advice. I was frightened of the house, of the man, of the woman, of the servants, even of the child. They were all horrible to me. If I could only bring you down all would be well. Of course I might have fled from the house, but my curiosity was almost as strong as my fears. My mind was soon made up. I would send you a wire. I put on my hat and cloak, went down to the office, which is about half a mile from the house, and then returned, feeling very much easier. A horrible doubt came into my mind as I approached the door lest the dog might be loose, but I remembered that Toller had drunk himself into a state of insensibility that evening, and I knew that he was the only one in the household who had any influence with the savage creature, or who would venture to set him free. I slipped in in safety, and lay awake half the night in my joy at the thought of seeing you. I had no difficulty in getting leave to come into Winchester this morning, but I must be back before three o’clock, for Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle are going on a visit, and will be away all the evening, so that I must look after the child. Now I have told you all my adventures, Mr. Holmes,

and I should be very glad if you could tell me what it all means, and, above all, what I should do.”



“I’ll throw you to the mastiff.”

Artist unknown, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, June 12, 1892

Holmes and I had listened spellbound to this extraordinary story. My friend rose now, and paced up and down the room, his hands in his pockets, and an expression of the most profound gravity upon his face.

“Is Toller still drunk?” he asked.

“Yes. I heard his wife tell Mrs. Rucastle that she could do nothing with him.”

“That is well. And the Rucastles go out to-night?”

“Yes.”

“Is there a cellar with a good strong lock?”

“Yes, the wine-cellar.”

“You seem to me to have acted all through this matter like a brave and sensible girl, Miss Hunter. Do you think that you could perform one more feat? I should not ask it of you if I did not think you a quite exceptional woman.”

“I will try. What is it?”

“We shall be at the Copper Beeches by seven o’clock, my friend and I. The Rucastles will be gone by that time, and Toller will, we hope, be incapable. There only remains Mrs. Toller, who might give the alarm. If you could send her into the cellar on some errand, and then turn the key upon her, you would facilitate matters immensely.”

“I will do it.”

“Excellent! We shall then look thoroughly into the affair. Of course there is only one feasible explanation. You have been brought there to personate some one, and the real person is imprisoned in this chamber. That is obvious. As to who this prisoner is, I have no doubt that it is the daughter, Miss Alice Rucastle, if I remember right, who was said to have gone to America. You were chosen, doubtless, as resembling her in height, figure, and the colour of your hair. Hers had been cut off, very possibly in some illness through which she has passed, and so, of course, yours had to be sacrificed also. By a curious chance you came upon her tresses. The man in the road was, undoubtedly, some friend of hers—possibly her *fiancé*—and no doubt as you wore the girl’s dress, and were so like her, he was convinced from your laughter, whenever he saw you, and afterwards from your gesture, that Miss Rucastle was perfectly happy, and that she no longer desired his attentions. The dog is let loose at night to prevent him from endeavouring to communicate with her. So much is fairly clear. The most serious point in the case is the disposition of the child.”

“What on earth has that to do with it?” I ejaculated.

“My dear Watson, you as a medical man are continually gaining light as to the tendencies of a child by the study of the parents. Don’t you see that the converse is equally valid. I have frequently gained my first real insight into the character of parents by studying their children. This child’s disposition is abnormally cruel, merely for cruelty’s sake, and whether he derives this from his smiling father, as I should suspect, or from his mother, it bodes evil for the poor girl who is in their power.”

“I am sure that you are right, Mr. Holmes,” cried our client. “A thousand things come back to me which make me certain that you have hit it. Oh, let us lose not an instant in bringing help to this poor creature.”

“We must be circumspect, for we are dealing with a very cunning man. We can do nothing until seven o’clock. At that hour we shall be with you, and it will not be long before we solve the mystery.”

We were as good as our word, for it was just seven when we reached the Copper Beeches, having put up our trap at a wayside publichouse. The group of trees, with their dark leaves shining like burnished metal in the light of the setting sun, were sufficient to mark the house even had Miss Hunter not been

standing smiling on the doorstep.

“Have you managed it?” asked Holmes.

A loud thudding noise came from somewhere downstairs. “That is Mrs. Toller in the cellar,” said she. “Her husband lies snoring on the kitchen rug. Here are his keys, which are the duplicates of Mr. Rucastle’s.”

“You have done well indeed!” cried Holmes with enthusiasm. “Now lead the way, and we shall soon see the end of this black business.”

We passed up the stair, unlocked the door, followed on down a passage, and found ourselves in front of the barricade which Miss Hunter had described. Holmes cut the cord and removed the transverse bar. Then he tried the various keys in the lock, but without success. No sound came from within, and at the silence Holmes’s face clouded over.

“I trust that we are not too late,” said he. “I think, Miss Hunter, that we had better go in without you. Now, Watson, put your shoulder to it, and we shall see whether we cannot make our way in.”

It was an old rickety door and gave at once before our united strength. Together we rushed into the room. It was empty. There was no furniture save a little pallet bed, a small table, and a basketful of linen. The skylight above was open, and the prisoner gone.

“There has been some villainy here,” said Holmes; “this beauty has guessed Miss Hunter’s intentions, and has carried his victim off.”

“But how?”

“Through the skylight. We shall soon see how he managed it.” He swung himself up onto the roof. “Ah, yes,” he cried, “Here’s the end of a long light ladder against the eaves. That is how he did it.”

“But it is impossible,” said Miss Hunter, “the ladder was not there when the Rucastles went away.”

“He has come back and done it. I tell you that he is a clever and dangerous man. I should not be very much surprised if this were he whose step I hear now upon the stair. I think, Watson, that it would be as well for you to have your pistol ready.”

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a man appeared at the door of the room, a very fat and burly man, with a heavy stick in his hand. Miss Hunter screamed and shrunk against the wall at the sight of him, but Sherlock Holmes sprang forward and confronted him.

“You villain!” said he, “where’s your daughter?”

The fat man cast his eyes round, and then up at the open skylight.

“It is for me to ask you that,” he shrieked, “you thieves! Spies and thieves! I have caught you, have I? You are in my power. I’ll serve you!” He turned and

clattered down the stairs as hard as he could go.

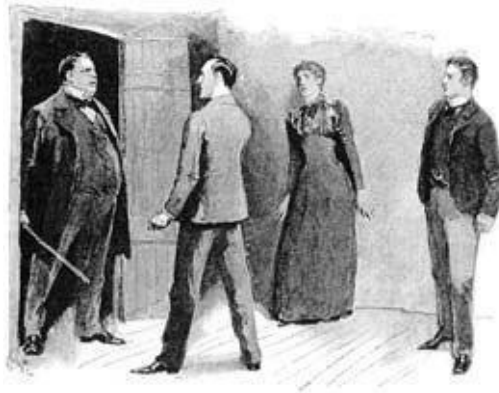
“He’s gone for the dog!” cried Miss Hunter.

“I have my revolver,” said I.

“Better close the front door,” cried Holmes, and we all rushed down the stairs together. We had hardly reached the hall when we heard the baying of a hound,³¹ and then a scream of agony, with a horrible worrying sound which it was dreadful to listen to. An elderly man with a red face and shaking limbs came staggering out at a side door.

“My God!” he cried. “Some one has loosed the dog. It’s not been fed for two days. Quick, quick, or it’ll be too late!”

Holmes and I rushed out, and round the angle of the house, with Toller hurrying behind us. There was the huge famished brute, its black muzzle buried in Rucastle’s throat, while he writhed and screamed upon the ground. Running up, I blew its brains out, and it fell over with its keen white teeth still meeting in the great creases of his neck.³² With much labour we separated them, and carried him, living but horribly mangled, into the house. We laid him upon the drawing-room sofa, and having despatched the sobered Toller to bear the news to his wife, I did what I could to relieve his pain. We were all assembled round him when the door opened, and a tall, gaunt woman entered the room.



“ ‘You villain!’ said he. ‘Where’s your daughter?’ ”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“Mrs. Toller!” cried Miss Hunter.

“Yes, miss. Mr. Rucastle let me out when he came back before he went up to you. Ah, miss, it is a pity you didn’t let me know what you were planning, for I would have told you that your pains were wasted.”

“Ha!” said Holmes, looking keenly at her. “It is clear that Mrs. Toller knows more about this matter than any one else.”

“Yes, sir, I do, and I am ready enough to tell what I know.”

“Then, pray sit down, and let us hear it, for there are several points on which I must confess that I am still in the dark.”

“I will soon make it clear to you,” said she; “and I’d have done so before now if I could ha’ got out from the cellar. If there’s police-court business over this, you’ll remember that I was the one that stood your friend, and that I was Miss Alice’s friend too.

“She was never happy at home, Miss Alice wasn’t, from the time that her father married again. She was slighted like, and had no say in anything; but it never really became bad for her until after she met Mr. Fowler at a friend’s house. As well as I could learn, Miss Alice had rights of her own by will, but she was so quiet and patient, she was, that she never said a word about them, but just left everything in Mr. Rucastle’s hands. He knew he was safe with her; but when there was a chance of a husband coming forward, who would ask for all that the law would give him, then her father thought it time to put a stop on it. He wanted her to sign a paper, so that whether she married or not, he could use her money. When she wouldn’t do it, he kept on worrying her until she got brain-fever,³³ and for six weeks was at death’s door. Then she got better at last, all worn to a shadow, and with her beautiful hair cut off; but that didn’t make no change in her young man, and he stuck to her as true as man could be.

“Ah,” said Holmes, “I think that what you have been good enough to tell us makes the matter fairly clear, and that I can deduce all that remains. Mr. Rucastle then, I presume, took to this system of imprisonment?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And brought Miss Hunter down from London in order to get rid of the disagreeable persistence of Mr. Fowler.”



“You thieves. Spies and thieves.”

Artist unknown, Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, June 12, 1892

“That was it, sir.”



“Running up, I blew its brains out.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“But Mr. Fowler being a persevering man, as a good seaman³⁴ should be, blockaded the house, and, having met you, succeeded by certain arguments, metallic or otherwise, in convincing you that your interests were the same as his.”

“Mr. Fowler was a very kind-spoken, free-handed gentleman,” said Mrs. Toller, serenely.

“And in this way he managed that your good man should have no want of drink, and that a ladder should be ready at the moment when your master had gone out.”³⁵

“You have it, sir, just as it happened.”

“I am sure we owe you an apology, Mrs. Toller,” said Holmes, “for you have certainly cleared up everything which puzzled us. And here comes the country surgeon and Mrs. Rucastle, so I think, Watson, that we had best escort Miss Hunter back to Winchester, as it seems to me that our *locus standi*³⁶ now is rather a questionable one.”

And thus was solved the mystery of the sinister house with the copper beeches in front of the door. Mr. Rucastle survived, but was always a broken man, kept alive solely through the care of his devoted wife. They still live with their old servants, who probably know so much of Rucastle’s past life that he finds it difficult to part from them. Mr. Fowler and Miss Rucastle were married, by special license, in Southampton the day after their flight, and he is now the holder of a Government appointment in the Island of Mauritius.³⁷ As to Miss Violet Hunter, my friend Holmes, rather to my disappointment, manifested no

further interest in her³⁸ when once she had ceased to be the centre of one of his problems, and she is now the head of a private school at Walsall, where I believe that she has met with considerable success.³⁹

1 “The Copper Beeches” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in June 1892 and was the last of the first series of twelve “Adventures” published in that magazine.

2 The *Daily Telegraph* was originally founded by Colonel Sleigh on June 29, 1855, and printed for him by Joseph Moses Levy, owner of the *Sunday Times* (which was deliberately named after *The Times* but not connected to it otherwise). When Sleigh proved unable to pay his bills, Levy took over, lowering the price—the *Daily Telegraph* became the first “penny newspaper” in London—and appointing his son, Edward Levy-Lawson and Thornton Leigh Hunt to serve as editors. The paper was relaunched on September 17, 1855. The reading public early embraced the *Daily Telegraph*’s colourful style, and within less than a year, Levy’s newspaper was outselling not only *The Times* but also every other newspaper in England.

3 The case occurred between 1885 and 1890 (see *Chronological Table*), and the reference to “little records of cases” (as contrasted with the “big records of cases” of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*) must be to Watson’s *manuscripts*, for the stories themselves had not yet been published. This remark belies the theory that Watson did not start to write the *Adventures* until after Holmes’s disappearance at the Reichenbach Falls in 1891.

4 Holmes’s superior attitude changed when he had to write his own account of “The Blanched Soldier”: “[H]aving taken my pen in my hand, I do begin to realize that the matter must be presented in such a way as may interest the reader.”

5 The characteristic to which Holmes refers concerns the mark left when one uses his or her teeth to cut thread. Remsen Ten Eyck Schenck examines this practice in “The Effect of Trades Upon the Body,” quoting Lester Burket’s *Oral Medicine* in discovering, “Tailors and seamstresses who are in the habit of cutting their thread with their teeth may show a characteristic tooth defect which consists of sharp V-shaped notches in the middle of the incisal [cutting] edge of the incisors.”

6 Schenck’s research also turns up the explanation behind this reference; he notes that the tip of a compositor’s left thumb often sported a callus, with an abrasion displayed further down on the “ball” of the thumb. Such markings came about because the composing stick was held in the left hand, and letters of type were placed into it with the right. The left thumb would be used to slide each piece of type into position and hold it snugly against the last piece added.

7 Holmes’s hobby of collecting Violets (there are four in the Canon) is noted by many commentators, who often suppose that women so named had some special importance to the detective. Esther Longfellow, writing in 1946, found the supposition “absurd when we face the probability that every tenth woman in England was, and still is, called Violet.”

8 Canada achieved independent federation status in 1867, with Nova Scotia as one of its four original confederate members. Yet Halifax, the capital of Nova Scotia, remained an important British Army and Navy base—one of the most heavily fortified outside Europe—until its dockyard and defences were taken over by the Canadian government in 1906. In addition, Halifax was the North American port of the first transatlantic steamship service, which started in 1840.

9 Until late in the nineteenth century, the position of governess was one of the few career options available

to single women of the middle class or to women of the upper class whose families' fortunes had fallen. A governess's pay was meagre (note Miss Hunter's previous pay of £4 per month), and the experience could be demeaning: as teacher and nanny to the children of an upper-class household, a governess was expected to act like a lady but was treated like a servant. Yet the servants often despised the governess, because "they give themselves the hairs and hupstarts of ladies and their wages is no better than you nor me," says Mrs. Blenkinsop in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847). The *Quarterly Review*, a magazine from that period, described a governess as a person "who is our equal in birth, manners and education but our inferior in worldly wealth." Some attempt to mitigate the economic drawbacks of the profession was made with the 1841 foundation of the Governesses' Benevolent Association, which established a system of compensation for governesses too old to work.

The figure of the governess was a popular one in Victorian literature, particularly in novels written by women. In fact, Charlotte Brontë, whose father was a clergyman, worked for some years as a governess, an experience reflected in her fiction. *Jane Eyre* (1847) features one of literature's most famed governesses: the homely, orphaned Jane, whose intellect and candor earned the love of the master of the house. While Mr. Rochester treats her with respect, the opposing viewpoint is presented by a group of visiting ladies and gentlemen, who speak scornfully of the profession even though Jane is clearly in the room. "You should hear mama on the chapter of governesses," the frivolous Blanche Ingram declares. "Mary and I have had, I should think a dozen at least in our day; half of them detestable and the rest ridiculous, and all incubi—were they not, mama?" Her mother obligingly replies, "My dearest, don't mention governesses; the word makes me nervous. I have suffered a martyrdom from their incompetency and caprice. I thank Heaven I have now done with them!"

The governess also faced possible harassment by her male employer. "Thor Bridge" and "The Solitary Cyclist" both deal with governesses in positions with employers making inappropriate advances. However, for some, the household with an eligible young man was a possible escape route; the visiting Hippolyte Taine wrote in his *Notes on England* (1872) that a good many well-off men in London kept governesses as their mistresses, and, at least in fiction (Becky Sharp, in *Vanity Fair*, David Copperfield's mother, and, indeed, Jane Eyre), the governess often married into the household.

10 Those who believe that Violet Hunter held romantic intentions have scrutinised her behaviour in the story, and some see this listing of attributes as a calculated ploy to put herself in a favourable light. "We may be sure [that Violet Hunter] knew of [Holmes's] French ancestry, of his knowledge of German, of his love for music, and that art was in his blood," Isaac S. George writes in "Violet the Hunter." "She simply parades for Holmes's benefit the talents she feels he would appreciate in a woman as a companion. . . ." Both Lee Shackelford and H. W. Bell take another tack, arguing that *Watson* was her target, not Holmes. Yet Dorothy Sayers refutes this suggestion in detail. First, she explains, this argument makes the "heartless and abominable suggestion that, at the very moment when his wife lay stricken with a mortal illness, Watson was endeavouring to get up an intrigue with another woman . . ." She goes on to contrast Watson's description of Hunter with his description of Mary Morstan, finding little positive comment in the former.

11 Why did Rucastle dwell upon his "fads" with Miss Hunter? Surely the wearing of distinctive clothing (a uniform) is not an unusual job condition. Had he not mentioned the dress or the "sitting here or there," her suspicions would have been lessened and Holmes's involvement avoided.

12 Miss Hunter refers, of course, to the Venetian painter Titian (Tiziano Vecellio, 1477–1570), whose preference for golden auburn colours gave rise to the adjective "titian" and was much admired, according to Richard Lancelyn Green, by the purist Pre-Raphaelite painters of the Victorian era, which included Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) and Sir John Everett Millais (1829–1896). Some Sherlockians point to this comment as another of Miss Hunter's strategies to gain Holmes's affections; Richard Asher, in "Holmes and the Fair Sex," makes note of her "brazen" bit of self-praise, observing acidly, "No doubt she wished to draw Holmes's attention to her best feature and keep his eyes off her face which Watson records was

‘freckled like a plover’s egg.’ ”

13 In the Victorian era, women generally wore their hair long, usually atop the head. Yet short hair was not uncommon, as in the “titus” hairstyle in which hair was cut close around the face and worn in curls. And as long hair could be used to make wigs and hairpieces, middle-class women sometimes even cut off their locks and sold them, as Jo March did in *Little Women* (1868–1869).

14 “It is just here that the lady gives herself away completely,” writes Isaac George, further asserting that Violet Hunter’s purpose was not to employ Holmes but to woo him. Why else, he wonders, would she consult a private detective but then state definitively that she had already made a decision—without even waiting for Holmes to offer advice of any kind?

15 Some commentators take this statement to mean that Holmes had a sister or sisters (as with his remark regarding sons in “The Beryl Coronet”).

16 Robert C. Burr points out, in “The Long Consultation,” that Violet Hunter arrives at Baker Street at 10:30 A.M. but bids Holmes and Watson “good-night” upon her departure. What has been going on for seven or eight hours?

17 Once the most complete of the numerous British railway guides. *Bradshaw’s Monthly Railway Guide* (originally *Bradshaw’s Railway Time-Tables*, first published in 1839) ceased publication in 1961. Its first publisher was George Bradshaw, a Quaker engraver and printer.

18 Acetones are an apparently useless byproduct of fat metabolism, often found in the blood, breath, or urine. Donald A. Redmond suggests (“Some Chemical Problems in the Canon”) that Holmes was “investigating the *acetone bodies* in blood—we know his intense interest in blood.”

19 Winchester became the capital of the Saxon kingdom of Wessex in 519 and the capital of England (under Alfred the Great) in 827, serving as the seat of government for Alfred, Canute the Dane, and William the Conqueror; even after the Norman Conquest and the political ascendancy of London, Winchester remained an important commercial centre but eventually lost its preeminence, especially after a serious fire ravaged the city in 1141.

20 Aldershot, to be visited by Holmes and Watson in the adventure of “The Crooked Man,” once housed Britain’s largest military training centre, which was established in 1854.

21 Ian McQueen sees this remark as evidence of Watson’s eagerness to see Violet Hunter and of his estrangement from his wife.

22 “Holmes’s reaction was decidedly un-English,” Clarke Olney comments bemusedly of this atypically dark soliloquy. “French, perhaps, even, one is tempted to say, Russian.” Conversely, Gordon Speck, in “Sherlock Holmes: An Augustan in a Romantic World,” describes Holmes’s seemingly dire attitude as “neo-classicism” instead; the detective in his logic sees only those things that pertain to his investigative work. (Watson is then Holmes’s “Romantic foil,” whose more emotional nature provides a necessary complement.) Such single-mindedness seems the only explanation for Holmes’s characterisation of the countryside, Speck goes on, for “How else could Holmes describe rural England as the scene of ‘a more dreadful record of sin’ than ‘the lowest and vilest alleys of London’ with Jack the Ripper busy in London carving his niche in history?”

23 Note that in “The Missing Three-Quarter,” Holmes remarks to Watson: “I had seven different schemes for getting a glimpse of that telegram”; in “The Naval Treaty,” he tells Percy Phelps that he has furnished him with seven different clues.

24 Curiously, Watson did not disguise the name of this hotel, for Baedeker’s *Great Britain* lists it as a hotel

in Winchester.

25 A woollen fabric, undyed. Mary Morstan (*The Sign of Four*) shared this fashion with Violet Hunter.

26 Victorian “funny stories” proliferated in *Tit-Bits*, a magazine published by George Newnes, publisher of the *Strand Magazine*. The magazine mixed longer humorous pieces with one-paragraph jokes. A sample from the February 7, 1885, issue: “Two tradesmen met recently. Said one to the other, ‘How is business?’ ‘Poor,’ was the reply. ‘I met with a little accident. Night before last burglars broke into my shop, but left without taking anything. Everything was marked so low they came around next morning and made purchases.’ ”

27 The spaniel in “The Sussex Vampire” was also named Carlo.

28 The mastiff breed dates back more than 2,000 years, when the powerful canine was developed in England as a fighting dog and guard dog. Julius Caesar’s account of the Roman invasion of Britain in 55 B.C. cites the courage and fighting ability of the mastiff, and in fact mastiffs were later sent to Rome to fight in arenas. In England, the dogs were used in competitions such as bear-baiting and dogfights until the banning of such blood sports in 1835. Yet as a guardian of homes, the mastiff has been bred to be calm, affectionate, and gentle with children. The purest breed of mastiff, the Old English Mastiff (which Carlo presumably was), became largely extinct after World War II, but various descendant breeds exist around the world today.

29 Feeling that she has exhausted her efforts to attract Holmes *as a man*, suggests Isaac George, Violet Hunter now must tell Holmes of those qualities “that will appeal to him *as a great detective*.” She emphasizes her sleuthing prowess and her resourcefulness in investigating the house. However, her first impression of Rucastle as “fascinating” and “thoughtful” undercuts this effort.

30 These two sentences—“I found myself lying on my bed trembling . . . I thought of you”—are highly suggestive when read in the light of the “long consultation.” See note 16.

31 As a mastiff, Eleanor S. Cole points out, in “Holmes, Watson and the K-9’s,” Carlo could not have “bayed,” but instead would have roared or growled. In addition, of course, hounds are completely different dogs from mastiffs. Cole names the Irish wolfhound and the Scottish deerhound, “which both exceed the mastiff in height, but not in substance.”

32 Ray Betzner, in “Whatever Happened to Baby Rucastle?,” suggests that Edward Rucastle (he of the abnormally large head) and Carlo (he of the projecting bones) were the same person, a boy werewolf. In fact, after the shooting of Carlo, it is as if Edward had vanished . . .

33 Seven patients in the Canon are mentioned as having the disease “brain fever,” which, Alvin E. Rodin and Jack D. Key write in *Medical Casebook of Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle*, “we can characterize . . . as one which follows quickly on a severe emotional shock, which exhibits weight loss, weakness, pallor, and high fever, and which has a protracted course. Most patients recover, but insanity or death is possible. . . .” Watson seems to have frequently reported a vague affliction, to be sure, but one that was recorded by other nineteenth-century writers as well: Rodin and Key single out Catherine Linton in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Emma Bovary in Gustave Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1857), and Lucy Feverel in George Meredith’s *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). Such preponderance of brain fever in the literature of the day would seem to validate it as a medical diagnosis; Rodin and Key further cite an 1892 medical textbook that lists “fever” as a manifestation of an hysterical reaction, as well as a modern dictionary that equates brain fever with meningitis.

34 On what basis did Holmes identify Fowler as a sailor?

35 Note that Holmes's earlier deduction about the ladder is wrong and makes no sense in any event. Why would Rucastle have needed to remove her through the skylight? Holmes often makes incorrect deductions (see, for example, "The Second Stain," in which he vehemently argues against coincidence) but seems to follow a policy of not admitting error unless someone calls attention to his mistake. "The Yellow Face," in which Holmes's theory of the case is proven completely wrong, records the most famous instance of Holmes's admission of error.

36 A legal term, meaning the right to be heard by a court, now expressed as "legal standing."

37 A British colony since 1810, Mauritius was an important way station on the route to India. The many sugar plantations on the island were worked by African slaves until Britain abolished slavery in 1835 and imported labourers from India (whose descendants make up much of the population today). The colony gained its independence in 1968.

38 Christopher Morley elaborates on Watson's disappointment (and his hopes for Holmes) in "Dr. Watson's Secret": ". . . how delightful, the Doctor thought naively, if he and Holmes should both marry governesses—and alumnae of the same agency, for undoubtedly Mary, too, had been a client of Westaway's."

39 For a woman of such talents, perhaps there is more to Miss Hunter's future than meets the eye. Lord Donegall is of the view that Violet Hunter, upon Holmes's recommendation, became a special agent, with her position as "head of a private school" serving as a mere cover provided by an operative such as Holmes's brother Mycroft. "It would also explain," Lord Donegall posits, "why we hear no more of this gifted young lady's remarkable skills; not forgetting her French and German."



THE MEMOIRS OF

SHERLOCK HOLMES¹



¹ First published in book form (without "The Cardboard Box") by George Newnes, Limited, in an edition of 10,000 copies, as volume three of *The Strand Library* on December 13, 1893, containing 90 illustrations by Sidney Paget. The first American edition was published on February 2, 1894, by Harper & Brothers, New York, and included "The Cardboard Box."

SILVER BLAZE¹

“Silver Blaze,” the first case of the Memoirs stories (a series that commenced five months after conclusion of the Adventures), is one of the most famous sporting mysteries ever penned. Watson presents the case, set in racing circles, as another “fair-play” murder mystery, with the villain concealed in plain view. Holmes’s well-known remark about “the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime” has been widely repeated in many contexts and has become a catch-phrase for a “negative inference.” Although many question the accuracy of Watson’s reporting of the sporting details of the adventure, few would dispute that Holmes’s powers are here at their peak. His computation of the speed of the train has been amply demonstrated to be accurate, and his careful observation of sheep leads to the capture of an unlikely killer. The only blemish on the tale is the evidence that Holmes placed an unethical bet on the race.

I AM AFRAID, Watson, that I shall have to go,” said Holmes, as we sat down together to our breakfast one morning.

“Go! Where to?”

“To Dartmoor²—to King’s Pyland.”

I was not surprised. Indeed, my only wonder was that he had not already been mixed up in this extraordinary case, which was the one topic of conversation through the length and breadth of England. For a whole day my companion had rambled about the room with his chin upon his chest and his brows knitted, charging and re-charging his pipe with the strongest black tobacco, and absolutely deaf to any of my questions or remarks. Fresh editions of every paper had been sent up by our news agent only to be glanced over and tossed down into a corner. Yet, silent as he was, I knew perfectly well what it was over which he was brooding. There was but one problem before the public which could challenge his powers of analysis, and that was the singular disappearance of the favourite for the Wessex Cup and the tragic murder of its trainer. When, therefore, he suddenly announced his intention of setting out for the scene of the drama, it was only what I had both expected and hoped for.

“I should be most happy to go down with you if I should not be in the way,” said I.

“My dear Watson, you would confer a great favour upon me by coming. And I think that your time will not be mis-spent, for there are points about the case which promise to make it an absolutely unique one. We have, I think, just time to catch our train at Paddington, and I will go further into the matter upon our journey. You would oblige me by bringing with you your very excellent field-glass.”

And so it happened that an hour or so later I found myself in the corner of a first-class carriage, flying along, en route for Exeter, while Sherlock Holmes, with his sharp, eager face framed in his ear-flapped traveling cap,³ dipped rapidly into the bundle of fresh papers which he had procured at Paddington. We had left Reading far behind us before he thrust the last of them under the seat, and offered me his cigar-case.

“We are going well,” said he, looking out of the window, and glancing at his watch. “Our rate at present is fifty-three and a half miles an hour.”⁴

“I have not observed the quarter-mile posts,” said I.

“Nor have I. But the telegraph posts upon this line are sixty yards apart, and the calculation is a simple one.⁵ I presume that you have already looked into this matter of the murder of John Straker and the disappearance of Silver Blaze?”

“I have seen what the *Telegraph* and the *Chronicle* have to say.”

“It is one of those cases where the art of the reasoner should be used rather for the sifting of details than for the acquiring of fresh evidence. The tragedy has been so uncommon, so complete, and of such personal importance to so many people, that we are suffering from a plethora of surmise, conjecture, and hypothesis. The difficulty is to detach the framework of fact—of absolute, undeniable fact—from the embellishments of theorists and reporters. Then, having established ourselves upon this sound basis, it is our duty to see what inferences may be drawn, and what are the special points upon which the whole mystery turns. On Tuesday evening I received telegrams from both Colonel Ross, the owner of the horse, and from Inspector Gregory, who is looking after the case, inviting my co-operation.”

“Tuesday evening!” I exclaimed. “And this is Thursday morning. Why did you not go down yesterday?”

“Because I made a blunder, my dear Watson—which is, I am afraid, a more common occurrence than anyone would think who only knew me through your memoirs. The fact is, that I could not believe it possible that the most remarkable horse in England could long remain concealed, especially in so sparsely inhabited a place as the north of Dartmoor. From hour to hour yesterday I expected to hear that he had been found, and that his abductor was the murderer of John Straker. When, however, another morning had come and I found that, beyond the arrest of young Fitzroy Simpson, nothing had been done, I felt that it was time for me to take action. Yet in some ways I feel that yesterday has not been wasted.”

“You have formed a theory then?”

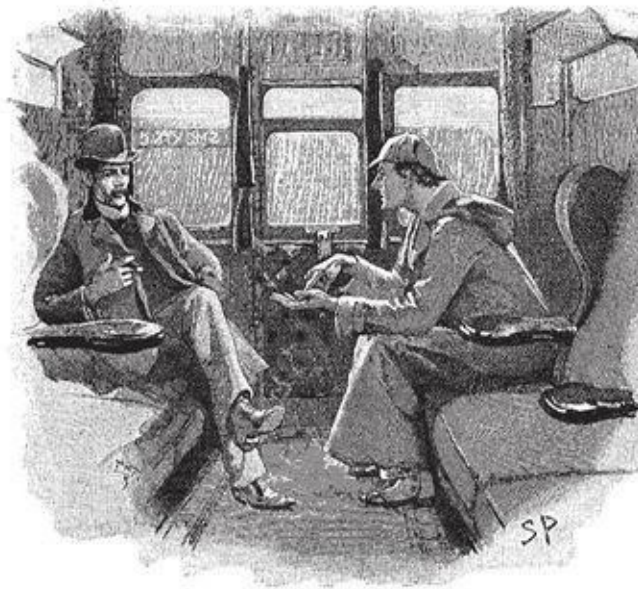
“At least I have got a grip of the essential facts of the case. I shall enumerate them to you, for nothing clears up a case so much as stating it to another person, and I can hardly expect your co-operation if I do not show you the position from which we start.”

I lay back against the cushions, puffing at my cigar, while Holmes, leaning forward with his long, thin forefinger checking off the points upon the palm of his left hand, gave me a sketch of the events which had led to our journey.

“Silver Blaze,” said he, “is from the Isonomy⁶ stock and holds as brilliant a record as his famous ancestor. He is now in his fifth year, and has brought in turn each of the prizes of the turf to Colonel Ross, his fortunate owner. Up to the time of the catastrophe he was the first favourite for the Wessex Cup, the betting being three to one on. He has always, however, been a prime favourite with the racing public, and has never yet disappointed them, so that even at those odds enormous sums of money have been laid upon him. It is obvious, therefore, that

there were many people who had the strongest interest in preventing Silver Blaze from being there at the fall of the flag, next Tuesday.

“The fact was, of course, appreciated at King’s Pyland, where the Colonel’s training stable is situated. Every precaution was taken to guard the favourite. The trainer, John Straker, is a retired jockey, who rode in Colonel Ross’s colours before he became too heavy for the weighing chair. He has served the Colonel for five years as jockey and for seven as trainer, and has always shown himself to be a zealous and honest servant. Under him were three lads, for the establishment was a small one, containing only four horses in all. One of these lads sat up each night in the stable, while the others slept in the loft. All three bore excellent characters. John Straker, who is a married man, lived in a small villa about two hundred yards from the stables. He has no children, keeps one maid-servant, and is comfortably off. The country round is very lonely, but about half a mile to the north there is a small cluster of villas which have been built by a Tavistock contractor for the use of invalids and others who may wish to enjoy the pure Dartmoor air. Tavistock itself lies two miles to the west, while across the moor, also about two miles distant, is the larger training establishment of Capleton,⁷ which belongs to Lord Backwater⁸ and is managed by Silas Brown. In every other direction the moor is a complete wilderness, inhabited only by a few roaming gipsies. Such was the general situation last Monday night when the catastrophe occurred.



“Holmes gave me a sketch of the events.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“On that evening the horses had been exercised and watered as usual, and the stables were locked up at nine o’clock. Two of the lads walked up to the trainer’s house, where they had supper in the kitchen, while the third, Ned Hunter, remained on guard. At a few minutes after nine the maid, Edith Baxter, carried down to the stables his supper, which consisted of a dish of curried mutton. She took no liquid, as there was a water-tap in the stables, and it was the rule that the lad on duty should drink nothing else. The maid carried a lantern with her, as it was very dark, and the path ran across the open moor.

“Edith Baxter was within thirty yards of the stables when a man appeared out of the darkness and called to her to stop. As he stepped into the circle of yellow light thrown by the lantern she saw that he was a person of gentlemanly bearing, dressed in a gray suit of tweeds, with a cloth cap. He wore gaiters, and carried a heavy stick with a knob to it. She was most impressed, however, by the extreme pallor of his face and by the nervousness of his manner. His age, she thought, would be rather over thirty than under it.



The maid carried his supper to the stables.”

W. W. Hyde, *Harper’s Weekly*, 1893

“ ‘Can you tell me where I am?’ he asked. ‘I had almost made up my mind to sleep on the moor when I saw the light of your lantern.’



“A man appeared out of the darkness.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“ ‘You are close to the King’s Pyland training stables,’ said she.

“ ‘Oh, indeed! What a stroke of luck!’ he cried. ‘I understand that a stable boy sleeps there alone every night. Perhaps that is his supper which you are carrying to him. Now I am sure that you would not be too proud to earn the price of a new dress, would you?’ He took a piece of white paper folded up out of his waistcoat pocket. ‘See that the boy has this to-night, and you shall have the prettiest frock that money can buy.’

“She was frightened by the earnestness of his manner, and ran past him to the window through which she was accustomed to hand the meals. It was already opened, and Hunter was seated at the small table inside. She had begun to tell him of what had happened when the stranger came up again.

“ ‘Good evening,’ said he, looking through the window. ‘I wanted to have a word with you.’ The girl has sworn that as he spoke she noticed the corner of the little paper packet protruding from his closed hand.

“ ‘What business have you here?’ asked the lad.

“ ‘It’s business that may put something into your pocket,’ said the other. ‘You’ve two horses in for the Wessex Cup—Silver Blaze and Bayard. Let me have the straight tip, and you won’t be a loser. Is it a fact that at the weights Bayard could give the other a hundred yards in five furlongs, and that the stable have put their money on him?’

“ ‘So you’re one of those damned touts!’⁹ cried the lad. ‘I’ll show you how we serve them in King’s Pyland.’ He sprang up and rushed across the stable to unloose the dog. The girl fled away to the house, but as she ran she looked back, and saw that the stranger was leaning through the window. A minute later, however, when Hunter rushed out with the hound he was gone, and though the lad ran all round the buildings he failed to find any trace of him.”

“One moment!” I asked. “Did the stable boy, when he ran out with the dog, leave the door unlocked behind him?”

“Excellent, Watson; excellent!” murmured my companion. “The importance of the point struck me so forcibly, that I sent a special wire to Dartmoor yesterday to clear the matter up. The boy locked the door before he left it. The window, I may add, was not large enough for a man to get through.

“Hunter waited until his fellow grooms had returned, when he sent a message to the trainer and told him what had occurred. Straker was excited at hearing the account, although he does not seem to have quite realized its true significance. It left him, however, vaguely uneasy, and Mrs. Straker, waking at one in the morning, found that he was dressing. In reply to her inquiries, he said that he could not sleep on account of his anxiety about the horses, and that he intended to walk down to the stables to see that all was well. She begged him to remain at home, as she could hear the rain pattering against the windows, but in spite of her entreaties he pulled on his large macintosh and left the house.

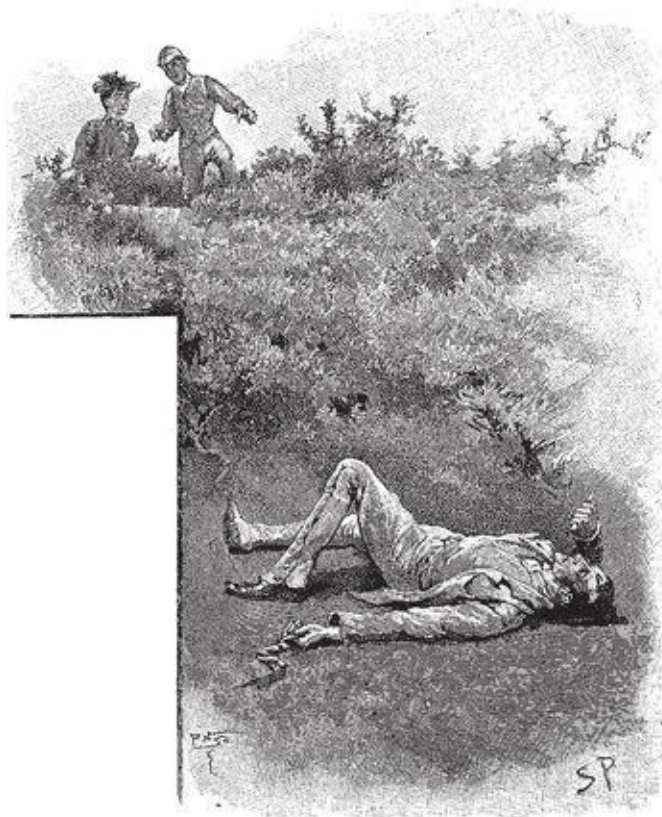


Contemporary advertisement for Macintoshes.

Victorian Advertisements

“Mrs. Straker awoke at seven in the morning, to find that her husband had not yet returned. She dressed herself hastily, called the maid, and set off for the stables. The door was open; inside, huddled together upon a chair, Hunter was sunk in a state of absolute stupor, the favourite’s stall was empty, and there were no signs of his trainer.

“The two lads who slept in the chaff-cutting loft above the harness-room were quickly aroused. They had heard nothing during the night, for they are both sound sleepers. Hunter was obviously under the influence of some powerful drug; and as no sense could be got out of him, he was left to sleep it off while the two lads and the two women ran out in search of the absentees. They still had hopes that the trainer had for some reason taken out the horse for early exercise, but on ascending the knoll near the house, from which all the neighbouring moors were visible, they not only could see no signs of the favourite, but they perceived something which warned them that they were in the presence of a tragedy.



“They found the dead body of the unfortunate trainer.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“About a quarter of a mile from the stables, John Straker’s overcoat was flapping from a furze bush. Immediately beyond there was a bowl-shaped depression in the moor, and at the bottom of this was found the dead body of the unfortunate trainer. His head had been shattered by a savage blow from some heavy weapon, and he was wounded in the thigh, where there was a long, clean cut, inflicted evidently by some very sharp instrument. It was clear, however, that Straker had defended himself vigorously against his assailants, for in his right hand he held a small knife, which was clotted with blood up to the handle, while in his left he clasped a red and black silk cravat, which was recognised by the maid as having been worn on the preceding evening by the stranger who had visited the stables. Hunter, on recovering from his stupor, was also quite positive as to the ownership of the cravat. He was equally certain that the same stranger had, while standing at the window, drugged his curried mutton, and so deprived the stables of their watchman. As to the missing horse, there were abundant proofs in the mud which lay at the bottom of the fatal hollow, that he had been there at the time of the struggle. But from that morning he has disappeared; and, although a large reward has been offered, and all the gipsies of Dartmoor are on

the alert, no news has come of him. Finally, an analysis has shown that the remains of his supper, left by the stable lad, contained an appreciable quantity of powdered opium, while the people at the house partook of the same dish on the same night without any ill effect.



His head had been shattered by a savage blow.

W. W. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“Those are the main facts of the case, stripped of all surmise and stated as baldly as possible. I shall now recapitulate what the police have done in the matter.

“Inspector Gregory, to whom the case has been committed, is an extremely competent officer. Were he but gifted with imagination he might rise to great heights in his profession. On his arrival he promptly found and arrested the man upon whom suspicion naturally rested. There was little difficulty in finding him, for he was thoroughly well-known in the neighbourhood.¹⁰ His name, it appears, was Fitzroy Simpson. He was a man of excellent birth and education, who had squandered a fortune upon the turf, and who lived now by doing a little quiet and genteel book-making in the sporting clubs of London. An examination of his betting-book shows that bets to the amount of five thousand pounds had been registered by him against the favourite. On being arrested, he volunteered the statement that he had come down to Dartmoor in the hope of getting some information about the King's Pyland horses, and also about Desborough, the second favourite, which was in charge of Silas Brown, at the Capleton stables. He did not attempt to deny that he had acted as described upon the evening before, but declared that he had no sinister designs, and had simply wished to obtain first-hand information. When confronted with the cravat he turned very pale, and was utterly unable to account for its presence in the hand of the

murdered man. His wet clothing showed that he had been out in the storm of the night before, and his stick, which was a Penang lawyer¹¹ weighted with lead, was just such a weapon as might, by repeated blows, have inflicted the terrible injuries to which the trainer had succumbed. On the other hand, there was no wound upon his person, while the state of Straker's knife would show that one, at least, of his assailants must bear his mark upon him. There you have it all in a nutshell, Watson, and if you can give me any light I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

I had listened with the greatest interest to the statement which Holmes, with characteristic clearness, had laid before me. Though most of the facts were familiar to me, I had not sufficiently appreciated their relative importance, nor their connection with each other.

"Is it not possible," I suggested, "that the incised wound upon Straker may have been caused by his own knife in the convulsive struggles which follow any brain injury?"

"It is more than possible; it is probable," said Holmes. "In that case one of the main points in favour of the accused disappears."

"And yet," said I, "even now I fail to understand what the theory of the police can be."

"I am afraid that whatever theory we state has very grave objections to it," returned my companion. "The police imagine, I take it, that this Fitzroy Simpson, having drugged the lad, and having in some way obtained a duplicate key, opened the stable door and took out the horse, with the intention apparently of kidnapping him altogether. His bridle is missing, so that Simpson must have put this on. Then, having left the door open behind him, he was leading the horse away over the moor, when he was either met or overtaken by the trainer. A row naturally ensued, Simpson beat out the trainer's brains with his heavy stick without receiving any injury from the small knife which Straker used in self-defence, and then the thief either led the horse on to some secret hiding-place, or else it may have bolted during the struggle, and be now wandering out on the moors. That is the case as it appears to the police, and improbable as it is, all other explanations are more improbable still. However, I shall very quickly test the matter when I am once upon the spot, and until then I cannot really see how we can get much further than our present position."

It was evening before we reached the little town of Tavistock, which lies, like the boss¹² of a shield, in the middle of the huge circle of Dartmoor.¹³ Two gentlemen were awaiting us in the station; the one a tall, fair man with lion-like hair and beard, and curiously penetrating light-blue eyes; the other a small alert

person, very neat and dapper, in a frock-coat and gaiters, with trim little side-whiskers and an eye-glass. The latter was Colonel Ross, the well-known sportsman, the other, Inspector Gregory, a man who was rapidly making his name in the English detective service.

“I am delighted that you have come down, Mr. Holmes,” said the Colonel. “The Inspector here has done all that could possibly be suggested, but I wish to leave no stone unturned in trying to avenge poor Straker and in recovering my horse.”

“Have there been any fresh developments?” asked Holmes.

“I am sorry to say that we have made very little progress,” said the Inspector. “We have an open carriage outside, and as you would no doubt like to see the place before the light fails, we might talk it over as we drive.”

A minute later we were all seated in a comfortable landau¹⁴ and were rattling through the quaint old Devonshire town. Inspector Gregory was full of his case, and poured out a stream of remarks, while Holmes threw in an occasional question or interjection. Colonel Ross leaned back with his arms folded and his hat tilted over his eyes, while I listened with interest to the dialogue of the two detectives. Gregory was formulating his theory, which was almost exactly what Holmes had foretold in the train.



“I am delighted that you have come down, Mr. Holmes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“The net is drawn pretty close round Fitzroy Simpson,” he remarked, “and I believe myself that he is our man. At the same time, I recognise that the evidence is purely circumstantial, and that some new development may upset it.”

“How about Straker’s knife?”

“We have quite come to the conclusion that he wounded himself in his fall.”

“My friend Dr. Watson made that suggestion to me as we came down. If so, it would tell against this man Simpson.”

“Undoubtedly. He has neither a knife nor any sign of a wound. The evidence against him is certainly very strong. He had a great interest in the disappearance of the favourite. He lies under suspicion of having poisoned the stable boy; he was undoubtedly out in the storm, he was armed with a heavy stick, and his cravat was found in the dead man’s hand. I really think we have enough to go before a jury.”

Holmes shook his head. “A clever counsel would tear it all to rags,” said he. Why should he take the horse out of the stable? If he wished to injure it, why could he not do it there? Has a duplicate key been found in his possession? What chemist sold him the powdered opium? Above all, where could he, a stranger to the district, hide a horse, and such a horse as this? What is his own explanation as to the paper which he wished the maid to give to the stable boy?”

“He says that it was a ten-pound note. One was found in his purse. But your other difficulties are not so formidable as they seem. He is not a stranger to the district. He has twice lodged at Tavistock in the summer. The opium was probably brought from London. The key, having served its purpose, would be hurled away. The horse may lie at the bottom of one of the pits or old mines upon the moor.”

“What does he say about the cravat?”

“He acknowledges that it is his, and declares that he had lost it. But a new element has been introduced into the case which may account for his leading the horse from the stable.”

Holmes pricked up his ears.

“We have found traces which show that a party of gipsies encamped on Monday night within a mile of the spot where the murder took place. On Tuesday they were gone. Now, presuming that there was some understanding between Simpson and these gipsies, might he not have been leading the horse to them when he was overtaken, and may they not have him now?”

“It is certainly possible.”

“The moor is being scoured for these gipsies. I have also examined every stable and outhouse in Tavistock, and for a radius of ten miles.”

“There is another training stable quite close, I understand?”

“Yes, and that is a factor which we must certainly not neglect. As Desborough, their horse, was second in the betting, they had an interest in the disappearance of the favourite. Silas Brown, the trainer, is known to have had large bets upon the event, and he was no friend to poor Straker. We have, however, examined the stables, and there is nothing to connect him with the affair.”

“And nothing to connect this man Simpson with the interests of the Capleton stables?”

“Nothing at all.”

Holmes leaned back in the carriage and the conversation ceased. A few minutes later our driver pulled up at a neat little red-brick villa with overhanging eaves, which stood by the road. Some distance off, across a paddock, lay a long, gray-tiled out-building. In every other direction the low curves of the moor, bronze-coloured from the fading ferns, stretched away to the sky-line, broken only by the steeples of Tavistock, and by a cluster of houses away to the westward, which marked the Capleton stables. We all sprang out with the exception of Holmes, who continued to lean back with his eyes fixed upon the sky in front of him, entirely absorbed in his own thoughts. It was only when I touched his arm that he roused himself with a violent start and stepped out of the carriage.

“Excuse me,” said he, turning to Colonel Ross, who had looked at him in some surprise. “I was day-dreaming.” There was a gleam in his eyes and a suppressed excitement in his manner which convinced me, used as I was to his ways, that his hand was upon a clue, though I could not imagine where he had found it.

“Perhaps you would prefer at once to go on to the scene of the crime, Mr. Holmes?” said Gregory.

“I think that I should prefer to stay here a little and go into one or two questions of detail. Straker was brought back here, I presume?”

“Yes, he lies upstairs. The inquest is to-morrow.”

“He has been in your service some years, Colonel Ross?”

“I have always found him an excellent servant.”

“I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?”

“I have the things themselves in the sitting-room if you would care to see them.”

“I should be very glad.” We all filed into the front room and sat round the central table, while the Inspector unlocked a square tin box and laid a small heap of things before us. There was a box of vestas, two inches of tallow candle, an

A.D.P. brier-root pipe,¹⁵ a pouch of sealskin with half an ounce of long-cut Cavendish,¹⁶ a silver watch with a gold chain, five sovereigns in gold, an aluminium pencil-case, a few papers, and an ivory-handled knife with a very delicate inflexible blade marked Weiss & Co., London.¹⁷

“This is a very singular knife,” said Holmes, lifting it up and examining it minutely. “I presume, as I see bloodstains upon it, that it is the one which was found in the dead man’s grasp. Watson, this knife is surely in your line.”

“It is what we call a cataract knife,” said I.

“I thought so. A very delicate blade devised for very delicate work. A strange thing for a man to carry with him upon a rough expedition, especially as it would not shut in his pocket.”

“The tip was guarded by a disc of cork which we found beside his body” said the inspector. “His wife tells us that the knife had lain for some days¹⁸ upon the dressing-table, and that he had picked it up as he left the room. It was a poor weapon, but perhaps the best that he could lay his hands on at the moment.”

“Very possibly. How about these papers?”

“Three of them are receipted hay-dealers’ accounts. One of them is a letter of instructions from Colonel Ross. The other is a milliner’s account for thirty-seven pounds fifteen made out by Madame Lesurier, of Bond Street¹⁹ to William Derbyshire. Mrs. Straker tells us that Derbyshire was a friend of her husband’s, and that occasionally his letters were addressed here.”

“Madame Derbyshire had somewhat expensive tastes,” remarked Holmes, glancing down the account. “Twenty-two guineas is rather heavy for a single costume. However, there appears to be nothing more to learn, and we may now go down to the scene of the crime.”

As we emerged from the sitting-room a woman, who had been waiting in the passage, took a step forward and laid her hand upon the inspector’s sleeve. Her face was haggard, and thin, and eager; stamped with the print of a recent horror.

“Have you got them? Have you found them?” she panted.

“No, Mrs. Straker; but Mr. Holmes, here, has come from London to help us, and we shall do all that is possible.”

“Surely I met you in Plymouth, at a garden-party, some little time ago, Mrs. Straker?” said Holmes.

“No, sir, you are mistaken.”

“Dear me, why, I could have sworn to it. You wore a costume of dove-coloured silk, with ostrich feather trimming.”

“I never had such a dress, sir,” answered the lady.

“Ah; that quite settles it,” said Holmes; and with an apology he followed the

inspector outside. A short walk across the moor took us to the hollow in which the body had been found. At the brink of it was the furze bush upon which the coat had been hung.



“Have you found them?” she panted.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“There was no wind that night, I understand,” said Holmes.

“None; but very heavy rain.”

“In that case the overcoat was not blown against the furze bush, but placed there.”

“Yes, it was laid across the bush.”

“You fill me with interest. I perceive that the ground has been trampled up a good deal. No doubt many feet have been here since Monday night.”

“A piece of matting has been laid here at the side, and we have all stood upon that.”

“Excellent.”

“In this bag I have one of the boots which Straker wore, one of Fitzroy Simpson’s shoes, and a cast horseshoe of Silver Blaze.”

“My dear Inspector, you surpass yourself!” Holmes took the bag, and descending into the hollow he pushed the matting into a more central position.

Then stretching himself upon his face and leaning his chin upon his hands, he made a careful study of the trampled mud in front of him. "Halloa!" said he, suddenly, "what's this?"



Wax vestas.

It was a wax vesta, half burned, which was so coated with mud that it looked at first like a little chip of wood.

"I cannot think how I came to overlook it," said the Inspector, with an expression of annoyance.

"It was invisible, buried in the mud. I only saw it because I was looking for it."

"What! you expected to find it?"

"I thought it not unlikely."

He took the boots from the bag and compared the impressions of each of them with marks upon the ground. Then he clambered up to the rim of the hollow and crawled about among the ferns and bushes.

"I am afraid that there are no more tracks," said the Inspector, "I have examined the ground very carefully for a hundred yards in each direction."

"Indeed!" said Holmes, rising. "I should not have the impertinence to do it again after what you say. But I should like to take a little walk over the moors before it grows dark that I may know my ground to-morrow, and I think that I shall put this horseshoe into my pocket for luck."

Colonel Ross, who had shown some signs of impatience at my companion's quiet and systematic method of work, glanced at his watch. "I wish you would come back with me, Inspector," said he. "There are several points on which I should like your advice, and especially as to whether we do not owe it to the public to remove our horse's name from the entries for the Cup."

"Certainly not," cried Holmes with decision; "I should let the name stand."

The Colonel bowed. "I am very glad to have had your opinion, sir" said he. "You will find us at poor Straker's house when you have finished your walk, and we can drive together into Tavistock."

He turned back with the inspector, while Holmes and I walked slowly across the moor. The sun was beginning to sink behind the stable of Capleton, and the long, sloping plain in front of us was tinged with gold, deepening into rich, ruddy brown where the faded ferns and brambles caught the evening light. But

the glories of the landscape were all wasted upon my companion, who was sunk in the deepest thought.

“It’s this way, Watson,” he said at last. “We may leave the question of who killed John Straker for the instant, and confine ourselves to finding out what has become of the horse. Now supposing that he broke away during or after the tragedy, where could he have gone to? The horse is a very gregarious creature. If left to himself his instincts would have been either to return to King’s Pyland, or go over to Capleton. Why should he run wild upon the moor? He would surely have been seen by now. And why should gipsies kidnap him? These people always clear out when they hear of trouble, for they do not wish to be pestered by the police. They could not hope to sell such a horse. They would run a great risk and gain nothing by taking him. Surely that is clear.”

“Where is he, then?”

“I have already said that he must have gone to King’s Pyland or to Capleton. He is not at King’s Pyland, therefore he is at Capleton. Let us take that as a working hypothesis and see what it leads us to. This part of the moor, as the inspector remarked, is very hard and dry. But it falls away towards Capleton, and you can see from here that there is a long hollow over yonder, which must have been very wet on Monday night. If our supposition is correct, then the horse must have crossed that, and there is the point where we should look for his tracks.”

We had been walking briskly during this conversation, and a few more minutes brought us to the hollow in question. At Holmes’s request I walked down the bank to the right, and he to the left, but I had not taken fifty paces before I heard him give a shout, and saw him waving his hand to me. The track of a horse was plainly outlined in the soft earth in front of him, and the shoe which he took from his pocket exactly fitted the impression.

“See the value of imagination,” said Holmes. “It is the one quality which Gregory lacks. We imagined what might have happened, acted upon the supposition, and find ourselves justified.²⁰ Let us proceed.”

We crossed the marshy bottom and passed over a quarter of a mile of dry, hard turf. Again the ground sloped and again we came on the tracks. Then we lost them for half a mile, but only to pick them up once more quite close to Capleton. It was Holmes who saw them first, and he stood pointing with a look of triumph upon his face. A man’s track was visible beside the horse’s.

“The horse was alone before,” I cried.

“Quite so. It was alone before. Halloa, what is this?”

The double track turned sharp off and took the direction of King’s Pyland. Holmes whistled, and we both followed along after it. His eyes were on the trail,

but I happened to look a little to one side and saw to my surprise the same tracks coming back again in the opposite direction.

“One for you, Watson,” said Holmes, when I pointed it out. “You have saved us a long walk which would have brought us back on our own traces. Let us follow the return track.”

We had not to go far. It ended at the paving of asphalt which led up to the gates of the Capleton stables. As we approached a groom ran out from them.

“We don’t want any loiterers about here,” said he.

“I only wished to ask a question,” said Holmes, with his finger and thumb in his waistcoat pocket. “Should I be too early to see your master, Mr. Silas Brown, if I were to call at five o’clock to-morrow morning?”

“Bless you, sir, if anyone is about he will be, for he is always the first stirring. But here he is, sir, to answer your questions for himself. No, sir, no; it is as much as my place is worth to let him see me touch your money. Afterwards, if you like.”

As Sherlock Holmes replaced the half-crown which he had drawn from his pocket, a fierce-looking elderly man strode out from the gate with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand.

“What’s this, Dawson!” he cried. “No gossiping! Go about your business! And you—what the devil do you want here?”

“Ten minutes’ talk with you, my good sir,” said Holmes in the sweetest of voices.

“I’ve no time to talk to every gadabout. We want no strangers here. Be off, or you may find a dog at your heels.”

Holmes leaned forward and whispered something in the trainer’s ear. He started violently and flushed to the temples.

“It’s a lie!” he shouted. “An infernal lie!”

“Very good! Shall we argue about it here in public or talk it over in your parlour?”

“Oh, come in if you wish to.”

Holmes smiled. “I shall not keep you more than a few minutes, Watson,” he said. “Now, Mr. Brown, I am quite at your disposal.”

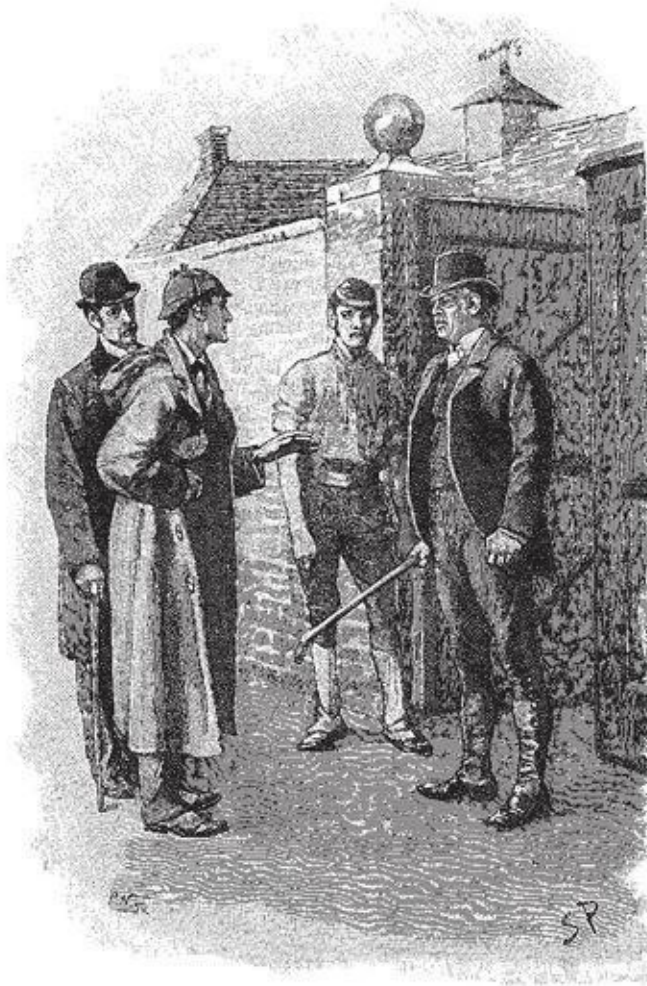
It was quite twenty minutes, and the reds had all faded into greys before Holmes and the trainer reappeared. Never have I seen such a change as had been brought about in Silas Brown in that short time. His face was ashy pale, beads of perspiration shone upon his brow, and his hands shook until the hunting-crop wagged like a branch in the wind. His bullying, overbearing manner was all gone too, and he cringed along at my companion’s side like a dog with its master.



“Ten minutes’ talk with you, sir,” said Holmes, in the sweetest of voices.

H. R. Eddy, Sunday *Boston American*, February 11, 1912

“Your instructions will be done. It shall all be done,” said he.



“Be off!”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“There must be no mistake,” said Holmes, looking round at him. The other winced as he read the menace in his eyes.

“Oh, no, there shall be no mistake. It shall be there. Should I change it first or not?”

Holmes thought a little and then burst out laughing. “No, don’t,” said he, “I shall write to you about it. No tricks, now, or—”

“Oh, you can trust me, you can trust me!”

“You must see to it on the day as if it were your own.”

“You can rely upon me.”²¹

“Yes, I think I can. Well, you shall hear from me to-morrow.” He turned upon his heel, disregarding the trembling hand which the other held out to him, and we set off for King’s Pyland.

“A more perfect compound of the bully, coward, and sneak than Master Silas

Brown I have seldom met with," remarked Holmes as we trudged along together.

"He has the horse, then?"

"He tried to bluster out of it, but I described to him so exactly what his actions had been upon that morning that he is convinced that I was watching him. Of course, you observed the peculiarly square toes in the impressions, and that his own boots exactly corresponded to them. Again, of course, no subordinate would have dared to do such a thing. I described to him how, when according to his custom he was the first down, he perceived a strange horse wandering over the moor; how he went out to it, and his astonishment at recognizing, from the white forehead which has given the favourite its name, that chance had put in his power the only horse which could beat the one upon which he had put his money. Then I described how his first impulse had been to lead him back to King's Pyland, and how the devil had shown him how he could hide the horse until the race was over, and how he had led it back and concealed it at Capleton. When I told him every detail he gave it up, and thought only of saving his own skin."

"But his stables had been searched?"

"Oh, an old horse-faker like him has many a dodge."

"But are you not afraid to leave the horse in his power now, since he has every interest in injuring it?"

"My dear fellow, he will guard it as the apple of his eye. He knows that his only hope of mercy is to produce it safe."

"Colonel Ross did not impress me as a man who would be likely to show much mercy in any case."

"The matter does not rest with Colonel Ross. I follow my own methods, and tell as much or as little as I choose. That is the advantage of being unofficial. I don't know whether you observed it, Watson, but the Colonel's manner has been just a trifle cavalier to me. I am inclined now to have a little amusement at his expense. Say nothing to him about the horse."

"Certainly not, without your permission."

"And, of course, this is all quite a minor point compared to the question of who killed John Straker."

"And you will devote yourself to that?"

"On the contrary, we both go back to London by the night train."

I was thunderstruck by my friend's words. We had only been a few hours in Devonshire, and that he should give up an investigation which he had begun so brilliantly was quite incomprehensible to me. Not a word more could I draw from him until we were back at the trainer's house. The colonel and the inspector were awaiting us in the parlour.

“My friend and I return to town by the midnight express,” said Holmes. “We have had a charming little breath of your beautiful Dartmoor air.”

The Inspector opened his eyes, and the Colonel’s lip curled in a sneer.

“So you despair of arresting the murderer of poor Straker,” said he.

Holmes shrugged his shoulders. “There are certainly grave difficulties in the way,” said he. “I have every hope, however, that your horse will start upon Tuesday, and I beg that you will have your jockey in readiness. Might I ask for a photograph of Mr. John Straker?”

The Inspector took one from an envelope and handed it to him.

“My dear Gregory, you anticipate all my wants. If I might ask you to wait here for an instant, I have a question which I should like to put to the maid.”

“I must say that I am rather disappointed in our London consultant,” said Colonel Ross, bluntly, as my friend left the room. “I do not see that we are any further than when he came.”

“At least, you have his assurance that your horse will run,” said I.

“Yes, I have his assurance,” said the Colonel, with a shrug of his shoulders. “I should prefer to have the horse.”

I was about to make some reply in defence of my friend, when he entered the room again.

“Now, gentlemen,” said he, “I am quite ready for Tavistock.”

As we stepped into the carriage one of the stable-lads held the door open for us. A sudden idea seemed to occur to Holmes, for he leaned forward and touched the lad upon the sleeve.

“You have a few sheep in the paddock,” he said. “Who attends to them?”

“I do, sir.”

“Have you noticed anything amiss with them of late?”

“Well, sir, not of much account; but three of them have gone lame, sir.”

I could see that Holmes was extremely pleased, for he chuckled and rubbed his hands together.

“A long shot, Watson, a very long shot!” said he, pinching my arm. “Gregory, let me recommend to your attention this singular epidemic among the sheep. Drive on, coachman!”

Colonel Ross still wore an expression which showed the poor opinion which he had formed of my companion’s ability, but I saw by the Inspector’s face that his attention had been keenly aroused.

“You consider that to be important?” he asked.

“Exceedingly so.”

“Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?”

“To the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime.”

“The dog did nothing in the nighttime.”



“Holmes was extremely pleased.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“That was the curious incident,” remarked Sherlock Holmes.²²

Four days later Holmes and I were again in the train, bound for Winchester to see the race for the Wessex Cup. Colonel Ross met us, by appointment, outside the station, and we drove in his drag²³ to the course beyond the town. His face was grave, and his manner was cold in the extreme.

“I have seen nothing of my horse,” said he.

“I suppose that you would know him when you saw him?” asked Holmes.

The colonel was very angry. “I have been on the turf for twenty years, and never was asked such a question as that before,” said he. “A child would know Silver Blaze with his white forehead and his mottled off-foreleg.”²⁴

“How is the betting?”

“Well, that is the curious part of it. You could have got fifteen to one yesterday, but the price has become shorter and shorter, until you can hardly get three to one now.”

“Hum!” said Holmes. “Somebody knows something, that is clear!”

As the drag drew up in the enclosure near the grandstand, I glanced at the card to see the entries.²⁵

Wessex Plate²⁶ 50 sovs. each h ft,²⁷ with 1,000 sovs. added, for four and five-year olds. Second, £300. Third, £200. New course (one mile and five furlongs).

1. Mr. Heath Newton's The Negro. (Red cap, cinnamon jacket).
2. Colonel Wardlaw's Pugilist. (Pink cap, blue and black jacket).
3. Lord Backwater's Desborough. (Yellow cap and sleeves).
4. Colonel Ross's Silver Blaze. (Black cap, red jacket).
5. Duke of Balmoral's²⁸ Iris. (Yellow and black stripes).
6. Lord Singleford's Rasper. (Purple cap, black sleeves).²⁹

"We scratched our other one and put all hopes on your word," said the Colonel. "Why, what is that? Silver Blaze favourite?"

"Five to four against Silver Blaze!" roared the ring. "Five to four against Silver Blaze! Fifteen to five against Desborough! Five to four on the field!"

"There are the numbers up," I cried. "They are all six there."

"All six there! Then my horse is running," cried the Colonel in great agitation. "But I don't see him. My colours have not passed."

"Only five have passed. This must be he."

As I spoke a powerful bay horse swept out from the weighing enclosure and cantered past us, bearing on its back the well-known black and red of the colonel.

"That's not my horse," cried the owner. "That beast has not a white hair upon its body. What is this that you have done, Mr. Holmes?"

"Well, well, let us see how he gets on," said my friend imperturbably. For a

few minutes he gazed through my field-glass. "Capital! An excellent start!" he cried suddenly. "There they are, coming round the curve!"

From our drag we had a superb view as they came up the straight. The six horses were so close together that a carpet could have covered them, but halfway up the yellow of the Capleton stable showed to the front. Before they reached us, however, Desborough's bolt was shot, and the colonel's horse, coming away with a rush, passed the post a good six lengths before its rival, the Duke of Balmoral's Iris making a bad third.

"It's my race, anyhow," gasped the colonel, passing his hand over his eyes. "I confess that I can make neither head nor tail of it. Don't you think that you have kept up your mystery long enough, Mr. Holmes?"

"Certainly, Colonel. You shall know everything. Let us all go round and have a look at the horse together. Here he is," he continued as we made our way into the weighing enclosure, where only owners and their friends find admittance. "You have only to wash his face and his leg in spirits of wine³⁰ and you will find that he is the same old Silver Blaze as ever."

"You take my breath away!"

"I found him in the hands of a faker, and took the liberty of running him just as he was sent over."³¹

"My dear sir, you have done wonders. The horse looks very fit and well. It never went better in its life. I owe you a thousand apologies for having doubted your ability. You have done me a great service by recovering my horse. You would do me a greater still if you could lay your hands on the murderer of John Straker."

"I have done so," said Holmes quietly.

The Colonel and I stared at him in amazement. "You have got him! Where is he, then?"

"He is here."

"Here! Where?"

"In my company at the present moment."

The Colonel flushed angrily. "I quite recognise that I am under obligations to you, Mr. Holmes," said he, "but I must regard what you have just said as either a very bad joke or an insult."

Sherlock Holmes laughed. "I assure you that I have not associated you with the crime, Colonel," said he. "The real murderer is standing immediately behind you." He stepped past and laid his hand upon the glossy neck of the thoroughbred.

"The horse!" cried both the Colonel and myself.

“Yes, the horse. And it may lessen his guilt if I say that it was done in self-defence, and that John Straker was a man who was entirely unworthy of your confidence. But there goes the bell; and as I stand to win a little on this next race,³² I shall defer a lengthy explanation until a more fitting time.”



He laid his hand upon the glossy neck.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

We had the corner of a Pullman car³³ to ourselves that evening as we whirled back to London, and I fancy that the journey was a short one to Colonel Ross as well as to myself, as we listened to our companion's narrative of the events which had occurred at the Dartmoor training stables upon that Monday night, and the means by which he had unravelled them.

“I confess,” said he, “that any theories which I had formed from the newspaper reports were entirely erroneous. And yet there were indications there, had they not been overlaid by other details which concealed their true import. I went to Devonshire with the conviction that Fitzroy Simpson was the true culprit, although, of course, I saw that the evidence against him was by no means complete. It was while I was in the carriage, just as we reached the trainer's house, that the immense significance of the curried mutton occurred to me. You

may remember that I was distraught, and remained sitting after you had all alighted. I was marvelling in my own mind how I could possibly have overlooked so obvious a clue.”

“I confess,” said the Colonel, “that even now I cannot see how it helps us.”

“It was the first link in my chain of reasoning. Powdered opium is by no means tasteless. The flavour is not disagreeable, but it is perceptible. Were it mixed with any ordinary dish, the eater would undoubtedly detect it and would probably eat no more. A curry was exactly the medium which would disguise this taste. By no possible supposition could this stranger, Fitzroy Simpson, have caused curry to be served in the trainer’s family that night, and it is surely too monstrous a coincidence to suppose that he happened to come along with powdered opium upon the very night when a dish happened to be served which would disguise the flavour. That is unthinkable. Therefore Simpson becomes eliminated from the case, and our attention centres upon Straker and his wife, the only two people who could have chosen curried mutton for supper that night. The opium was added after the dish was set aside for the stable boy, for the others had the same for supper with no ill effects. Which of them, then, had access to that dish without the maid seeing them?

“Before deciding that question I had grasped the significance of the silence of the dog, for one true inference invariably suggests others. The Simpson incident had shown me that a dog was kept in the stables, and yet, though someone had been in and had fetched out a horse, he had not barked enough to arouse the two lads in the loft. Obviously the midnight visitor was someone whom the dog knew well.

“I was already convinced, or almost convinced, that John Straker went down to the stables in the dead of the night and took out Silver Blaze. For what purpose? For a dishonest one, obviously, or why should he drug his own stable boy? And yet I was at a loss to know why. There have been cases before now where trainers have made sure of great sums of money by laying against their own horses through agents and then preventing them from winning by fraud. Sometimes it is a pulling jockey.³⁴ Sometimes it is some surer and subtler means. What was it here? I hoped that the contents of his pockets might help me to form a conclusion.



Silver Blaze.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1892

“And they did so. You cannot have forgotten the singular knife which was found in the dead man’s hand, a knife which certainly no sane man would choose for a weapon. It was, as Dr. Watson told us, a form of knife which is used for the most delicate operations known in surgery. And it was to be used for a delicate operation that night. You must know, with your wide experience of turf matters, Colonel Ross, that it is possible to make a slight nick upon the tendons of a horse’s ham,³⁵ and to do it subcutaneously, so as to leave absolutely no trace.³⁶ A horse so treated would develop a slight lameness, which would be put down to a strain in exercise or a touch of rheumatism, but never to foul play.”

“Villain! Scoundrel!” cried the Colonel.

“We have here the explanation of why John Straker wished to take the horse out on to the moor. So spirited a creature would have certainly roused the soundest of sleepers when it felt the prick of the knife. It was absolutely necessary to do it in the open air.”

“I have been blind!” cried the Colonel. “Of course, that was why he needed the candle and struck the match.”

“Undoubtedly. But in examining his belongings, I was fortunate enough to discover, not only the method of the crime, but even its motives. As a man of the world, Colonel, you know that men do not carry other people’s bills about in their pockets. We have most of us quite enough to do to settle our own. I at once

concluded that Straker was leading a double life, and keeping a second establishment. The nature of the bill showed that there was a lady in the case, and one who had expensive tastes. Liberal as you are with your servants, one can hardly expect that they can buy twenty-guinea walking dresses for their women. I questioned Mrs. Straker as to the dress without her knowing it, and having satisfied myself that it had never reached her, I made a note of the milliner's address, and felt that by calling there with Straker's photograph, I could easily dispose of the mythical Derbyshire.

"From that time on all was plain. Straker had led out the horse to a hollow where his light would be invisible. Simpson, in his flight, had dropped his cravat, and Straker had picked it up with some idea, perhaps, that he might use it in securing the horse's leg. Once in the hollow, he had got behind the horse, and had struck a light,³⁷ but the creature, frightened at the sudden glare, and with the strange instinct of animals feeling that some mischief was intended, had lashed out, and the steel shoe had struck Straker full on the forehead. He had already, in spite of the rain, taken off his overcoat in order to do his delicate task, and so, as he fell, his knife gashed his thigh. Do I make it clear?"

"Wonderful!" cried the Colonel. "Wonderful! You might have been there."

"My final shot was, I confess, a very long one. It struck me that so astute a man as Straker would not undertake this delicate tendon-nicking without a little practise. What could he practise on? My eyes fell upon the sheep, and I asked a question which, rather to my surprise, showed that my surmise was correct."³⁸

"You have made it perfectly clear, Mr. Holmes."

"When I returned to London I called upon the milliner, who had recognised Straker as an excellent customer of the name of Derbyshire, who had a very dashing wife with a strong partiality for expensive dresses. I have no doubt that this woman had plunged him over head and ears in debt, and so led him into this miserable plot."

"You have explained all but one thing," cried the colonel. "Where was the horse?"

"Ah, it bolted, and was cared for by one of your neighbours. We must have an amnesty in that direction, I think. This is Clapham Junction, if I am not mistaken, and we shall be in Victoria³⁹ in less than ten minutes. If you care to smoke a cigar in our rooms, Colonel, I shall be happy to give you any other details which might interest you."⁴⁰ ■

["... AND THE CALCULATION IS A SIMPLE ONE"](#)

SHERLOCKIAN scholars have been fascinated by Sherlock Holmes's apparent mathematical wizardry in calculating the speed of the train in which he and Watson went "flying along" to Exeter.

A. S. Galbraith, in "The Real Moriarty," finds Holmes's assertion of the calculation's simplicity to be inconsistent with his precise, reasoning character, because the nature of the calculation requires a standard of accuracy much looser than the exact conclusion Holmes ultimately draws. Given that the speed of the train would have varied—probably remaining constant for no more than two minutes at a time—Holmes's casual use of an ordinary watch to count the seconds from the passage of one telegraph post to another would necessarily have produced an error of at least one or two seconds. Galbraith points out that a one-second error in a two-minute span, at the speed the train was travelling, would account for an inaccuracy of half a mile an hour. "Then the man of precise mind," Galbraith deduces, "even if confident of almost superhuman accuracy in his measurement of the time, would say 'between fifty-three and fifty-four miles an hour,' and a more reasonable statement would be 'between fifty-two and fifty-five.' Is Holmes trying to impress Watson, or is Watson trying to impress his readers?"

Jay Finley Christ, in "Sherlock Pulls a Fast One," concludes that the calculation was not a simple one. Guy Warrack, in *Sherlock Holmes and Music*, concurs, maintaining that a speed of 53½ miles per hour would have required Holmes counting 2.2439 seconds between passing poles and then figuring out a complex fraction in his head. "The only conclusion to be drawn," Warrack believes, "is that Holmes's precise statement was sheer bluff which took Watson in at the time and Watson's readers ever since."

S. C. Roberts, reviewing Warrack's book in "The Music of Baker Street," had this to say in response: "Mr. Warrack, if we may so express it, is making telegraph-poles out of fountain-pens. What happened, surely, was something like this: About half a minute before he addressed Watson, Holmes had looked at the second hand of his watch and then counted fifteen telegraph poles." Using this prior observation as well as the knowledge that the poles were sixty yards apart (a fact not revealed to the reader), Holmes—according to Roberts—did make a simple calculation based on the difference (more than 10 percent) between the figures worked out for this train and for one that was travelling 60 miles per hour.

At least four other methods have been proposed that purport to be "simple," but to the average reader, the problem appears to be similar to Moriarty's work on *The Dynamics of an Asteroid*, "which ascends to such rarefied heights of pure mathematics that it is said that there was no man in the scientific press capable

of criticizing it” (*The Valley of Fear*).

“I STAND TO WIN A LITTLE ON THIS NEXT RACE

”
— — —

DID Sherlock Holmes bet on Silver Blaze? His revelation that he bet on the race following the Wessex Plate leads some to believe that Holmes may have capitalized on his inside information. “There is no evidence that Holmes actually backed Silver Blaze to win the Wessex cup, but knowing Holmes,” writes Gavin Brend, “and knowing what Holmes knew about Silver Blaze, we should be very surprised if he had neglected this opportunity.” Robert Keith Leavitt reaches much the same conclusion, fingering Silas Brown and Lord Backwater (who owned the horse Desborough and who would later do Holmes a favour by recommending him to Lord Robert St. Simon in “The Noble Bachelor”) as Holmes’s conspirators in framing the race. The large amount of money they would have won would help account for Holmes’s mysterious fortune.

Charles B. Stephens outlines one potential plot: Silas Brown kept Silver Blaze concealed while Holmes took the train to London on the night before the race, betting the longest possible odds on the ostensibly missing horse. Brown then instructed Desborough’s jockey to take an early lead, which the jockey did, little knowing that the strategy would cost him the race. “[T]he evidence seems all too clear,” Stephens deduces, “that it was Holmes, himself, who master-minded the manipulation of the betting odds to his own advantage, in derogation of his obligations to the man who had employed him for the investigation.”

This same unhappy view is held by sports columnist Red Smith, who, in his essay “The Nefarious Holmes,” criticises Holmes for having an “ethical blindspot” when it comes to sports. Smith points out that in “The Final Problem,” which took place in 1891, Holmes stated that his earnings from recent cases had left him free to live as he wished; yet by 1901 (“The Priory School”) the detective confessed, “I am a poor man.” Despite the princely fees Holmes received for his services, he was practically always broke—“obviously because the bookies took everything he didn’t have to lay out for happy dust.” Smith then charges Holmes with being “a horse player of degenerate principles who thought nothing of fixing a race, and when you bear in mind his first-hand knowledge of the use and effect of cocaine, he probably had his syringe in the veins of more than one thoroughbred.”

Edward T. Buxton, in “He Solved the Case and Won the Race,” attempts to

argue that Holmes had somewhat more benign motives for hiding the horse. Rather than sending an eminently competent trainer to jail and certain ruin, Holmes elected to force Silas Brown to train Silver Blaze for the Wessex Cup. Even though this plan benefited Colonel Ross, he likely would not have approved of it, and thus Holmes kept the whole plan secret. Buxton's view of events does not, however, rule out the detective's making a wager on the race as well.

S. Tupper Bigelow also rises to Holmes's defence, in "Silver Blaze: The Master Vindicated." He argues that Holmes was not guilty of larceny, because Silas Brown did not intend to deprive Col. Ross of the horse *permanently*. Furthermore, because the horse that ran was not a *substitute* for Silver Blaze but was in fact Silver Blaze, no one was defrauded. "There is no evidence," concludes Judge Bigelow, "of any illegal, improper, unethical or even venial conduct on the part of the Master in the entire story . . ."

Are we to believe, incidentally, that Dr. Watson, who by the time of "Shoscombe Old Place" was spending half his income on turf speculation, did not have a little something wagered on the race?

[1](#) "Silver Blaze" was published in the *Strand Magazine* in December 1892 and in the *Strand Magazine* (New York) in January 1893.

[2](#) The moorland district of Dartmoor (named after the river Dart) is located in Devon county in south-west England and is characterised by its striking tors—large blocks of granite that rise dramatically above their surroundings—as well as by several relics from the Bronze and Iron Ages. A royal forest in Saxon times, the district was converted to a national park in 1951 and remains home to Dartmoor Prison, a notoriously brutal penitentiary built in 1806–1809 to house French prisoners in the Napoleonic Wars. During the War of 1812, some 1,500 French and American prisoners died in captivity there and were buried in a field outside the prison walls. After a thirty-year period of dormancy, Dartmoor Prison was reopened to house civilian prisoners in 1850.

Dartmoor is also known for the Dartmoor pony, a small, sturdy horse with a shaggy coat. Once near extinction because it was not considered large enough to carry soldiers and armour, the breed made a comeback when Edward VII (Queen Victoria's eldest son) began training Dartmoors for his polo teams.

Karl Baedeker, in his *Great Britain: Handbook for Travellers* for 1894, warned: "The pedestrian will find abundant opportunity for his prowess, but should be on his guard against bogs and mists. It is prudent to keep pretty closely to the beaten tracks, and accompanied by a guide."

[3](#) This, and a reference in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" to a "close-fitting cloth cap," are the only references to the "deerstalker" in which Sidney Paget depicted Holmes and which became his trademark. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* also refers to a cloth cap, but Paget depicted that cap as a homburg.

[4](#) Some have doubted that the train could be travelling at such a speed, but D. Marcus Hook, in "More on the Railway Journeys," points out that the speed "was not only possible, but necessary." He cites the fact that the *Flying Dutchman* and the *Zulu*, both of which made the run from Paddington to Swindon in 87

minutes, would have had to *average* 53-¼ m.p.h.; the top speed, of course, would have had to be much faster than that. Holmes is speaking here well after he and Watson have left Reading, and thus the train would only be hitting its top speed right around this time. His estimate of 53-½ m.p.h., then, is not only reasonable but in fact possibly too conservative.

[5](#) See the appendix on page 418.

[6](#) In most American texts the name is given as “Somomy,” for reasons unclear. Jay Finley Christ delves into the history of Silver Blaze’s bloodline, in “Silver Blaze: An Identification As of 1893 A.D.,” discovering that Isonomy won the 1878 Cambridgeshire at the Newmarket race course as a three-year-old, capturing the Manchester Plate the following year. He was one of only a handful of horses to win the Ascot Gold Cup twice, finishing first in both 1874 and 1880. Taking a guess as to who the famed “Silver Blaze” might have been, Christ suggests Isinglass, who won the British Triple Crown (the Epsom Derby, the St. Leger Stakes, and the Two Thousand Guineas) in 1893 and broke the record at the time for most prize money won by a British horse.

Looking at similarities in the name “Silver Blaze,” Gavin Brend observes, in “From the Horse’s Mouth,” that horses named Silvio and St. Blaise were both Derby winners, Silvio in 1877, St. Blaise in 1883, but neither of them was of the Isonomy stock. “If we confine our attention to Isonomy’s progeny,” Brend concludes, “the most hopeful claimant from the standpoint of phonetics would seem to be Seabreeze, who won the Oaks and St. Leger in 1888 but who, I regret to say, was not a colt but a filly.”

Wayne B. Swift, in “Silver Blaze—A Corrected Identification,” an exhaustively researched and widely accepted work, identifies Silver Blaze with the horse Ormonde, the Triple Crown winner in 1886. John Porter, the horse’s trainer, wrote in *Kingsclere* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1898): “He won all his engagements. And he ran practically untried.” Ormonde, the second cousin (twice removed) of Isonomy, was owned by the Duke of Westminster.

[7](#) For no apparent reason, “Mapleton” in the *Strand Magazine* and American editions, “Capleton” in English editions.

[8](#) He had an estate at Petersfield and was a guest at the wedding of Lord Robert St. Simon, to whom he recommended Holmes (“The Noble Bachelor”).

[9](#) An agent who obtains and sells information on the condition and prospects of horses entered for an upcoming race.

[10](#) In the English book edition, the sentence reads “There was little difficulty in finding him, for he inhabited one of those villas which I have mentioned.” However, the American text seems to be a more likely explanation.

[11](#) A walking stick with a large round head and imported from Penang, an island off the west coast of Malaya. The name, according to Sir Henry Yule’s *Hobson-Jobson* dictionary, was perhaps a corruption of the Malay *pinang liyar* (wild *areca*), or *pinang layor* (fire-dried *areca*); it may also have been a reference (well-founded or not) to legal matters in Penang being settled by use of a cane. John Camden Hotten’s *Slang Dictionary* (1865) refers to it as “now carried by footmen, though formerly by gentlemen.”

[12](#) The convex projection in the center of a shield.

[13](#) John Weber points out that Tavistock is neither at the north of Dartmoor, as Holmes implies, nor in the middle of the circle of Dartmoor, as Watson states. Instead, Tavistock is on the western extremity of Dartmoor. Weber selects Oakley Farm (two miles east of Tavistock) as “King’s Pyland” and further identifies the village of Collaton as Capleton (Mapleton). He also suggests that the racetrack was not at Winchester at all but instead at Newton Abbott, on the eastern border of Dartmoor.

14 A four-wheeled carriage with a top in two parts, so that it may be closed, half-open, or entirely open.

15 Although it is tempting to assume that “A.D.P.” stands for the popular pipe manufacturer and tobacco retailer Alfred Dunhill Pipe, Lord Donegall concludes that it referred instead to small-briar pipes made outside Ancona, Italy. Hence, A.D.P. meant “*Ancona Della Piccola*.” Alfred Dunhill did not open his tobacconist shop (Alfred Dunhill Ltd.) until 1907 and did not manufacture a pipe until 1910, further bolstering this argument. A more likely candidate is English pipe manufacturer A. Posener & Son, who marketed pipes under the label “A. D. Pierson.”

16 Smoking tobacco softened and pressed into solid cakes; from the name of the maker.

17 John Weiss & Sons of Oxford Street and Manchester manufactured surgical instruments.

18 The phrase “for some days” does not appear in some American texts.

19 There were two Bond Streets, Old and New. The latter housed numerous attractive and fashionable shops and several picture galleries.

20 Holmes comments several times on the detective’s need for imagination: “ You’ll get results, Inspector, by always putting yourself in the other fellow’s place, and thinking what you would do yourself. It takes some imagination, but it pays” (“The Retired Colourman”); “You know my methods in such cases, Watson. I put myself in the man’s place, and, having first gauged his intelligence, I try to imagine how I should myself have proceeded under the same circumstances” (“The Musgrave Ritual”).

Holmes’s comments here fly in the face of his frequent declaration (for example, in *A Study in Scarlet*) of the principle that it is a mistake to theorize before one has data. Indeed, by “imagining,” is not Holmes guilty of the very practice he condemns there, “twist[ing] facts to suit theories”?

21 This and the previous line do not appear in the Strand Magazine or American editions.

22 Monsignor Ronald Knox, in his famous satirical essay “Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes,” coined the lofty-sounding comic label “Sherlockismus” for Holmes’s epigrammatic sayings, typified in this exchange. Another of Knox’s favourites is “It looks like one of those social summonses which call upon a man either to be bored or to lie” (“The Noble Bachelor”).

23 Similar to a Western stagecoach, with seats inside and on top.

24 This means the horses’s right front leg. The left side of a horse is “near,” the right, “off.”

25 Noticeably missing from the card is any mention of the jockeys.

26 Note that earlier Watson refers to the “Wessex Cup.” A “plate” is a horse race in which the contestants compete for a prize of fixed value rather than stakes.

27 Wayne Swift translates the symbols “h ft” as meaning “half forfeit.” “This means,” he explains, “that the stake which each owner has to put up in order to enter his horse will not be returned if the horse does not run. Instead, *half* of that stake will be *forfeited*.”

28 The duke, a member of the St. Simon family, was at one time Secretary for Foreign Affairs. As recorded in “The Noble Bachelor,” the family was somewhat impoverished. This may have been a result of gambling; in “The Empty House,” Watson reports that Ronald Adair won a large sum at cards from “Lord Balmoral,” presumably the same person.

29 What is presented as a copy of the race card here is somewhat suspect and incomplete, possibly even assembled after the race from memory, by someone unfamiliar with racing colours. Gavin Brend elucidates: Pugilist’s “blue and black jacket” is insufficiently described—a reference to “blue and black stripes” would

have been more appropriate. Iris's rider seems to have no cap whatsoever. Desborough and Rasper, with outfits consisting solely of sleeves, seem to be missing their jackets. Only the entries for Silver Blaze and The Negro are fully and correctly listed.

30 Brandy, that is.

31 Alle Caccia finds the incognito running of the horse so unlikely, in light of the standards of the stewards and the prestige of the race, that he concludes that Watson made up the entire incident to show off Holmes's abilities.

32 The question as to whether Holmes bet on Silver Blaze intrigues many scholars (see the appendix on page 420), and one clue may be found here. In "Some Observations Upon *Silver Blaze*," Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler notes that Holmes watched the races from the drag and apparently never left it, meaning he could not have placed a bet on that particular day. Yet his admission that he might "win a little on this next race" indicates that he *had* bet on the race following Silver Blaze's, presumably placing his wager before arriving at Winchester. Thus he might also have bet on Silver Blaze at the same time.

33 A Pullman car was a railway coach designed for sleeping, named after its inventor, the American George Mortimer Pullman (1831–1897). A former cabinetmaker, Pullman experienced little initial success with his first sleeping car, the luxurious *Pioneer*, which was too wide to fit on most tracks. This situation changed in May 1865 after the *Pioneer* was included in President Abraham Lincoln's two-day funeral procession, for which platforms and bridges were modified to accommodate the special coach's dimensions. After seeing how comfortable railway travel could be, the public began clamouring for the new car, leading Pullman to found the Pullman Palace Car Company in 1867—followed by the model community of Pullman for its workers in 1880 (the town became part of Chicago in 1889). Pullman was the site of one of the most famous and contentious labour disputes in U.S. history in 1894, when workers struck to protest wage cuts and massive layoffs. An American Railway Union boycott, widespread rioting, and paralysis of the railway system led President Grover Cleveland to send in federal troops, finally breaking the strike two months after it had begun.

34 Holmes refers to a jockey who deliberately holds back his horse, in order to lose the race.

35 The area behind the knee.

36 The researches of Roland Hammond, M.D., convince him that a cataract knife could not possibly inflict such an injury, because a horse's tendons would be too tough for a small knife to make sufficient penetration. "The incident has great dramatic value," Hammond concludes, "but the thrilling scene depicted [in "Silver Blaze"] does not stand up to the cold light of reason and experience."

37 It is odd indeed that an experienced trainer would approach an untied horse from behind—and then light a match. Alexander Moore Hobb notes that Straker could have prevented the horse from kicking by holding down his tail, but his hands were full with the cravat and the knife. In which hand did he hold the match? "And it was raining," Hobbs muses. "It's a wonder he even got the match—beg pardon, vesta—to light."

38 Holmes's explanation certainly makes sense, but he could have just as easily been mistaken. Harald Curjel, in "Some Thoughts on the Case of 'Silver Blaze,'" asserts that sheep are prone to strained joints and painful foot infections. Therefore, the observed lameness could have arisen from natural causes and not from Straker's surgery. In addition, suggests Curjel, such surgery would be very difficult to perform unless the sheep were immobilised or shorn and in any event would likely have been observed.

39 According to *Baedeker*, no train from Winchester arrived at Victoria Station; rather, they used Waterloo Station.

[40](#) In his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, claiming authorship of this story, plainly owns up to its factual deficiencies, confessing that he has “never been a racing man, and yet I ventured to write ‘Silver Blaze,’ in which the mystery depends upon the laws of training and racing. The story is all right, and Holmes may have been at the top of his form, but my ignorance cries aloud to heaven. I read an excellent and very damaging criticism of the story in some sporting paper, written clearly by a man who did know, in which he explained the exact penalties which would come upon everyone concerned if they had acted as I described. Half would have been in jail, and the other half warned off the turf forever. However, I have never been nervous about details, and one must be masterful sometimes.”

THE CARDBOARD BOX1

“The Cardboard Box” is one of Watson’s finest stories, combining brilliant detection and a powerful human drama. Easily the darkest tale in the entire Canon, Holmes and Watson here investigate a case that begins with the delivery of a gruesome packet and ends with a revelation of alcoholism, adultery, and murder. Following up the slenderest of clues, wholly overlooked by Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard, Holmes discovers serious crime where the police see only grotesque humour. Even Holmes, the hardened criminal investigator, is deeply troubled by his discoveries: “What is the meaning of it, Watson? . . . What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear?” In fact, the case is so stark in its portrayal of human emotions that Arthur Conan Doyle suppressed publication of the story in the first edition of the Memoirs, deeming it unsuitable for younger readers. A poor editorial job on the story left its opening muddled; here it is

restored to its original version from the pages of the Strand Magazine, as Watson intended it.

IN CHOOSING A few typical cases which illustrate the remarkable mental qualities of my friend, Sherlock Holmes, I have endeavoured, so far as possible, to select those which presented the minimum of sensationalism, while offering a fair field for his talents. It is, however, unfortunately, impossible entirely to separate the sensational from the criminal, and a chronicler is left in the dilemma that he must either sacrifice details which are essential to his statement, and so give a false impression of the problem, or he must use matter which chance, and not choice, has provided him with. With this short preface I shall turn to my notes of what proved to be a strange, though a peculiarly terrible, chain of events.

It was a blazing hot day in August. Baker Street was like an oven, and the glare of the sunlight upon the yellow brickwork of the house across the street was painful to the eye. It was hard to believe that these were the same walls which loomed so gloomily through the fogs of winter.² Our blinds were half-drawn, and Holmes lay curled upon the sofa, reading and re-reading a letter which he had received by the morning post. For myself, my term of service in India had trained me to stand heat better than cold, and a thermometer at ninety was no hardship. But the morning paper was uninteresting. Parliament had risen.³ Everybody was out of town, and I yearned for the glades of the New Forest⁴ or the shingle of Southsea.⁵ A depleted bank account⁶ had caused me to postpone my holiday, and as to my companion, neither the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to him. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country.

Finding that Holmes was too absorbed for conversation I had tossed aside the barren paper and, leaning back in my chair, I fell into a brown study.⁷ Suddenly my companion's voice broke in upon my thoughts.

"You are right, Watson," said he. "It does seem a most preposterous way of

settling a dispute.”



“I fell into a brown study.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Most preposterous!” I exclaimed, and then suddenly realising how he had echoed the inmost thought of my soul, I sat up in my chair and stared at him in blank amazement.

“What is this, Holmes?” I cried. “This is beyond anything which I could have imagined.”

He laughed heartily at my perplexity.

“You remember,” said he, “that some little time ago when I read you the passage in one of Poe’s sketches⁸ in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thoughts of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere tour-de-force of the author. On my remarking that I was constantly in the habit of doing the same thing you expressed incredulity.”

“Oh, no!”

“Perhaps not with your tongue, my dear Watson, but certainly with your eyebrows. So when I saw you throw down your paper and enter upon a train of thought, I was very happy to have the opportunity of reading it off, and eventually of breaking into it, as a proof that I had been in rapport with you.”

But I was still far from satisfied. “In the sample which you read to me,” said I, “the reasoner drew his conclusions from the actions of the man whom he observed. If I remember right, he stumbled over a heap of stones, looked up at the stars, and so on. But I have been seated quietly in my chair, and what clues can I have given you?”

“You do yourself an injustice. The features are given to man as the means by

which he shall express his emotions, and yours are faithful servants.”

“Do you mean to say that you read my train of thoughts from my features?”

“Your features, and especially your eyes. Perhaps you cannot yourself recall how your reverie commenced?”

“No, I cannot.”

“Then I will tell you. After throwing down your paper, which was the action which drew my attention to you, you sat for half a minute with a vacant expression. Then your eyes fixed themselves upon your newly framed picture of General Gordon,⁹ and I saw by the alteration in your face that a train of thought had been started. But it did not lead very far. Your eyes flashed across to the unframed portrait of Henry Ward Beecher¹⁰ which stands upon the top of your books. Then you glanced up at the wall, and of course your meaning was obvious. You were thinking that if the portrait were framed, it would just cover that bare space and correspond with Gordon’s picture over there.”



General Gordon's Last Stand.

G. W. Joy, 1885

“You have followed me wonderfully!” I exclaimed.

“So far I could hardly have gone astray. But now your thoughts went back to Beecher, and you looked hard across as if you were studying the character in his features. Then your eyes ceased to pucker, but you continued to look across, and your face was thoughtful. You were recalling the incidents of Beecher’s career. I

was well aware that you could not do this without thinking of the mission which he undertook on behalf of the North at the time of the Civil War, for I remember your expressing your passionate indignation at the way in which he was received by the more turbulent of our people. You felt so strongly about it, that I knew you could not think of Beecher without thinking of that also. When a moment later I saw your eyes wander away from the picture, I suspected that your mind had now turned to the Civil War, and when I observed that your lips set, your eyes sparkled, and your hands clenched, I was positive that you were indeed thinking of the gallantry which was shown by both sides in that desperate struggle. But then, again, your face grew sadder; you shook your head. You were dwelling upon the sadness and horror and useless waste of life. Your hand stole towards your own old wound and a smile quivered on your lips, which showed me that the ridiculous side of this method of settling international questions had forced itself upon your mind. At this point I agreed with you that it was preposterous and was glad to find that all my deductions had been correct.”

“Absolutely!” said I. “And now that you have explained it, I confess that I am as amazed as before.”

“It was very superficial, my dear Watson, I assure you. I should not have intruded it upon your attention had you not shown some incredulity the other day.¹¹ But I have in my hands here a little problem which may prove to be more difficult of solution than my small essay in thought reading.¹² Have you observed in the paper a short paragraph referring to the remarkable contents of a packet sent through the post to Miss Cushing, of Cross Street,¹³ Croydon?”

“No, I saw nothing.”

“Ah! then you must have overlooked it. Just toss it over to me. Here it is, under the financial column. Perhaps you would be good enough to read it aloud.”

I picked up the paper which he had thrown back to me, and read the paragraph indicated. It was headed, “A Gruesome Packet.”

Miss Susan Cushing, living at Cross Street, Croydon,¹⁴ has been made the victim of what must be regarded as a peculiarly revolting practical joke, unless some more sinister meaning should prove to be attached to the incident. At two o’clock yesterday afternoon a small packet, wrapped in brown paper, was handed in by the postman. A cardboard box was inside, which was filled with coarse salt. On emptying this, Miss Cushing was horrified to find two human ears, apparently quite freshly severed. The box had been sent by parcel post from Belfast upon the morning before. There is

no indication as to the sender, and the matter is the more mysterious as Miss Cushing, who is a maiden lady of fifty, has led a most retired life, and has so few acquaintances or correspondents that it is a rare event for her to receive anything through the post. Some years ago, however, when she resided at Penge, she let apartments in her house to three young medical students, whom she was obliged to get rid of on account of their noisy and irregular habits. The police are of opinion that this outrage may have been perpetrated upon Miss Cushing by these youths, who owed her a grudge, and who hoped to frighten her by sending her these relics of the dissecting-rooms. Some probability is lent to the theory by the fact that one of these students came from the north of Ireland, and, to the best of Miss Cushing's belief, from Belfast. In the meantime, the matter is being actively investigated, Mr. Lestrade, one of the very smartest of our detective officers, being in charge of the case.

“So much for *The Daily Chronicle*,” said Holmes, as I finished reading. “Now for our friend Lestrade. I had a note from him this morning, in which he says:

I think that this case is very much in your line. We have every hope of clearing the matter up, but we find a little difficulty in getting anything to work upon. We have, of course, wired to the Belfast post-office, but a large number of parcels were handed in upon that day, and they have no means of identifying this particular one, or of remembering the sender. The box is a half-pound box of honeydew tobacco,¹⁵ and does not help us in any way. The medical student theory still appears to me to be the most feasible, but if you should have a few hours to spare, I should be very happy to see you out here. I shall be either at the house or in the police-station all day.

“What say you, Watson? Can you rise superior to the heat and run down to Croydon with me on the off chance of a case for your annals?”

“I was longing for something to do.”

“You shall have it then. Ring for our boots and tell them to order a cab. I'll be back in a moment when I have changed my dressing-gown and filled my cigar-case.”

A shower of rain fell while we were in the train, and the heat was far less oppressive in Croydon than in town. Holmes had sent on a wire, so that Lestrade, as wiry, as dapper, and as ferret-like as ever, was waiting for us at the station. A walk of five minutes took us to Cross Street, where Miss Cushing resided.

It was a very long street of two-story brick houses, neat and prim, with whitened stone steps and little groups of aproned women gossiping at the doors. Halfway down, Lestrade stopped and tapped at a door, which was opened by a small servant girl. Miss Cushing was sitting in the front room, into which we were ushered. She was a placid-faced woman, with large, gentle eyes, and grizzled hair curving down over her temples on each side. A worked antimacassar¹⁶ lay upon her lap and a basket of coloured silks stood upon a stool beside her.



Contemporary advertisement for Macassar oil.

Victorian Advertisements

“They are in the outhouse, those dreadful things,” said she, as Lestrade entered. “I wish that you would take them away altogether.”



“Miss Cushing.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“So I shall, Miss Cushing. I only kept them here until my friend, Mr. Holmes, should have seen them in your presence.”

“Why in my presence, sir?”

“In case he wished to ask any questions.”

“What is the use of asking me questions when I tell you I know nothing whatever about it?”

“Quite so, madam,” said Holmes, in his soothing way. “I have no doubt that you have been annoyed more than enough already over this business.”

“Indeed, I have, sir. I am a quiet woman and live a retired life. It is something new for me to see my name in the papers and to find the police in my house. I won’t have those things in here, Mr. Lestrade. If you wish to see them you must go to the outhouse.”

It was a small shed in the narrow garden which ran behind the house. Lestrade went in and brought out a yellow cardboard box, with a piece of brown paper and some string. There was a bench at the end of the path, and we all sat down while Holmes examined, one by one, the articles which Lestrade had handed to him.

“The string is exceedingly interesting,” he remarked, holding it up to the light and sniffing at it. “What do you make of this string, Lestrade?”

“It has been tarred.”

“Precisely. It is a piece of tarred twine. You have also, no doubt, remarked that Miss Cushing has cut the cord with a scissors, as can be seen by the double fray on each side. This is of importance.”

“I cannot see the importance,” said Lestrade.

“The importance lies in the fact that the knot is left intact, and that this knot is of a peculiar character.”

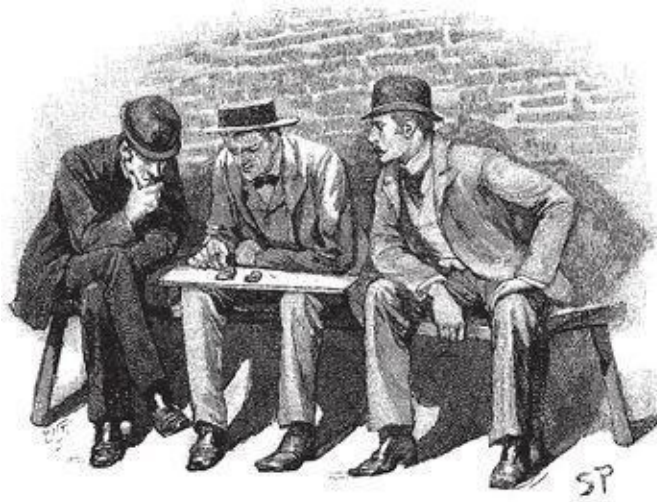
“It is very neatly tied. I had already made a note to that effect,” said Lestrade complacently.

“So much for the string, then,” said Holmes, smiling; “now for the box wrapper. Brown paper, with a distinct smell of coffee. What, did you not observe it? I think there can be no doubt of it. Address printed in rather straggling characters: ‘Miss S. Cushing, Cross Street, Croydon.’ Done with a broad-pointed pen, probably a J, and with very inferior ink. The word ‘Croydon’ has been originally spelled with an ‘i,’ which has been changed to ‘y.’ The parcel was directed then by a man—the printing is distinctly masculine—of limited education and unacquainted with the town of Croydon. So far, so good! The box is a yellow, half-pound honeydew box, with nothing distinctive save two thumb marks at the left bottom corner. It is filled with rough salt of the quality used for preserving hides and other of the coarser commercial purposes. And embedded in it are these very singular enclosures.”

He took out the two ears as he spoke, and laying a board across his knee, he examined them minutely, while Lestrade and I, bending forward on each side of

him, glanced alternately at these dreadful relics and at the thoughtful, eager face of our companion. Finally he returned them to the box once more, and sat for a while in deep meditation.

“You have observed, of course,” said he at last, “that the ears are not a pair.”



He examined them minutely.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Yes, I have noticed that. But if this were the practical joke of some students from the dissecting-rooms,¹⁷ it would be as easy for them to send two odd ears as a pair.”

“Precisely. But this is not a practical joke.”

“You are sure of it?”

“The presumption is strongly against it. Bodies in the dissecting-rooms are injected with preservative fluid. These ears bear no signs of this. They are fresh too. They have been cut off with a blunt instrument, which would hardly happen if a student had done it. Again, carbolic or rectified spirits would be the preservatives which would suggest themselves to the medical mind, certainly not rough salt.

“I repeat that there is no practical joke here, but that we are investigating a serious crime.”

A vague thrill ran through me as I listened to my companion’s words and saw the stern gravity which had hardened his features. This brutal preliminary seemed to shadow forth some strange and inexplicable horror in the background. Lestrade, however, shook his head like a man who is only half convinced.

“There are objections to the joke theory, no doubt,” said he; “but there are much stronger reasons against the other. We know that this woman has led a

most quiet and respectable life at Penge and here for the last twenty years. She has hardly been away from her home for a day during that time. Why on earth, then, should any criminal send her the proofs of his guilt, especially as, unless she is a most consummate actress, she understands quite as little of the matter as we do?"

"That is the problem which we have to solve," Holmes answered, "and for my part I shall set about it by presuming that my reasoning is correct, and that a double murder has been committed. One of these ears is a woman's, small, finely formed, and pierced for an earring. The other is a man's, sun-burned, discoloured, and also pierced for an earring. These two people are presumably dead, or we should have heard their story before now. To-day is Friday. The packet was posted on Thursday morning. The tragedy, then, occurred on Wednesday or Tuesday, or earlier. If the two people were murdered, who but their murderer would have sent this sign of his work to Miss Cushing? We may take it that the sender of the packet is the man whom we want. But he must have some strong reason for sending Miss Cushing this packet. What reason then? It must have been to tell her that the deed was done; or to pain her, perhaps. But in that case she knows who it is. Does she know? I doubt it. If she knew, why should she call the police in? She might have buried the ears, and no one would have been the wiser. That is what she would have done if she had wished to shield the criminal. But if she does not wish to shield him she would give his name. There is a tangle here which needs straightening out." He had been talking in a high, quick voice, staring blankly up over the garden fence, but now he sprang briskly to his feet and walked towards the house.

"I have a few questions to ask Miss Cushing," said he.

"In that case I may leave you here," said Lestrade, "for I have another small business on hand. I think that I have nothing further to learn from Miss Cushing. You will find me at the police-station."

"We shall look in on our way to the train," answered Holmes. A moment later he and I were back in the front room, where the impassive lady was still quietly working away at her antimacassar. She put it down on her lap as we entered, and looked at us with her frank, searching blue eyes.

"I am convinced, sir," she said, "that this matter is a mistake, and that the parcel was never meant for me at all. I have said this several times to the gentleman from Scotland Yard, but he simply laughs at me. I have not an enemy in the world, as far as I know, so why should anyone play me such a trick?"

"I am coming to be of the same opinion, Miss Cushing," said Holmes, taking a seat beside her. "I think that it is more than probable . . ." he paused, and I was surprised, on glancing round to see that he was staring with singular intentness at

the lady's profile. Surprise and satisfaction were both for an instant to be read upon his eager face, though when she glanced round, to find out the cause of his silence he had become as demure as ever. I stared hard myself at her flat, grizzled hair, her trim cap, her little gilt earrings, her placid features; but I could see nothing which could account for my companion's evident excitement.

"There were one or two questions—"

"Oh, I am weary of questions!" cried Miss Cushing, impatiently.

"You have two sisters, I believe."

"How could you know that?"

"I observed the very instant that I entered the room that you have a portrait group of three ladies upon the mantelpiece, one of whom is undoubtedly yourself, while the others are so exceedingly like you that there could be no doubt of the relationship."

"Yes, you are quite right. Those are my sisters, Sarah and Mary."

"And here at my elbow is another portrait, taken at Liverpool, of your younger sister, in the company of a man who appears to be a steward by his uniform. I observe that she was unmarried at the time."

"You are very quick at observing."

"That is my trade."

"Well, you are quite right. But she was married to Mr. Browner a few days afterwards. He was on the South American line when that was taken, but he was so fond of her that he couldn't abide to leave her for so long, and he got into the Liverpool and London boats."

"Ah, the *Conqueror*, perhaps?"

"No, the *May Day*,¹⁸ when last I heard. Jim came down here to see me once. That was before he broke the pledge; but afterwards he would always take drink when he was ashore, and a little drink would send him stark, staring mad. Ah! it was a bad day that ever he took a glass in his hand again. First he dropped me, then he quarrelled with Sarah, and now that Mary has stopped writing we don't know how things are going with them."

It was evident that Miss Cushing had come upon a subject on which she felt very deeply. Like most people who lead a lonely life, she was shy at first, but ended by becoming extremely communicative. She told us many details about her brother-in-law the steward, and then wandering off on the subject of her former lodgers, the medical students, she gave us a long account of their delinquencies, with their names and those of their hospitals. Holmes listened attentively to everything, throwing in a question from time to time.

"About your second sister, Sarah," said he. "I wonder, since you are both maiden ladies, that you do not keep house together."

“Ah! you don’t know Sarah’s temper, or you would wonder no more. I tried it when I came to Croydon, and we kept on until about two months ago, when we had to part. I don’t want to say a word against my own sister, but she was always meddlesome and hard to please, was Sarah.”

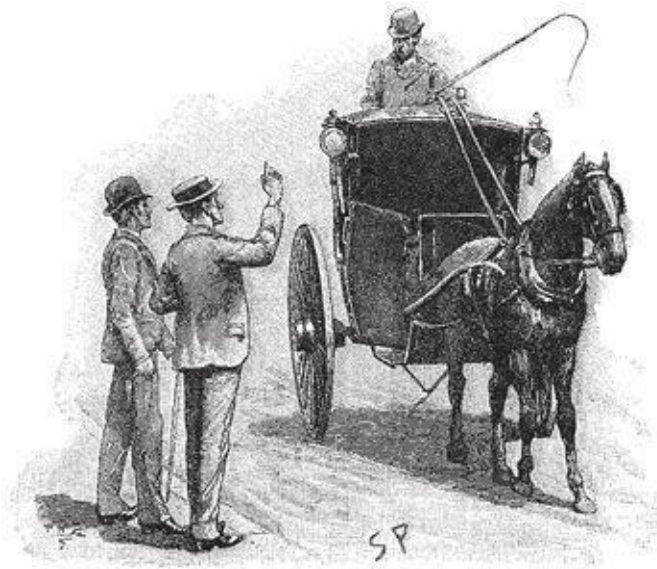
“You say that she quarrelled with your Liverpool relations.”

“Yes, and they were the best of friends at one time. Why, she went up there to live in order to be near them. And now she has no word hard enough for Jim Browner. The last six months that she was here she would speak of nothing but his drinking and his ways. He had caught her meddling, I suspect, and given her a bit of his mind, and that was the start of it.”

“Thank you, Miss Cushing,” said Holmes, rising and bowing. “Your sister Sarah lives, I think you said, at New Street, Wallington? Good-bye, and I am very sorry that you should have been troubled over a case with which, as you say, you have nothing whatever to do.”

There was a cab passing as we came out, and Holmes hailed it.

“How far to Wallington?” he asked.



“How far to Wallington?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Only about a mile, sir.”

“Very good. Jump in, Watson. We must strike while the iron is hot. Simple as the case is, there have been one or two very instructive details in connection with it. Just pull up at a telegraph office as you pass, cabby.”

Holmes sent off a short wire, and for the rest of the drive lay back in the cab, with his hat tilted over his nose to keep the sun from his face. Our driver pulled

up at a house which was not unlike the one which we had just quitted. My companion ordered him to wait, and had his hand upon the knocker, when the door opened and a grave young gentleman in black, with a very shiny hat, appeared on the step.

“Is Miss Cushing at home?” asked Holmes.

“Miss Sarah Cushing is extremely ill,” said he. “She has been suffering since yesterday from brain symptoms of great severity. As her medical adviser, I cannot possibly take the responsibility of allowing anyone to see her. I should recommend you to call again in ten days.” He drew on his gloves, closed the door, and marched off down the street.

“Well, if we can’t we can’t,” said Holmes, cheerfully.

“Perhaps she could not, or would not have told you much.”

“I did not wish her to tell me anything. I only wanted to look at her. However, I think that I have got all that I want. Drive us to some decent hotel, cabby, where we may have some lunch, and afterwards we shall drop down upon friend Lestrade at the police-station.”

We had a pleasant little meal together, during which Holmes would talk about nothing but violins, narrating with great exultation how he had purchased his own Stradivarius,¹⁹ which was worth at least five hundred guineas, at a Jew broker’s in Tottenham Court Road for fifty-five shillings. This led him to Paganini,²⁰ and we sat for an hour over a bottle of claret while he told me anecdote after anecdote of that extraordinary man. The afternoon was far advanced and the hot glare had softened into a mellow glow before we found ourselves at the police-station. Lestrade was waiting for us at the door.

“A telegram for you, Mr. Holmes,” said he.

“Ha! It is the answer!” He tore it open, glanced his eyes over it, and crumpled it into his pocket. “That’s all right,” said he.

“Have you found out anything?”

“I have found out everything!”

“What!” Lestrade stared at him in amazement. “You are joking.”

“I was never more serious in my life. A shocking crime has been committed, and I think I have now laid bare every detail of it.”

“And the criminal?”

Holmes scribbled a few words upon the back of one of his visiting cards and threw it over to Lestrade.

“That is the name,” he said. “You cannot effect an arrest until to-morrow night at the earliest. I should prefer that you do not mention my name at all in connection with the case, as I choose to be only associated with those crimes

which present some difficulty in their solution. Come on, Watson.” We strode off together to the station, leaving Lestrade still staring with a delighted face at the card which Holmes had thrown him.

“The case,” said Sherlock Holmes as we chatted over our cigars that night in our rooms at Baker Street, “is one where, as in the investigations which you have chronicled under the names of the ‘Study in Scarlet’ and of the ‘Sign of Four,’ we have been compelled to reason backward from effects to causes.²¹ I have written to Lestrade asking him to supply us with the details which are now wanting, and which he will only get after he has secured his man. That he may be safely trusted to do, for although he is absolutely devoid of reason, he is as tenacious as a bull-dog when he once understands what he has to do, and, indeed, it is just this tenacity which has brought him to the top at Scotland Yard.”

“Your case is not complete, then?” I asked.

“It is fairly complete in essentials. We know who the author of the revolting business is, although one of the victims still escapes us. Of course, you have formed your own conclusions.”



“Jim Browner.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“I presume that this Jim Browner, the steward of a Liverpool boat, is the man whom you suspect?”

“Oh! it is more than a suspicion.”

“And yet I cannot see anything save very vague indications.”

“On the contrary, to my mind nothing could be more clear. Let me run over the principal steps. We approached the case, you remember, with an absolutely blank mind, which is always an advantage. We had formed no theories. We were

simply there to observe and to draw inferences from our observations. What did we see first? A very placid and respectable lady, who seemed quite innocent of any secret, and a portrait which showed me that she had two younger sisters. It instantly flashed across my mind that the box might have been meant for one of these. I set the idea aside as one which could be disproved or confirmed at our leisure. Then we went to the garden, as you remember, and we saw the very singular contents of the little yellow box.

“The string was of the quality which is used by sail-makers aboard ship, and at once a whiff of the sea was perceptible in our investigation. When I observed that the knot was one which is popular with sailors, that the parcel had been posted at a port, and that the male ear was pierced for an earring which is so much more common among sailors than landsmen, I was quite certain that all the actors in the tragedy were to be found among our seafaring classes.

“When I came to examine the address of the packet I observed that it was to Miss S. Cushing. Now, the oldest sister would, of course, be Miss Cushing, and although her initial was ‘S’ it might belong to one of the others as well. In that case we should have to commence our investigation from a fresh basis altogether. I therefore went into the house with the intention of clearing up this point. I was about to assure Miss Cushing that I was convinced that a mistake had been made when you may remember that I came suddenly to a stop. The fact was that I had just seen something which filled me with surprise and at the same time narrowed the field of our inquiry immensely.

“As a medical man, you are aware, Watson, that there is no part of the body which varies so much as the human ear. Each ear is as a rule quite distinctive, and differs from all other ones. In last year’s *Anthropological Journal* you will find two short monographs from my pen upon the subject.²² I had, therefore, examined the ears in the box with the eyes of an expert, and had carefully noted their anatomical peculiarities. Imagine my surprise then, when, on looking at Miss Cushing, I perceived that her ear corresponded exactly with the female ear which I had just inspected. The matter was entirely beyond coincidence. There was the same shortening of the pinna,²³ the same broad curve of the upper lobe, the same convolution of the inner cartilage. In all essentials it was the same ear.

“Of course, I at once saw the enormous importance of the observation. It was evident that the victim was a blood relation, and probably a very close one. I began to talk to her about her family, and you remember that she at once gave us some exceedingly valuable details.

“In the first place, her sister’s name was Sarah, and her address had, until recently, been the same, so that it was quite obvious how the mistake had

occurred and for whom the packet was meant. Then we heard of this steward, married to the third sister, and learned that he had at one time been so intimate with Miss Sarah that she had actually gone up to Liverpool to be near the Browners, but a quarrel had afterwards divided them. This quarrel had put a stop to all communications for some months, so that if Browner had occasion to address a packet to Miss Sarah, he would undoubtedly have done so to her old address.

“And now the matter had begun to straighten itself out wonderfully. We had learned of the existence of this steward, an impulsive man, of strong passions—you remember that he threw up what must have been a very superior berth, in order to be nearer to his wife—subject, too, to occasional fits of hard drinking. We had reason to believe that his wife had been murdered, and that a man—presumably a seafaring man—had been murdered at the same time. Jealousy, of course, at once suggests itself as the motive for the crime. And why should these proofs of the deed be sent to Miss Sarah Cushing? Probably because during her residence in Liverpool she had some hand in bringing about the events which led to the tragedy. You will observe that this line of boats calls at Belfast, Dublin, and Waterford; so that, presuming that Browner had committed the deed, and had embarked at once upon his steamer, the *May Day*, Belfast would be the first place at which he could post his terrible packet.

“A second solution was at this stage obviously possible, and although I thought it exceedingly unlikely, I was determined to elucidate it before going further. An unsuccessful lover might have killed Mr. and Mrs. Browner, and the male ear might have belonged to the husband. There were many grave objections to this theory, but it was conceivable. I therefore sent off a telegram to my friend Algar, of the Liverpool force, and asked him to find out if Mrs. Browner were at home, and if Browner had departed in the *May Day*. Then we went on to Wellington to visit Miss Sarah.

“I was curious, in the first place, to see how far the family ear had been reproduced in her. Then, of course, she might give us very important information, but I was not sanguine that she would. She must have heard of the business the day before, since all Croydon was ringing with it, and she alone could have understood for whom the packet was meant. If she had been willing to help justice she probably would have communicated with the police already. However, it was clearly our duty to see her, so we went. We found that the news of the arrival of the packet—for her illness dated from that time—had such an effect on her as to bring on brain fever. It was clearer than ever that she understood its full significance, but equally clear that we should have to wait some time for any assistance from her.

“However, we were really independent of her help. Our answers were waiting for us at the police-station, where I directed Algar to send them. Nothing could be more conclusive. Mrs. Browner’s house had been closed for more than three days, and the neighbors were of opinion that she had gone south to see her relatives. It had been ascertained at the shipping offices that Browner had left aboard the *May Day*, and I calculate that she is due in the Thames to-morrow night. When he arrives he will be met by the obtuse but resolute Lestrade, and I have no doubt that we shall have our details filled in.”

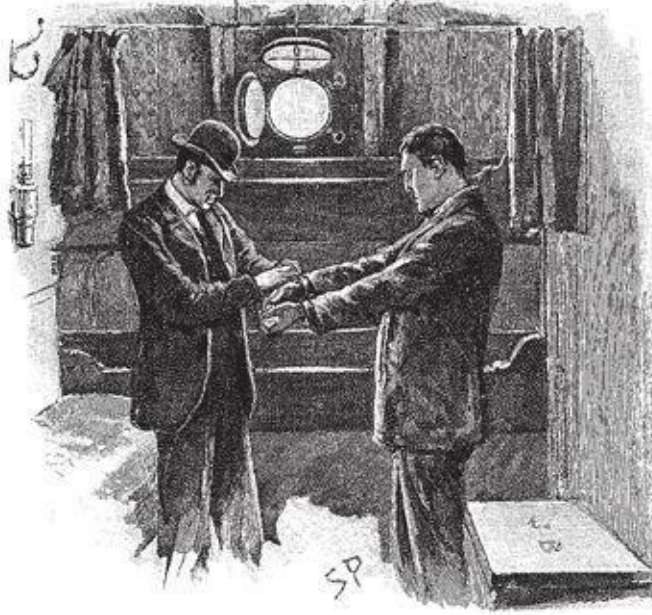
Sherlock Holmes was not disappointed in his expectations. Two days later he received a bulky envelope, which contained a short note from the detective, and a typewritten document, which covered several pages of foolscap.

“Lestrade has got him all right,” said Holmes, glancing up at me. “Perhaps it would interest you to hear what he says.

My dear Mr. Holmes:—

In accordance with the scheme which we had formed in order to test our theories [“The ‘we’ is rather fine, Watson, is it not?”] I went down to the Albert Dock²⁴ yesterday at 6 p.m., and boarded the S.S. *May Day*, belonging to the Liverpool, Dublin, and London Steam Packet Company. On inquiry, I found that there was a steward on board of the name of James Browner and that he had acted during the voyage in such an extraordinary manner that the captain had been compelled to relieve him of his duties. On descending to his berth, I found him seated upon a chest with his head sunk upon his hands, rocking himself to and fro. He is a big, powerful chap, clean-shaven, and very swarthy—something like Aldridge, who helped us in the bogus laundry affair. He jumped

up when he heard my business, and I had my whistle to my lips to call a couple of river police, who were round the corner, but he seemed to have no heart in him, and he held out his hands quietly enough for the darbies. We brought him along to the cells, and his box as well, for we thought there might be something incriminating; but, bar a big sharp knife such as most sailors have, we got nothing for our trouble. However, we find that we shall want no more evidence, for on being brought before the inspector at the station, he asked leave to make a statement, which was, of course, taken down, just as he made it, by our shorthand man. We had three copies typewritten, one of which I enclose. The affair proves, as I always thought it would, to be an extremely simple one, but I am obliged to you for assisting me in my investigation. With kind regards—



“He held out his hands quietly.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

Yours very truly,
G. LESTRADE.

“Hum! The investigation really was a very simple one,” remarked Holmes; “but I don’t think it struck him in that light when he first called us in. However, let us see what Jim Browner has to say for himself. This is his statement, as made before Inspector Montgomery at the Shadwell Police Station, and it has the advantage of being verbatim.”

“ ‘Have I anything to say? Yes, I have a deal to say. I have to make a clean breast of it all. You can hang me, or you can leave me alone. I don’t care a plug which you do. I tell you I’ve not shut an eye in sleep since I did it, and I don’t believe I ever will again until I get past all waking. Sometimes it’s his face, but most generally it’s hers. I’m never without one or the other before me. He looks frowning and black-like, but she has a kind o’ surprise upon her face. Ay, the white lamb, she might well be surprised when she read death on a face that had seldom looked anything but love upon her before.

“ ‘But it was Sarah’s fault, and may the curse of a broken man put a blight on her and set the blood rotting in her veins. It’s not that I want to clear myself. I know that I went back to drink, like the beast that I was. But she would have forgiven me; she would have stuck as close to me as a rope to a block if that

woman had never darkened our door. For Sarah Cushing loved me—that's the root of the business—she loved me until all her love turned to poisonous hate when she knew that I thought more of my wife's footmark in the mud than I did of her whole body and soul.

“ ‘There were three sisters altogether. The old one was just a good woman, the second was a devil, and the third was an angel. Sarah was thirty-three, and Mary was twenty-nine when I married. We were just as happy as the day was long when we set up house together, and in all Liverpool there was no better woman than my Mary. And then we asked Sarah up for a week, and the week grew into a month, and one thing led to another, until she was just one of ourselves.

“ ‘I was blue ribbon²⁵ at that time, and we were putting a little money by, and all was as bright as a new dollar. My God, whoever would have thought that it could have come to this? Whoever would have dreamed it?

“ ‘I used to be home for the week-ends very often, and sometimes if the ship were held back for cargo I would have a whole week at a time, and in this way I saw a deal of my sister-in-law, Sarah. She was a fine tall woman, black and quick and fierce, with a proud way of carrying her head, and a glint from her eye like a spark from a flint. But when little Mary was there I had never a thought of her, and that I swear as I hope for God's mercy.

“ ‘It had seemed to me sometimes that she liked to be alone with me, or to coax me out for a walk with her, but I had never thought anything of that. But one evening my eyes were opened. I had come up from the ship and found my wife out, but Sarah at home. “Where's Mary?” I asked. “Oh, she has gone to pay some accounts.” I was impatient and paced up and down the room. “Can't you be happy for five minutes without Mary, Jim?” says she. “It's a bad compliment to me that you can't be contented with my society for so short a time.” “That's all right, my lass,” said I, putting out my hand towards her in a kindly way, but she had it in both hers in an instant, and they burned as if they were in a fever. I looked into her eyes and I read it all there. There was no need for her to speak, nor for me either. I frowned and drew my hand away. Then she stood by my side in silence for a bit, and then put up her hand and patted me on the shoulder. “Steady, old Jim!” said she; and with a kind o' mocking laugh, she ran out of the room.

“ ‘Well, from that time Sarah hated me with her whole heart and soul, and she is a woman who can hate, too. I was a fool to let her go on biding with us—a besotted fool—but I never said a word to Mary, for I knew it would grieve her. Things went on much as before, but after a time I began to find that there was a bit of a change in Mary herself. She had always been so trusting and so innocent, but now she became queer and suspicious, wanting to know where I had been

and what I had been doing, and whom my letters were from, and what I had in my pockets, and a thousand such follies. Day by day she grew queerer and more irritable, and we had ceaseless rows about nothing. I was fairly puzzled by it all. Sarah avoided me now, but she and Mary were just inseparable. I can see now how she was plotting and scheming and poisoning my wife's mind against me, but I was such a blind beetle that I could not understand it at the time. Then I broke my ribbon and began to drink again, but I think I should not have done it if Mary had been the same as ever. She had some reason to be disgusted with me now, and the gap between us began to be wider and wider. And then this Alec Fairbairn chipped in, and things became a thousand times blacker.



“‘That’s all right, my lass,’ said I.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘It was to see Sarah that he came to my house first, but soon it was to see us, for he was a man with winning ways, and he made friends wherever he went. He was a dashing, swaggering chap, smart and curled, who had seen half the world and could talk of what he had seen. He was good company, I won’t deny it, and he had wonderful polite ways with him for a sailor man, so that I think there must have been a time when he knew more of the poop than the forecastle.²⁶ For a month he was in and out of my house, and never once did it cross my mind that

harm might come of his soft, tricky ways. And then at last something made me suspect, and from that day my peace was gone forever.

“ ‘It was only a little thing too. I had come into the parlour unexpected, and as I walked in at the door I saw a light of welcome on my wife’s face. But as she saw who it was it faded again, and she turned away with a look of disappointment. That was enough for me. There was no one but Alec Fairbairn whose step she could have mistaken for mine. If I could have seen him then I should have killed him, for I have always been like a madman when my temper gets loose. Mary saw the devil’s light in my eyes, and she ran forward with her hands on my sleeve. “Don’t, Jim, don’t!” says she. “Where’s Sarah?” I asked. “In the kitchen,” says she. “Sarah,” says I, as I went in, “this man Fairbairn is never to darken my door again.” “Why not?” says she. “Because I order it.” “Oh!” says she, “if my friends are not good enough for this house, then I am not good enough for it either.” “You can do what you like,” says I, “but if Fairbairn shows his face here again, I’ll send you one of his ears for a keepsake.” She was frightened by my face, I think, for she never answered a word, and the same evening she left my house.

“ ‘Well, I don’t know now whether it was pure devilry on the part of this woman, or whether she thought that she could turn me against my wife by encouraging her to misbehave. Anyway, she took a house just two streets off and let lodgings to sailors. Fairbairn used to stay there, and Mary would go round to have tea with her sister and him. How often she went I don’t know, but I followed her one day, and as I broke in at the door Fairbairn got away over the back garden wall, like the cowardly skunk that he was. I swore to my wife that I would kill her if I found her in his company again, and I led her back with me, sobbing and trembling, and as white as a piece of paper. There was no trace of love between us any longer. I could see that she hated me and feared me, and when the thought of it drove me to drink, then she despised me as well.

“ ‘Well, Sarah found that she could not make a living in Liverpool, so she went back, as I understand, to live with her sister in Croydon, and things jogged on much the same as ever at home. And then came this last week and all the misery and ruin.

“ ‘It was in this way. We had gone on the *May Day* for a round voyage of seven days, but a hogshhead got loose and started one of our plates, so that we had to put back into port for twelve hours. I left the ship and came home, thinking what a surprise it would be for my wife, and hoping that maybe she would be glad to see me so soon. The thought was in my head as I turned into my own street, and at that moment a cab passed me, and there she was, sitting by the side of Fairbairn, the two chatting and laughing, with never a thought for me

as I stood watching them from the footpath.

“ ‘I tell you, and I give you my word for it, that from that moment I was not my own master, and it is all like a dim dream when I look back on it. I had been drinking hard of late, and the two things together fairly turned my brain. There’s something throbbing in my head now, like a docker’s hammer, but that morning I seemed to have all Niagara whizzing and buzzing in my ears.

“ ‘Well, I took to my heels, and I ran after the cab. I had a heavy oak stick in my hand, and I tell you I saw red from the first; but as I ran I got cunning, too, and hung back a little to see them without being seen. They pulled up soon at the railway station. There was a good crowd round the booking office, so I got quite close to them without being seen. They took tickets for New Brighton. So did I, but I got in three carriages behind them. When we reached it they walked along the Parade, and I was never more than a hundred yards from them. At last I saw them hire a boat and start for a row, for it was a very hot day, and they thought, no doubt, that it would be cooler on the water.



Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘It was just as if they had been given into my hands. There was a bit of a haze, and you could not see more than a few hundred yards. I hired a boat for myself, and I pulled after them, I could see the blurr of their craft, but they were going nearly as fast as I, and they must have been a long mile from the shore before I caught them up. The haze was like a curtain all round us, and there were we three in the middle of it. My God, shall I ever forget their faces when they saw who was in the boat that was closing in upon them? She screamed out. He swore like a madman and jabbed at me with an oar, for he must have seen death in my eyes. I got past it and got one in with my stick that crushed his head like

an egg. I would have spared her, perhaps, for my madness, but she threw her arms round him, crying out to him, and calling “Alec.” I struck again, and she lay stretched beside him. I was like a wild beast then that had tasted blood. If Sarah had been there, by the Lord, she should have joined them. I pulled out my knife, and—well, there! I’ve said enough. It gave me a kind of savage joy when I thought how Sarah would feel when she had such signs as these of what her meddling had brought about. Then I tied the bodies into the boat, stove a plank, and stood by until they had sunk. I knew very well that the owner would think that they had lost their bearings in the haze, and had drifted off out to sea. I cleaned myself up, got back to land, and joined my ship without a soul having a suspicion of what had passed. That night I made up the packet for Sarah Cushing, and next day I sent it from Belfast.

“ ‘There you have the whole truth of it. You can hang me, or do what you like with me, but you cannot punish me as I have been punished already. I cannot shut my eyes but I see those two faces staring at me, staring at me as they stared when my boat broke through the haze. I killed them quick, but they are killing me slow; and if I have another night of it I shall be either mad or dead before morning. You won’t put me alone into a cell, sir? For pity’s sake don’t and may you be treated in your day of agony as you treat me now.’ ”

“What is the meaning of it, Watson?” said Holmes, solemnly, as he laid down the paper. “What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.”

1 “The Cardboard Box” appeared in the *Strand Magazine* in January 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on January 14, 1893. The first edition of *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, published in London in 1894 by George Newnes, Limited, contained only eleven “memoirs,” excluding “The Cardboard Box” from the series of twelve that had appeared in the *Strand Magazine*. The first American edition of *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, published by Harper that same year, contained all twelve stories; almost immediately afterward, however, a “new and revised” Harper edition appeared that, like the British edition, omitted “The Cardboard Box.”

Theories about the odd handling of this story are sketchy at best. Arthur Bartlett Maurice, in an article entitled “Sherlock Holmes and His Creator” (*Collier’s*, August 15, 1908), surmises that the story’s recounting of an “illicit love affair” led a cautious Doyle to put the piece aside when preparing the collection for publication. Eminent bookseller David Randall, in his *Catalogue of Original Manuscripts, etc.*, subsequently concludes that the American publisher Harper, having seen the story in the *Strand*, was unaware that Doyle had any objections to including all twelve stories in book form; upon publication, Doyle must have issued a protest, hence the quick issuance of a new *Memoirs* edition. The first American version is now considered quite rare. Curiously, not one of the numerous biographers of Arthur Conan Doyle has a word of explanation of this self-censorship, nor did Doyle himself comment upon it in his *Memories and*

Adventures.

[2](#) The material following was “pasted” onto the beginning of “The Resident Patient” when “The Cardboard Box” was suppressed in the George Newnes, Limited, edition of the *Memoirs*. See note 1 above.

[3](#) That is, adjourned for the summer recess.

[4](#) An ancient royal hunting ground in Hampshire, the New Forest was established by William the Conqueror in 1079 as a crown property, valued for its varied terrain of woodlands and heaths. Since 1877 the area has been administered as a public park by the judicial Verderers Court. Arthur Conan Doyle had a cottage in the New Forest. See “The Five Orange Pips,” note 24.

[5](#) An eastern suburb of Portsmouth, where Arthur Conan Doyle practised medicine for a time.

[6](#) In “The Dancing Men,” generally dated in 1898 (see *Chronological Table*), Holmes reminds Watson, “Your cheque-book is locked in my drawer.” Perhaps there is a causal connection between Watson’s depletion of funds and Holmes’s later control.

[7](#) In defining “brown study” as a vacuous or melancholy state of mind, the 1898 Dictionary of Phrase and Fable cites two lines from William Congreve’s *An Impossible Thing*, published over a century earlier: “Invention flags, his brain grows muddy, / And black despair succeeds brown study.”

[8](#) Actually, in *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson remarked, “You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin. . . .” but did not read the passage aloud. The “sketch” to which Holmes and Watson refer is “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Published in *Graham’s Magazine* (of which Poe was the editor) in 1841, this story of a mother-daughter murder that baffles police marked the debut of amateur detective C. August Dupin. It is widely considered the first modern detective story.

[9](#) Charles George Gordon (1833–1885) was a British military hero of several distinct campaigns. After service in the Crimean War, Gordon was sent to China, where he eventually accepted the mission that would earn him the nickname “Chinese Gordon.” It is indeed ironic that the deeply religious Gordon would make his reputation doing battle with two religious zealots. The first, Hong Xiuquan, was a schoolteacher whose visions convinced him that he was Jesus Christ’s younger brother. Hong proclaimed himself King of the Taiping Tianguo (Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace) and, rebelling against the ruling Qing dynasty, led his followers—who, according to historian Jonathan Spence, at one time numbered over 60,000 people—to capture Nanking in 1853. They controlled the city for eleven years and made various other conquests until suppressed by the “Ever-Victorious Army,” a motley force helmed by General Gordon. In *Eminent Victorians* (1918), Lytton Strachey described the charismatic commander as attaining “an almost magical prestige. . . . More than once their [the Taipings’] leaders, in a frenzy of fear and admiration, ordered the sharpshooters not to take aim at the advancing figure of the faintly smiling Englishman.” Hong and his followers were said to have committed mass suicide when Nanking fell. Gordon’s return to England was relatively inauspicious; he was made a Companion of the Bath, an award that Strachey cuttingly observed was “usually reserved for industrious clerks.”

Gordon’s final and most well-known campaign arose as a result of his governorship of the Sudan, a difficult post he held from 1877 to 1879. In 1884 he returned to defend the capital, Khartoum, from the Mahdi (Muhammad Ahmad), who claimed to be the messianic twelfth Imam and who sought to eliminate the Egyptian authority and purify Islam. Khartoum was besieged for ten months, but despite the entreaties of the British public—including Queen Victoria, who telegraphed Lord Hartington, “General Gordon is in danger, you are bound to try to save him”—Prime Minister William Gladstone delayed in sending reinforcements. Shortly before his death, a defiant Gordon wrote in his journals, “[I]f any emissary or letter comes up here ordering me to come down, I WILL NOT OBEY IT, BUT WILL STAY HERE, AND FALL WITH TOWN, AND RUN ALL RISKS.” On January 26, 1885, two days before the arrival of a British

relief expedition, the Mahdists took Khartoum, and General Gordon was killed, his head brought to the Mahdi (according to Strachey) as a trophy. Gordon was martyred in the popular imagination, and some speculate that the eccentric general might have sought out such adulation in rushing toward certain death.

Gordon's death is immortalised in G. W. Joy's painting *General Gordon's Last Stand*, which depicts the general standing regally atop the stairs as his spear-holding assailants pause in contemplation below. A dramatic interpretation of Gordon's final days appears in the 1966 film *Khartoum*, starring Charlton Heston as Gordon and Laurence Olivier as the Mahdi. The movie also featured Sir Ralph Richardson, who earlier played Watson in a long-running BBC Radio series, and Douglas Wilmer, who later played Holmes in various BBC radio and television productions.

10 Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887) was an American minister, editor, and writer, perhaps the most influential Protestant spokesman of his time. Crowds of up to 2,500 would flock to the Congregational Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, on Sundays to hear the powerful orator speak not only of God but also of his opposition to slavery and his support for women's suffrage, evolutionary theory, and free trade. The brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Beecher found a national platform as the editor of *The Independent* (1861–1864) and the *Christian Union* (1870–1881). His stature only increased in 1863 when, vacationing in England, he gave a series of lectures on the Civil War at London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Edinburgh; these appearances had a tremendous effect on the British public, winning sympathy for the Union cause. Beecher was a charismatic and emotional man—Sinclair Lewis said of him in 1927, “He was a combination of St. Augustine, Barnum and John Barrymore”—but his reputation was tarnished when his friend Theodore Tilton sued him in 1874 on the charge that Beecher had committed adultery with Tilton's wife. (Rumour had it that this was far from Beecher's only affair.) The sensational Tilton trial ended in 1875, when the jury failed to reach a verdict. Still, the clergyman remained a prominent social figure for the rest of his life. His published works include *Seven Lectures to Young Men* (1844), *Eyes and Ears* (1862), *The Life of Jesus, the Christ* (1871), and *Evolution and Religion* (1885). Watson's interest in Beecher remains unexplained.

11 Here ends the material repeated in “The Resident Patient.”

12 H. W. Bell was the first to note, in *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: The Chronology of Their Adventures*, that this famous “mind-reading” episode was repeated virtually intact in the version of “The Resident Patient” that appeared in *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (but not in the original *Strand Magazine* version of that story). Bell guesses that, even though “The Cardboard Box” was to be excluded from the *Memoirs*, the scene depicted here so perfectly illustrated Holmes's deductive talents that Watson was loath to eliminate it altogether; thus he simply transferred it to another vehicle. “Watson's point of view is easy to understand,” Bell rationalizes. “When the *Memoirs* came out Holmes was, as he believed, dead, and his own activities as a chronicler terminated. . . . There would be no more Sherlock Holmes stories . . . and the passage . . . threw too bright a light on Holmes's genius to be allowed to slumber in the files of a periodical.”

Trevor Hall, speculating in “The Documents in the Case” as to Arthur Conan Doyle's role in suppressing “The Cardboard Box” from publication (see note 1, above), claims that Doyle, distressed at this scene's debunking of a supposed mystical practice as little more than a parlour trick, asked Watson to eliminate the entire story as a result.

13 There is no *Cross Street* in Croydon today, but *Cross Road* has existed there for many years. David L. Hammer tentatively identifies the house as No. 57 Cross Road.

14 A largely residential borough in south-east London, Croydon would in 1920 become the site of London's first official airport, the Croydon Aerodrome (later Croydon Airport), which combined a military airfield and a testing ground. It was shut down in 1959 with the construction of Heathrow.

15 Tobacco with sweetener added.

16 Antimacassar, a covering hung over the backs of sofas and chairs to protect furniture from hair grease, took its name from a popular hair oil, Macassar Oil. Macassar itself was made with ylang-ylang, a perfume oil extracted from the tropical Asian tree *Cananga odorata* and said to have calming and aphrodisiac qualities. The name is a derivation of Makasar (now Ujung Pandang), a city in Indonesia.

17 By the 1800s, the use of dissection in medical schools as an aid in the instruction of anatomy had become fairly common. Yet in Britain, public qualms about the practice were still such that until the early part of the nineteenth century, only the cadavers of recently executed criminals could be legally dissected. The resultant paucity of available cadavers led to the black-market trade of grave robbing, in which corpses were dug up and delivered to surgeons and assistants who purported not to know where the bodies came from.

Britain's most notorious body-snatchers, or "resurrectionists," were William Hare and William Burke, an Edinburgh landlord and his tenant. Their reputation for providing exceedingly "fresh" bodies stemmed from the fact that their grave robbing had escalated to murder: in all, they killed at least fifteen people and sold the corpses to doctors such as Robert Knox, a celebrated anatomist at the University of Edinburgh. Knox's reputation suffered when it was discovered that the cadavers used in his lectures had been so obtained. He claimed ignorance, but Hare and Burke were convicted in 1828 (Hare testified for the prosecution; Burke was hanged), and in 1832 Parliament passed the Anatomy Act, which allowed medical schools to practise dissection on the unclaimed bodies of poor and homeless people.

The tale of Hare and Burke has inspired various fictional works, such as James Bridie's play *The Anatomist*, first staged in 1931, and the Edinburgh-born Robert Louis Stevenson's 1884 story *The Body Snatcher*, later adapted into a 1945 film starring Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi as well as Henry Daniell (who also appeared in three of the Universal Studios Sherlock Holmes films in the 1940s).

18 The *Conqueror* and the *May Day* were real ships registered to the Liverpool, Dublin, and London Steam Packet Co. Why Watson failed to conceal their names is unknown.

19 Antonio Stradivari (1644–1737) made cellos, harps, guitars, mandolins, and violas in his workshop in Cremona, Italy; but it is his perfectly designed violin for which he is most famously known. (In John Meade Falkner's 1895 ghost-story novel *The Lost Stradivarius*, a Stradivarius discovered in an old cupboard is described as possessing "a light-red colour, with a varnish of peculiar lustre and softness. The neck seemed rather longer than ordinary, and the scroll was remarkably bold and free.") Approximately 650 of Stradivari's more than 1,100 instruments survive today. The Smithsonian Institution reports that in the nineteenth century, thousands of violins were created in tribute to Stradivari after his death and were affixed with the exact same label—reading *Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis Faciebat Anno* and the date of production—that identified violins the master himself had made. This was common practice at the time, and since these imitation violins were much more inexpensive than the genuine article, no deception was intended. The end result, however, is that an instrument bearing the Stradivari label now has only a very slim chance of being a genuine Stradivarius violin. Presumably Holmes's Stradivarius was genuine despite its bargain price; otherwise, the story would make Holmes appear foolish.

20 The virtuoso Italian violinist Niccolò Paganini (1782–1840) was variously a child prodigy in Genoa, the court violinist to the princess of Lucca, and a touring soloist of great renown. In addition to composing important works for the violin—both Franz Liszt and Robert Schumann transcribed his twenty-four caprices for the piano, and Johannes Brahms and Sergei Rachmaninov based compositions on his *Caprice in A Minor*—Paganini also played guitar and viola. Shortly after retiring in 1835, he lost his voice, eventually succumbing to cancer of the larynx. (He also lost much of his fortune, having invested heavily in a Paris casino—Casino Paganini—that failed.) Paganini's extraordinary skill and innovations in tuning, harmonics, and double and triple stops are legendary, and he is widely considered the greatest of all violinists; nevertheless, the *Penguin Dictionary of Music* solemnly opines that by today's advanced standards, "his

feats are no longer regarded as freakishly difficult.”

21 For a rigorous study of this method of logical thinking, see Chapter VIII, “Reasoning to Causes,” of William Neblett’s *Sherlock’s Logic*, a charming book on logic in which Holmes’s grandson explains and illustrates the author’s points.

22 Although no one has been able to locate the issues of the *Journal* containing Holmes’s monographs, they may have been reprinted in the *Strand Magazine*, which published a pair of unattributed monographs entitled “A Chapter on Ears” in the October 1893 and November 1893 issues.

23 The broad part of the upper, external ear.

24 That is, the Royal Victoria and Albert Docks.

25 By referring to himself as “blue ribbon,” Browner means that he had been abstaining from alcohol, probably as a member of one of several temperance organisations in existence at the time. The first modern local society was formed in 1808 by Dr. B. J. Clark, in Greenfield, New York. In the late 1820s, groups sprang up in Ireland and Glasgow, with an English society formed in 1830 at Bradford; a myriad others would follow in the decades to come. Some were based on religious beliefs, others looked to scientific rationale. Not surprisingly, insurance companies fostered groups of abstainers, and temperance hotels, temperance cafés, British workmen public-houses, cocoa houses, coffee palaces, and teetotal clubs arose in many places as social expressions of the temperance movement.

The so-called Blue Ribbon Army—which, along with other U.S. societies such as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, would lend momentum to the eventual passage of the Eighteenth Amendment and the 1919–1933 period of American prohibition—was founded in the 1870s by Francis Murphy, an Irish-American and former liquor dealer in Maine. Basing his movement on principles of “gospel temperance,” Murphy received inspiration from the biblical passage “Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments, throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue . . .” (*Numbers XV*, 38–39). Unique among temperance leaders, Murphy did not view liquor sellers as evil, and he preached Christian charity toward them as well as toward drinkers themselves.

In addition to donning blue ribbons as a symbol of their dedication, Murphy’s followers were asked to sign a pledge that read, “With malice toward none, with charity for all; I, the undersigned, do pledge my word and honor (God helping me) to abstain from all intoxicating liquors as a beverage, and that I will by all honorable means encourage others to abstain.” A similar group was formed in London by William Noble, a Murphy admirer; and Murphy ultimately came to Britain to lead a great rally in Dundee—gaining as many as 40,000 converts—in 1882. There he recruited William McGonagall, the poet laureate of Dundee (and widely hailed as the worst poet in the English language), who wrote, in “A Tribute to Mr. Murphy and the Blue Ribbon Army,”

“All hail to Mr Murphy, he is a hero brave,
That has crossed the mighty Atlantic wave,
For what purpose let me pause and think—
I answer, to warn the people not to taste strong drink.”

(See “The Five Orange Pips,” note 22, for more on McGonagall.) 26 Meaning that Fairbairn was better acquainted with officers’ quarters than crewmen’s, implying that he was a former officer who had “descended” to the occupation of common sailor.

THE YELLOW FACE¹

Some students question why Watson included “The Yellow Face” among the Memoirs. Mr. Grant Munro’s problem completely baffles Holmes, who can only propose outlandish theories with no evidence, and many suggest that Holmes was completely taken in by Munro’s wife. Mindful of his failure, Holmes urges Watson to whisper “Norbury” in his ear whenever he becomes too arrogant, and perhaps it is to present this view of Holmes—the-less-than-perfect reasoner—that Watson wrote up the case. Contemporary readers may deplore the apparent racial attitudes of the case, which suggest that interracial marriage was intolerable to English society, but a careful reading reveals that Watson applauds the tolerance of Mr. Munro. On a lighter note, it is gratifying to see Effie Munro call her husband Grant by the name “Jack,” if only to bear out that John Watson’s wife may well have called him James!

IN PUBLISHING THESE short sketches, based upon the numerous cases in which my companion's singular gifts have made me² the listener to, and eventually the actor in, some strange drama, it is only natural that I should dwell rather upon his successes than upon his failures. And this not so much for the sake of his reputation, for indeed it was when he was at his wit's end that his energy and his versatility were most admirable, but because where he failed it happened too often that no one else succeeded, and that the tale was left for ever without a conclusion. Now and again, however, it chanced that even when he erred the truth was still discovered. I have notes of some half-dozen cases of the kind; the affair of the second stain³ and that which I am now about to recount are the two which present the strongest features of interest.

Sherlock Holmes was a man who seldom took exercise for exercise's sake. Few men were capable of greater muscular effort, and he was undoubtedly one of the finest boxers of his weight⁴ that I have ever seen; but he looked upon aimless bodily exertion as a waste of energy, and he seldom bestirred himself save where there was some professional object to be served. Then he was absolutely untiring and indefatigable. That he should have kept himself in training under such circumstances is remarkable, but his diet was usually of the sparest, and his habits were simple to the verge of austerity. Save for the occasional use of cocaine he had no vices, and he only turned to the drug as a protest against the monotony of existence when cases were scanty and the papers uninteresting.

One day in early spring he had so far relaxed as to go for a walk with me in the Park,⁵ where the first faint shoots of green were breaking out upon the elms, and the sticky spearheads of the chestnuts were just beginning to burst into their five-fold leaves. For two hours we rambled about together, in silence for the most part, as befits two men who know each other intimately. It was nearly five before we were back in Baker Street once more.

"Beg pardon, sir," said our page-boy, as he opened the door; "there's been a gentleman here asking for you, sir."

Holmes glanced reproachfully at me. "So much for afternoon walks!" said he. "Has this gentleman gone, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"Didn't you ask him in?"

"Yes, sir; he came in."

"How long did he wait?"

"Half an hour, sir. He was a very restless gentleman, sir, a-walkin' and a-

stampin' all the time he was here. I was waitin' outside the door, sir, and I could hear him. At last he goes out into the passage, and he cries: 'Is that man never goin' to come?' Those were his very words, sir. 'You'll only need to wait a little longer,' says I. 'Then I'll wait in the open air, for I feel half choked,' says he. 'I'll be back before long.' And with that he ups and he outs, and all I could say wouldn't hold him back."

"Well, well, you did your best," said Holmes, as we walked into our room. "It's very annoying, though, Watson. I was badly in need of a case, and this looks, from the man's impatience, as if it were of importance. Halloo! that's not your pipe on the table. He must have left his behind him. A nice old brier, with a good long stem of what the tobacconists call amber. I wonder how many real amber mouthpieces there are in London? Some people think that a fly in it is a sign. Why, it is quite a branch of trade, the putting of sham flies into the sham amber.⁶ Well, he must have been disturbed in his mind to leave a pipe behind him which he evidently values highly."

"How do you know that he values it highly?" I asked.

"Well, I should put the original cost of the pipe at seven-and-sixpence. Now it has, you see, been twice mended: once in the wooden stem and once in the amber. Each of these mends, done, as you observe, with silver bands, must have cost more than the pipe did originally. The man must value the pipe highly when he prefers to patch it up rather than buy a new one with the same money."

"Anything else?" I asked, for Holmes was turning the pipe about in his hand, and staring at it in his peculiar, pensive way.

He held it up and tapped on it with his long, thin forefinger as a professor might who was lecturing on a bone.

"Pipes are occasionally of extraordinary interest," said he. "Nothing has more individuality save perhaps watches and bootlaces. The indications here, however, are neither very marked nor very important. The owner is obviously a muscular man, left-handed, with an excellent set of teeth, careless in his habits, and with no need to practise economy."



“He held it up.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893



“Pipes are occasionally of extraordinary interest,” said
he.

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

My friend threw out the information in a very off-hand way, but I saw that he cocked his eye at me to see if I had followed his reasoning.

“You think a man must be well-to-do if he smokes a seven-shilling pipe?” said I.

“This is Grosvenor mixture at eightpence an ounce,” Holmes answered, knocking a little out on his palm. “As he might get an excellent smoke for half the price, he has no need to practise economy.”

“And the other points?”

“He has been in the habit of lighting his pipe at lamps and gas-jets.⁷ You can see that it is quite charred all down one side. Of course, a match could not have done that. Why should a man hold a match to the side of his pipe? But you cannot light it at a lamp without getting the bowl charred. And it is all on the right side of the pipe. From that I gather that he is a left-handed man. You hold your own pipe to the lamp, and see how naturally you, being right-handed, hold the left side to the flame. You might do it once the other way, but not as a constancy. This has always been held so. Then he has bitten through his amber. It takes a muscular, energetic fellow, and one with a good set of teeth, to do that. But if I am not mistaken I hear him upon the stair, so we shall have something more interesting than his pipe to study.”

An instant later our door opened, and a tall young man entered the room. He was well but quietly dressed in a dark-grey suit and carried a brown wide-awake⁸ in his hand. I should have put him at about thirty, though he was really some years older.

“I beg your pardon,” said he, with some embarrassment; “I suppose I should have knocked. Yes, of course I should have knocked. The fact is that I am a little upset, and you must put it all down to that.” He passed his hand over his forehead like a man who is half dazed, and then fell, rather than sat, down upon a chair.

“I can see that you have not slept for a night or two,” said Holmes, in his easy, genial way. “That tries a man’s nerves more than work, and more even than pleasure. May I ask how I can help you?”

“I wanted your advice, sir. I don’t know what to do, and my whole life seems to have gone to pieces.”

“You wish to employ me as a consulting detective?”

“Not that only. I want your opinion as a judicious man—as a man of the world. I want to know what I ought to do next. I hope to God you’ll be able to tell me.”

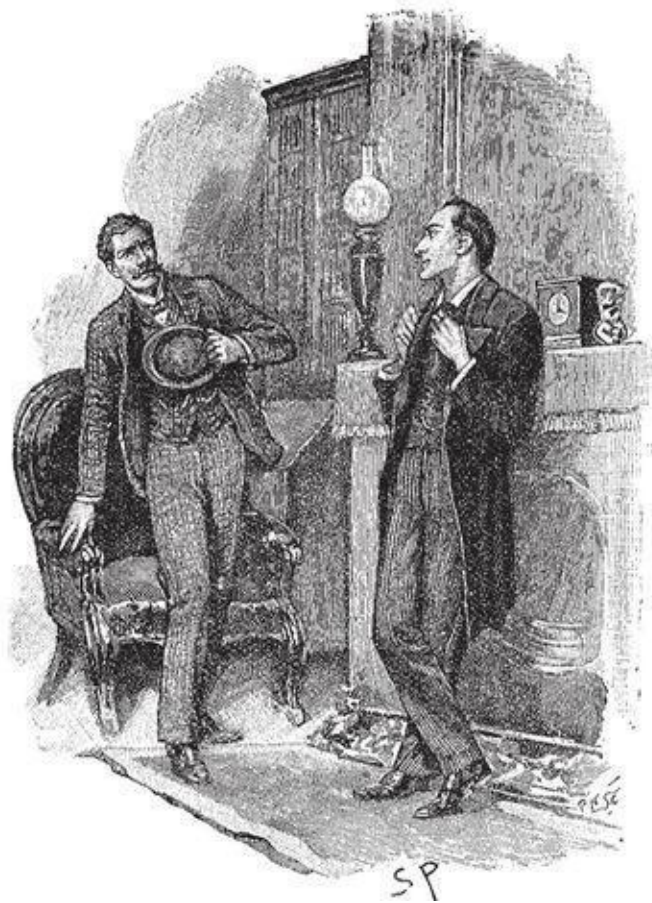
He spoke in little, sharp, jerky outbursts, and it seemed to me that to speak at all was very painful to him, and that his will all through was overriding his inclinations.

“It’s a very delicate thing,” said he. “One does not like to speak of one’s domestic affairs to strangers. It seems dreadful to discuss the conduct of one’s wife with two men whom I have never seen before. It’s horrible to have to do it. But I’ve got to the end of my tether, and I must have advice.”

“My dear Mr. Grant Munro—” began Holmes.

Our visitor sprang from his chair. “What!” he cried, “you know my name?”

“If you wish to preserve your *incognito*,” said Holmes, smiling, “I should suggest that you cease to write your name upon the lining of your hat, or else that you turn the crown towards the person whom you are addressing. I was about to say that my friend and I have listened to a good many strange secrets in this room, and that we have had the good fortune to bring peace to many troubled souls. I trust that we may do as much for you. Might I beg you, as time may prove to be of importance, to furnish me with the facts of your case without further delay?”



“Our visitor sprang from his chair.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

Our visitor again passed his hand over his forehead as if he found it bitterly hard. From every gesture and expression I could see that he was a reserved, self-contained man, with a dash of pride in his nature, more likely to hide his wounds than to expose them. Then suddenly, with a fierce gesture of his closed hand, like one who throws reserve to the winds, he began.

“The facts are these, Mr. Holmes,” said he. “I am a married man, and have been so for three years. During that time my wife and I have loved each other as fondly and lived as happily as any two that ever were joined. We have not had a difference, not one, in thought, or word, or deed. And now, since last Monday, there has suddenly sprung up a barrier between us, and I find that there is something in her life and in her thoughts of which I know as little as if she were the woman who brushes by me in the street. We are estranged, and I want to know why.

“Now there is one thing that I want to impress upon you before I go any further, Mr. Holmes: Effie loves me. Don’t let there be any mistake about that. She loves me with her whole heart and soul, and never more than now. I know it. I feel it. I don’t want to argue about that. A man can tell easily enough when a woman loves him. But there’s this secret between us, and we can never be the same until it is cleared.”

“Kindly let me have the facts, Mr. Munro,” said Holmes, with some impatience.

“I’ll tell you what I know about Effie’s history. She was a widow when I met her first, though quite young—only twenty-five. Her name then was Mrs. Hebron. She went out to America when she was young and lived in the town of Atlanta, where she married this Hebron, who was a lawyer with a good practice. They had one child, but the yellow fever broke out badly in the place, and both husband and child died of it.⁹ I have seen his death certificate.¹⁰ This sickened her of America, and she came back to live with a maiden aunt at Pinner, in Middlesex. I may mention that her husband had left her comfortably off, and that she had a capital of about four thousand five hundred pounds, which had been so well invested by him that it returned an average of seven per cent.¹¹ She had only been six months at Pinner when I met her; we fell in love with each other, and we married a few weeks afterwards.

“I am a hop merchant myself, and as I have an income of seven or eight hundred, we found ourselves comfortably off, and took a nice eighty-pound-a-year villa¹² at Norbury. Our little place was very countrified, considering that it is so close to town. We had an inn and two houses a little above us, and a single cottage at the other side of the field which faces us, and except those there were

no houses until you got halfway to the station. My business took me into town at certain seasons, but in summer I had less to do, and then in our country home my wife and I were just as happy as could be wished. I tell you that there never was a shadow between us until this accursed affair began.

“There’s one thing I ought to tell you before I go further. When we married, my wife made over all her property to me—rather against my will, for I saw how awkward it would be if my business affairs went wrong. However, she would have it so, and it was done. Well, about six weeks ago she came to me.

“ ‘Jack,’¹³ said she, ‘When you took my money you said that if ever I wanted any I was to ask you for it.’

“ ‘Certainly,’ said I. ‘It’s all your own.’

“ ‘Well,’ said she, ‘I want a hundred pounds.’

“I was a bit staggered at this, for I had imagined it was simply a new dress or something of the kind that she was after.

“ ‘What on earth for?’ I asked.

“ ‘Oh,’ said she, in her playful way, ‘you said that you were only my banker, and bankers never ask questions, you know.’

“ ‘If you really mean it, of course you shall have the money,’ said I.

“ ‘Oh, yes, I really mean it.’

“ ‘And you won’t tell me what you want it for?’

“ ‘Some day, perhaps, but not just at present, Jack.’

“So I had to be content with that, though it was the first time that there had ever been any secret between us. I gave her a cheque, and I never thought any more of the matter. It may have nothing to do with what came afterwards, but I thought it only right to mention it.

“Well, I told you just now that there is a cottage not far from our house. There is just a field between us, but to reach it you have to go along the road and then turn down a lane. Just beyond it is a nice little grove of Scotch firs, and I used to be very fond of strolling down there, for trees are always a neighbourly kind of thing. The cottage had been standing empty this eight months, and it was a pity, for it was a pretty two-storied place, with an old-fashioned porch and a honeysuckle about it. I have stood many a time and thought what a neat little homestead it would make.

“Well, last Monday evening I was taking a stroll down that way, when I met an empty van coming up the lane, and saw a pile of carpets and things lying about on the grass-plot beside the porch. It was clear that the cottage had at last been let. I walked past it, and then stopping, as an idle man might, I ran my eye over it, and wondered what sort of folk they were who had come to live so near us. And as I looked I suddenly became aware that a face was watching me out of

one of the upper windows.

“I don’t know what there was about that face, Mr. Holmes, but it seemed to send a chill right down my back. I was some little way off, so that I could not make out the features, but there was something unnatural and inhuman about the face. That was the impression that I had, and I moved quickly forward to get a nearer view of the person who was watching me. But as I did so the face suddenly disappeared, so suddenly that it seemed to have been plucked away into the darkness of the room. I stood for five minutes thinking the business over, and trying to analyze my impressions. I could not tell if the face was that of a man or a woman. It had been too far from me for that. But its colour was what had impressed me most. It was of a livid dead yellow,¹⁴ and with something set and rigid about it, which was shockingly unnatural. So disturbed was I, that I determined to see a little more of the new inmates of the cottage. I approached and knocked at the door, which was instantly opened by a tall, gaunt woman, with a harsh, forbidding face.

“ ‘What may you be wantin’?’ she asked, in a Northern¹⁵ accent.

“ ‘I am your neighbour over yonder,’ said I, nodding towards my house. ‘I see that you have only just moved in, so I thought that if I could be of any help to you in any—’

“ ‘Ay, we’ll just ask ye when we want ye,’ said she, and shut the door in my face. Annoyed at the churlish rebuff, I turned my back and walked home. All the evening, though I tried to think of other things, my mind would still turn to the apparition at the window and the rudeness of the woman. I determined to say nothing about the former to my wife, for she is a nervous, highly-strung woman, and I had no wish that she should share the unpleasant impression which had been produced upon myself. I remarked to her, however, before I fell asleep that the cottage was now occupied, to which she returned no reply.



“What may you be wantin’?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“I am usually an extremely sound sleeper. It has been a standing jest in the family that nothing could ever wake me during the night; and yet somehow on that particular night, whether it may have been the slight excitement produced by my little adventure or not, I know not, but I slept much more lightly than usual. Half in my dreams I was dimly conscious that something was going on in the room, and gradually became aware that my wife had dressed herself and was slipping on her mantle and her bonnet. My lips were parted to murmur out some sleepy words of surprise or remonstrance at this untimely preparation, when suddenly my half-opened eyes fell upon her face, illuminated by the candle light, and astonishment held me dumb. She wore an expression such as I had never seen before—such as I should have thought her incapable of assuming. She was deadly pale, and breathing fast, glancing furtively towards the bed, as she

fastened her mantle, to see if she had disturbed me. Then, thinking that I was still asleep, she slipped noiselessly from the room, and an instant later I heard a sharp creaking, which could only come from the hinges of the front door. I sat up in bed and rapped my knuckles against the rail to make certain that I was truly awake. Then I took my watch from under the pillow. It was three in the morning. What on this earth could my wife be doing out on the country road at three in the morning?

“I had sat for about twenty minutes turning the thing over in my mind and trying to find some possible explanation. The more I thought, the more extraordinary and inexplicable did it appear. I was still puzzling over it when I heard the door gently close again, and her footsteps coming up the stairs.

“ ‘Where in the world have you been, Effie?’ I asked, as she entered.

“She gave a violent start and a kind of gasping cry when I spoke, and that cry and start troubled me more than all the rest, for there was something indescribably guilty about them. My wife had always been a woman of a frank, open nature, and it gave me a chill to see her slinking into her own room, and crying out and wincing when her own husband spoke to her.

“ ‘You awake, Jack?’ she cried with a nervous laugh. ‘Why, I thought that nothing could awake you.’

“ ‘Where have you been?’ I asked, more sternly.

“ ‘I don’t wonder that you are surprised,’ said she, and I could see that her fingers were trembling as she undid the fastenings of her mantle. ‘Why, I never remember having done such a thing in my life before. The fact is, that I felt as though I were choking, and had a perfect longing for a breath of fresh air. I really think that I should have fainted if I had not gone out. I stood at the door for a few minutes, and now I am quite myself again.’

“All the time that she was telling me this story she never once looked in my direction, and her voice was quite unlike her usual tones. It was evident to me that she was saying what was false. I said nothing in reply, but turned my face to the wall, sick at heart, with my mind filled with a thousand venomous doubts and suspicions. What was it that my wife was concealing from me? Where had she been during that strange expedition? I felt that I should have no peace until I knew, and yet I shrank from asking her again after once she had told me what was false. All the rest of the night I tossed and tumbled, framing theory after theory, each more unlikely than the last.



The Crystal Palace.

The Queen's London (1897)

“I should have gone to the City that day, but I was too perturbed in my mind to be able to pay attention to business matters. My wife seemed to be as upset as myself, and I could see from the little questioning glances which she kept shooting at me, that she understood that I disbelieved her statement, and that she was at her wit's end what to do. We hardly exchanged a word during breakfast, and immediately afterwards I went out for a walk, that I might think the matter out in the fresh morning air.

“I went as far as the Crystal Palace,¹⁶ spent an hour in the grounds, and was back in Norbury by one o'clock. It happened that my way took me past the cottage, and I stopped for an instant to look at the windows and to see if I could catch a glimpse of the strange face which had stared out at me on the day before. As I stood there, imagine my surprise, Mr. Holmes, when the door suddenly opened and my wife walked out!

“I was struck dumb with astonishment at the sight of her, but my emotions were nothing to those which showed themselves upon her face when our eyes met. She seemed for an instant to wish to shrink back inside the house again, and then, seeing how useless all concealment must be, she came forward, with a very white face and frightened eyes which belied the smile upon her lips.

“ ‘Ah, Jack,’ she said, ‘I have just been in to see if I can be of any assistance to our new neighbours. Why do you look at me like that, Jack? You are not angry with me?’

“ ‘So,’ said I, ‘this is where you went during the night.’

“ ‘What do you mean?’ she cried.

“ ‘You came here. I am sure of it. Who are these people that you should visit them at such an hour?’

“ ‘I have not been here before.’

“ ‘How can you tell me what you know is false?’ I cried. ‘Your very voice

changes as you speak. When have I ever had a secret from you? I shall enter that cottage, and I shall probe the matter to the bottom.'

" 'No, no, Jack, for God's sake!' she gasped, in uncontrollable emotion. Then, as I approached the door, she seized my sleeve and pulled me back with convulsive strength.



“She seized my sleeve and pulled me back with convulsive strength.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“ 'I implore you not to do this, Jack,' she cried. 'I swear that I will tell you everything some day, but nothing but misery can come of it if you enter that cottage.' Then, as I tried to shake her off, she clung to me in a frenzy of entreaty.

“ 'Trust me, Jack!' she cried. 'Trust me only this once. You will never have cause to regret it. You know that I would not have a secret from you if it were not for your own sake. Our whole lives are at stake on this. If you come home with me all will be well. If you force your way into that cottage all is over between us.' ”

“There was such earnestness, such despair, in her manner that her words arrested me, and I stood irresolute before the door.

“ ‘I will trust you on one condition, and on one condition only,’ said I at last. ‘It is that this mystery comes to an end from now. You are at liberty to preserve your secret, but you must promise me that there shall be no more nightly visits, no more doings which are kept from my knowledge. I am willing to forget those which are past if you will promise that there shall be no more in the future.’



“Trust me, Jack!’ she cried.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘I was sure that you would trust me,’ she cried, with a great sigh of relief. ‘It shall be just as you wish. Come away, oh, come away up to the house!’

“Still pulling at my sleeve, she led me away from the cottage. As we went I glanced back, and there was that yellow, livid face watching us out of the upper

window. What link could there be between that creature and my wife? Or how could the coarse, rough woman whom I had seen the day before be connected with her? It was a strange puzzle, and yet I knew that my mind could never know ease again until I had solved it.

“For two days after this I stayed at home, and my wife appeared to abide loyally by our engagement, for, as far as I know, she never stirred out of the house. On the third day, however, I had ample evidence that her solemn promise was not enough to hold her back from this secret influence which drew her away from her husband and her duty.

“I had gone into town on that day, but I returned by the 2.40 instead of the 3.36, which is my usual train. As I entered the house the maid ran into the hall with a startled face.

“ ‘Where is your mistress?’ I asked.

“ ‘I think that she has gone out for a walk,’ she answered.

“My mind was instantly filled with suspicion. I rushed upstairs to make sure that she was not in the house. As I did so I happened to glance out of one of the upper windows and saw the maid with whom I had just been speaking running across the field in the direction of the cottage. Then, of course, I saw exactly what it all meant. My wife had gone over there and had asked the servant to call her if I should return. Tingling with anger, I rushed down and strode across, determined to end the matter once and for ever. I saw my wife and the maid hurrying back together along the lane, but I did not stop to speak with them. In the cottage lay the secret which was casting a shadow over my life. I vowed that, come what might, it should be a secret no longer. I did not even knock when I reached it, but turned the handle and rushed into the passage.

“It was all still and quiet upon the ground-floor. In the kitchen a kettle was singing on the fire, and a large black cat lay coiled up in the basket, but there was no sign of the woman whom I had seen before. I ran into the other room, but it was equally deserted. Then I rushed up the stairs, only to find two other rooms empty and deserted at the top. There was no one at all in the whole house. The furniture and pictures were of the most common and vulgar description, save in the one chamber at the window of which I had seen the strange face. That was comfortable and elegant, and all my suspicions rose into a fierce, bitter blaze when I saw that on the mantelpiece stood a full-length photograph of my wife, which had been taken at my request only three months ago.

“I stayed long enough to make certain that the house was absolutely empty. Then I left it, feeling a weight at my heart such as I had never had before. My wife came out into the hall as I entered my house, but I was too hurt and angry to speak with her, and pushing past her, I made my way into my study. She

followed me, however, before I could close the door.

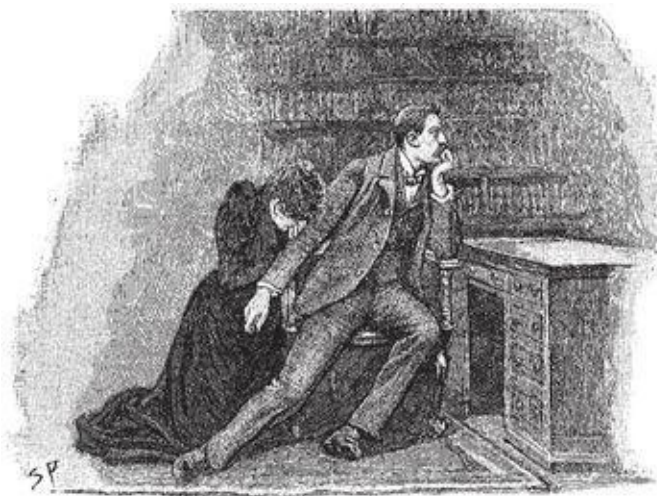
“ ‘I am sorry that I broke my promise, Jack,’ said she; ‘but if you knew all the circumstances I am sure that you would forgive me.’

“ ‘Tell me everything, then,’ said I.

“ ‘I cannot, Jack, I cannot!’ she cried.

“ ‘Until you tell me who it is that has been living in that cottage, and who it is to whom you have given that photograph, there can never be any confidence between us,’ said I, and breaking away from her I left the house. That was yesterday, Mr. Holmes, and I have not seen her since, nor do I know anything more about this strange business. It is the first shadow that has come between us, and it has so shaken me that I do not know what I should do for the best. Suddenly this morning it occurred to me that you were the man to advise me, so I have hurried to you now, and I place myself unreservedly in your hands. If there is any point which I have not made clear, pray question me about it. But above all tell me quickly what I am to do, for this misery is more than I can bear.”

Holmes and I had listened with the utmost interest to this extraordinary statement, which had been delivered in the jerky, broken fashion of a man who is under the influence of extreme emotion. My companion sat silent now for some time, with his chin upon his hand, lost in thought.



“‘Tell me everything,’ said I.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Tell me,” said he at last, “could you swear that this was a man’s face which you saw at the window?”

“Each time that I saw it I was some distance away from it, so that it is

impossible for me to say.”

“You appear, however, to have been disagreeably impressed by it.”

“It seemed to be of an unnatural colour, and to have a strange rigidity about the features. When I approached, it vanished with a jerk.”

“How long is it since your wife asked you for a hundred pounds?”

“Nearly two months.”

“Have you ever seen a photograph of her first husband?”

“No; there was a great fire at Atlanta¹⁷ very shortly after his death, and all her papers were destroyed.”

“And yet she had a certificate of death. You say that you saw it?”

“Yes, she got a duplicate after the fire.”

“Did you ever meet anyone who knew her in America?”

“No.”

“Did she ever talk of revisiting the place?”

“No.”

“Or get letters from it?”

“Not to my knowledge.”

“Thank you. I should like to think over the matter a little now. If the cottage is permanently deserted we may have some difficulty; if, on the other hand, as I fancy is more likely, the inmates were warned of your coming, and left before you entered yesterday, then they may be back now, and we should clear it all up easily. Let me advise you, then, to return to Norbury and to examine the windows of the cottage again. If you have reason to believe that it is inhabited do not force your way in, but send a wire to my friend and me. We shall be with you within an hour of receiving it, and we shall then very soon get to the bottom of the business.”

“And if it is still empty?”

“In that case I shall come out to-morrow and talk it over with you. Good-bye, and above all things do not fret until you know that you really have a cause for it.”

“I am afraid that this is a bad business, Watson,” said my companion, as he returned after accompanying Mr. Grant Munro to the door. “What do you make of it?”

“It has an ugly sound,” I answered.

“Yes. There’s blackmail in it, or I am much mistaken.”

“And who is the blackmailer?”

“Well, it must be this creature who lives in the only comfortable room in the place, and has her photograph above his fireplace.¹⁸ Upon my word, Watson,

there is something very attractive about that livid face at the window, and I would not have missed the case for worlds.”

“You have a theory?”

“Yes, a provisional one. But I shall be surprised if it does not turn out to be correct. This woman’s first husband is in that cottage.”

“Why do you think so?”

“How else can we explain her frenzied anxiety that her second one should not enter it? The facts, as I read them, are something like this: This woman was married in America. Her husband developed some hateful qualities, or, shall we say, he contracted some loathsome disease, and became a leper or an imbecile. She fled from him at last, returned to England, changed her name, and started her life, as she thought, afresh. She had been married three years and believed that her position was quite secure—having shown her husband the death certificate of some man, whose name she had assumed—when suddenly her whereabouts was discovered by her first husband, or, we may suppose, by some unscrupulous woman who had attached herself to the invalid. They write to the wife and threaten to come and expose her. She asks for a hundred pounds and endeavours to buy them off. They come in spite of it, and when the husband mentions casually to the wife that there are new-comers in the cottage, she knows in some way that they are her pursuers. She waits until her husband is asleep, and then she rushes down to endeavour to persuade them to leave her in peace. Having no success, she goes again next morning, and her husband meets her, as he has told us, as she comes out. She promises him then not to go there again, but two days afterwards, the hope of getting rid of those dreadful neighbours is too strong for her, and she makes another attempt, taking down with her the photograph which had probably been demanded from her. In the midst of this interview the maid rushes in to say that the master has come home, on which the wife, knowing that he would come straight down to the cottage, hurries the inmates out at the back door, into the grove of fir-trees, probably, which was mentioned as standing near. In this way he finds the place deserted. I shall be very much surprised, however, if it is still so when he reconnoitres it this evening. What do you think of my theory?”

“It is all surmise.”

“But at least it covers all the facts. When new facts come to our knowledge which cannot be covered by it, it will be time enough to reconsider it. At present we can do nothing more until we have a fresh message from our friend at Norbury.”

But we had not a very long time to wait. It came just as we had finished our tea.

The cottage is still tenanted. Have seen the face again at the window. I'll meet the seven-o'clock train, and take no steps until you arrive.

He was waiting on the platform when we stepped out, and we could see in the light of the station lamps that he was very pale, and quivering with agitation.

"They are still there, Mr. Holmes," said he, laying his hand hard upon my friend's sleeve. "I saw lights in the cottage as I came down. We shall settle it now, once and for all."

"What is your plan, then?" asked Holmes, as he walked down the dark tree-lined road.

"I am going to force my way in and see for myself who is in the house. I wish you both to be there as witnesses."

"You are quite determined to do this in spite of your wife's warning that it is better that you should not solve the mystery?"

"Yes, I am determined."

"Well, I think that you are in the right. Any truth is better than indefinite doubt. We had better go up at once. Of course, legally, we are putting ourselves hopelessly in the wrong, but I think that it is worth it."

It was a very dark night, and a thin rain began to fall as we turned from the highroad into a narrow lane, deeply rutted, with hedges on either side. Mr. Grant Munro pushed impatiently forward, however, and we stumbled after him as best we could.

"There are the lights of my house," he murmured, pointing to a glimmer among the trees. "And here is the cottage which I am going to enter."

We turned a corner in the lane as he spoke, and there was the building close beside us. A yellow bar falling across the black foreground showed that the door was not quite closed, and one window in the upper story was brightly illuminated. As we looked we saw a dark blurr moving across the blind.

"There is that creature!" cried Grant Munro. "You can see for yourselves that someone is there. Now follow me, and we shall soon know all."

We approached the door, but suddenly a woman appeared out of the shadow and stood in the golden track of the lamp-light. I could not see her face in the darkness, but her arms were thrown out in an attitude of entreaty.

"For God's sake, don't, Jack!" she cried. "I had a presentiment that you would come this evening. Think better of it, dear! Trust me again, and you will never have cause to regret it."

"I have trusted you too long, Effie!" he cried sternly. "Leave go of me! I must pass you. My friends and I are going to settle this matter once and for ever." He pushed her to one side, and we followed closely after him. As he threw the door

open an elderly woman ran out in front of him and tried to bar his passage, but he thrust her back, and an instant afterwards we were all upon the stairs. Grant Munro rushed into the lighted room at the top, and we entered at his heels.

It was a cosy, well-furnished apartment, with two candles burning upon the table and two upon the mantelpiece. In the corner, stooping over a desk, there sat what appeared to be a little girl. Her face was turned away as we entered, but we could see that she was dressed in a red frock, and that she had long white gloves on. As she whisked round to us, I gave a cry of surprise and horror. The face which she turned towards us was of the strangest livid tint, and the features were absolutely devoid of any expression. An instant later the mystery was explained. Holmes, with a laugh, passed his hand behind the child's ear, a mask peeled off from her countenance, and there was a little coal-black negress with all her white teeth flashing in amusement at our amazed faces. I burst out laughing out of sympathy with her merriment, but Grant Munro stood staring, with his hand clutching his throat.



“There was a little coal-black Negress.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“My God!” he cried. “What can be the meaning of this?”

“I will tell you the meaning of it,” cried the lady, sweeping into the room with a proud, set face. “You have forced me against my own judgment to tell you, and now we must both make the best of it. My husband died at Atlanta. My child survived.”

“Your child!”

She drew a large silver locket from her bosom. “You have never seen this open.”

“I understood that it did not open.”

She touched a spring, and the front hinged back. There was a portrait within of a man, strikingly handsome and intelligent, but bearing unmistakable signs upon his features of his African descent.

“That is John Hebron, of Atlanta,” said the lady, “and a nobler man never walked the earth.¹⁹ I cut myself off from my race in order to wed him;²⁰ but never once while he lived did I for an instant regret it. It was our misfortune that our only child took after his people rather than mine.²¹ It is often so in such matches, and little Lucy is darker far than ever her father was. But, dark or fair, she is my own dear little girlie, and her mother’s pet.”²² The little creature ran across at the words and nestled up against the lady’s dress. “When I left her in America,” she continued, “it was only because her health was weak, and the change might have done her harm. She was given to the care of a faithful Scotch woman who had once been our servant. Never for an instant did I dream of disowning her as my child. But when chance threw you in my way, Jack, and I learned to love you, I feared to tell you about my child. God forgive me, I feared that I should lose you, and I had not the courage to tell you. I had to choose between you, and in my weakness I turned away from my own little girl.²³ For three years I have kept her existence a secret from you, but I heard from the nurse, and I knew that all was well with her. At last, however, there came an overwhelming desire to see the child once more. I struggled against it, but in vain. Though I knew the danger, I determined to have the child over, if it were but for a few weeks. I sent a hundred pounds to the nurse, and I gave her instructions about this cottage, so that she might come as a neighbour without my appearing to be in any way connected with her. I pushed my precautions so far as to order her to keep the child in the house during the daytime, and to cover up her little face and hands, so that even those who might see her at the window should not gossip about there being a black child in the neighbourhood. If I had been less cautious I might have been more wise, but I was half crazy with fear lest you should learn the truth.

“It was you who told me first that the cottage was occupied. I should have waited for the morning, but I could not sleep for excitement, and so at last I slipped out, knowing how difficult it is to awaken you. But you saw me go, and that was the beginning of my troubles. Next day you had my secret at your mercy, but you nobly refrained from pursuing your advantage. Three days later, however, the nurse and child only just escaped from the back door as you rushed in at the front one. And now to-night you at last know all, and I ask you what is to become of us, my child and me?”²⁴ She clasped her hands and waited for an

answer.

It was a long two²⁵ minutes before Grant Munro broke the silence, and when his answer came it was one of which I love to think. He lifted the little child, kissed her, and then, still carrying her, he held his other hand out to his wife and turned towards the door.



“He lifted the little child.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“We can talk it over more comfortably at home,” said he. “I am not a very good man, Effie, but I think that I am a better one than you have given me credit for being.”

Holmes and I followed them down to the lane, and my friend plucked at my sleeve as we came out.

“I think,” said he, “that we shall be of more use in London than in Norbury.”

Not another word did he say of the case until late that night when he was turning away, with his lighted candle, for his bedroom.

“Watson,” said he, “if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little overconfident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper ‘Norbury’ in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you.”

1 “The Yellow Face” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in February 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly*

(New York) on February 11, 1893.

2 In various American editions the references have been inexplicably changed to “us,” “listeners,” and “actors.”

3 American editions refer here, not to “the affair of the second stain,” but to “the adventure of the Musgrave Ritual,” which seems a bit incongruous. Certainly Holmes would disagree with Watson’s regarding “The Musgrave Ritual” as a case in which Holmes erred. But see “The Musgrave Ritual,” note 41, for the views of others. In addition, this opening paragraph is often printed in brackets, for reasons unexplained.

The provenance of Watson’s casual mention of “the affair of the second stain” also remains somewhat unclear; the story entitled “The Second Stain” was not published in the *Strand Magazine* until December 1904, over a decade after “The Yellow Face” first appeared. Perhaps the mystery affair is related in some way to the “Adventure of the Second Stain” that Watson makes reference to in “The Naval Treaty”; in that instance, he hints at various details that appear nowhere else in the Canon. See “The Naval Treaty,” note 1.

4 Edward J. Van Liere, in “Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, Perennial Athletes,” calls this “[a] real compliment, for Watson was a keen sportsman, who probably had had occasion to attend many boxing matches.” Van Liere points out that Holmes’s rangy build, long reach, speed, and superior intelligence would have made him “a dangerous man in the ring.” In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes recalls to the professional boxer McMurdo how they went three rounds together, and McMurdo declares, “You might have aimed high, if you had joined the fancy.”

Modern boxing actually originated in England with the publication of the Queensberry Rules in 1867. Written by John Graham Chambers under the patronage of John Sholto Douglas, the 8th Marquis of Queensberry (and the father of Oscar Wilde’s particular friend, Alfred Douglas), these rules called for the use of gloves, a specified number of three-minute rounds, and a ten-second count to signify a knockout, among other tenets familiar to today’s boxing fans. The sport prior to the adoption of the Queensberry Rules had been much more of a no-holds-barred affair, a bare-knuckle, often brutal pastime that in the eighteenth century had supplanted swordplay and gunplay as a way of defending one’s honour. From its working-class roots boxing grew to become popular among members of the aristocracy as well, leading to the formation of numerous clubs dedicated to the training of athletes and the staging of fights; given Watson’s description of Holmes’s skills, the detective was surely a member of one of these establishments. Arthur Conan Doyle was a great student of the history of boxing, and his novel *Rodney Stone* (1896) indelibly captures the boxing milieu of the Regency period.

5 Regent’s Park was the nearest at hand. See “A Scandal in Bohemia,” note 66.

6 As fossilised tree resin, amber often preserves the remains of insects, leaves, and flowers trapped in the substance millions of years ago—thus fake amber might be passed off as genuine if it were embedded with what looks to be a fossilised fly. In the American texts, the sentence is omitted. D. Martin Dakin comments, “I don’t know if the [American] editor was shocked that such reprehensible practices should go on among the dishonest English.”

7 Holmes himself indulged in this means of pipe-lighting; see “Charles Augustus Milverton.”

8 According to John Camden Hotten’s 1865 *Slang Dictionary*, a broad-brimmed felt hat—so called because it never had a *nap*, and never wants one.

9 For much of the nineteenth century, yellow fever outbreaks struck south-eastern cities of the United States nearly every summer. One particularly deadly epidemic killed 9,000 people in New Orleans in 1853. (As for Atlanta, Manly Wade Wellman has concluded that between 1860 and 1900 there were actually no epidemics of yellow fever in that city.) In 1900, some degree of control over the disease—which was

devastating U.S. troops occupying Cuba after the Spanish-American War—was finally obtained when a commission of physicians, led by army surgeon Walter Reed, travelled to Havana and conducted a series of experiments proving that the virus was carried and transmitted by infected *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos. Subsequent mosquito-eradication efforts had dramatic results, paving the way for successful construction of the Panama Canal. The last U.S. outbreak of yellow fever occurred in New Orleans in 1905; a vaccine was developed in 1937.

10 Stuart C. Rand points out that neither the State of Georgia nor the city of Atlanta issued death certificates until they were provided for by an Act of 1914.

11 A sum equivalent to about £300,000 in modern purchasing power. But to have such a sum return “an average of 7 per cent” would be “an impossibility with any degree of safety,” R. M. McLaren points out in “Doctor Watson—Punter or Speculator?”

12 The current purchasing power of £700 is about £45,000, or about \$80,000 per year in current U.S. dollars. Readers may form their own conclusions about whether this sum would leave one “well off” in today’s economy.

13 Who is “Jack”? Is this another symptom of the “John/James” syndrome exhibited in “Man with the Twisted Lip”? Or did Holmes misread Munro’s handwriting upon the lining of his hat, and Munro is subtly correcting Holmes? Note that no one actually calls Munro by the name “Grant,” and Watson, who consistently identifies him as “Grant Munro,” is only following Holmes’s lead. D. Martin Dakin suggests that “ ‘Grant’ sounds rather formal from a loving wife, and no doubt she adopted a pet name, which might well have been his second one.” Patrick Drazen points out that “Jack” is a familiar version of “John,” Effie’s *first* husband’s name.

14 The American texts change the colour to “chalky white” instead of “dead yellow,” perhaps in some concession to the growing Asian population, although the title of the story makes the change absurd.

15 North of *England*, Munro presumably means. It is curious that Grant Munro, likely of Scottish descent (for both Grant and Munro are common Scottish names), should not identify the accent of a woman whom Effie calls a “Scotch woman” as Scottish.

16 The Crystal Palace was originally constructed in Hyde Park to house the Great Exhibition of 1851, conceived of by Prince Albert to show off Britain’s industrial, military, and scientific achievements. Designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, landscape architect to the Duke of Devonshire, the mammoth structure required some 2,000 men to assemble its 2,300 cast-iron girders and 900,000 square feet of glass. The building’s incandescence inspired Punch magazine editor Douglas Jerrold to dub it “the Crystal Palace,” and William Thackeray to write in tribute, “As though ‘twere by a wizard’s rod *A blazing arch of lucid glass* Leaps like a fountain from the grass / To meet the sun!” (Historian A. N. Wilson, comparing the Crystal Palace to other buildings of the age, describes it as “a magnificent airy structure . . . modern, architecturally innovative and without the camp element of pastiche which characterizes almost all other great Victorian buildings.”) Six million visitors from all across Europe flocked to the Great Exhibition to see its vast array of exhibits, which ranged from cotton-spinning machines to microscopes and cameras to religious artifacts to stuffed elephants from India. After the exhibition, the structure was dismantled and rebuilt, reopening at Sydenham Hill—obviously the location to which Munro refers—in 1854. There, the building hosted concerts, auto shows, air shows, sporting events (the Crystal Palace Football Club was formed in 1861), and even a circus until 1936, when the building was destroyed by fire.

17 Manly Wade Wellman’s research into that period of Atlanta history uncovers no “great fire” having taken place there since Union General William Tecumseh Sherman’s infamous burning of the city in 1864.

18 “Does it not seem unlikely that a blackmailer would give a place of honour in his home to the

photograph of one of his victims?” asks Beverly Baer Potter, in “Thoughts on *The Yellow Face*.”

19 His noble nature notwithstanding, Sherlockians have thrown certain details of John Hebron’s background into question. Earlier, Hebron is identified as a lawyer; yet in searching the City Directory for 1885, Stuart C. Rand could locate no black attorneys, and he contends that—given the inequities of the day—none who practised in later years could have amassed the £4,500 of capital to which Grant Munro has referred. Robert H. Schutz, using C. G. Woodson’s *The Negro Professional Man and the Community, with Special Emphasis on the Physician and the Lawyer* (1934) as his source, counters that as early as 1850 there were a number of black lawyers in New York City. The differences between New York City and Atlanta at that time were, of course, vast. But Schutz slyly suggests that Effie Munro could be alluding not to Atlanta, Georgia, but to Atlanta, New York, a small town near the New York–Pennsylvania state line. D. Martin Dakin takes a similar tack with his own reference to Atlanta, Michigan.

David R. McCallister, in “The Black Barrister Who Baffled Baker Street,” takes a less mundane view of John Hebron in identifying him as Aaron Alpeoria Bradley, a former slave from Boston who passed himself off as a lawyer and became involved in Reconstruction politics in Georgia. Bradley made his fortune by charging thousands of Savannah blacks one dollar each to petition Washington, ostensibly to secure their voting rights. Elected to the state senate in 1868 as one of Georgia’s first four black legislators, Bradley was ousted when compromising rumours of his past surfaced; he then went up North, where McCallister guesses he may have met Effie. Moving to St. Louis, Bradley became part of a movement to form a black separatist territory in the West. He died penniless on the streets of St. Louis in 1882.

20 Georgia’s laws, H. W. Bell points out, prohibited such marriages. “[E]ven on the theory that [Mrs. Munro and John Hebron] were married in some State in which such unions were permitted, their marriage upon their return to Atlanta, would have come to an abrupt and sanguinary end.”

21 Would Hebron have thought so?

22 A “dear little girlie” she may well be, but Edward Quayle charges that Lucy’s “coal-black” complexion makes it impossible for her to be Effie Munro’s child. “Any anthropologist could have reminded him that the child of a mixed racial marriage has pigmentation approximately halfway between that of the parents.” Eileen Snyder, after examining the seminal work of Charles B. Davenport on miscegenation in the British West Indies (1913), similarly states that it would have been impossible for anyone other than two at-least-tan-skinned blacks to produce a “coal-black” offspring.

Patrick E. Drazen attempts to refute Snyder’s conclusions, pointing out that Davenport’s studies ignore dominant-recessive gene theory and that Snyder’s blanket statement fails to take into account that genetics is a science of probabilities, not certainties. While it is not likely that a “coal-black” descendant would result, it is not impossible. Further, Drazen suggests, Effie Munro may have been a mulatto herself.

23 Snyder sympathetically suggests that Lucy was the child of Hebron and his *first* wife and the *step*-daughter of Effie Munro.

24 H. W. Bell concludes that, because Effie’s story contains so many glaring inconsistencies, the child must have been fathered by someone other than Mr. Hebron (who, according to Bell, was white). After her husband’s death, Bell continues, Effie fled in order to start her life over. When confronted by Munro, she made up the entire story. “She was an actress of parts, and an accomplished liar,” marvels Bell, “but her greatest distinction is that she deceived Sherlock Holmes.”

25 The American text has “ten” minutes. Christopher Roden suggests that this American emendation was made to suggest Munro’s great hesitancy and so soften the story’s acceptance of an interracial marriage.

THE STOCK-BROKER'S CLERK¹

The world of money has changed little in 100 years, and “The StockBroker’s Clerk” tells a thrilling tale of “identity theft” that might be drawn from today’s headlines. Here Holmes and Watson must tread unfamiliar turf, the “City,” the realm of banks, brokerage firms, and high finance, to foil a daring robbery. Watson reveals an ear for Cockney slang in recording young Hall Pycroft’s encounter with mystery. Strangely, the criminals of “The StockBroker’s Clerk” appear to have been familiar with Holmes’s cases, for the plot is certainly reminiscent of “The Red-Headed League.” Scholars date the case to 1888 or 1889, and therefore the plotters could not have read the published version of “The Red-Headed League.” However, if Professor Moriarty had a hand in both, the similarities are no coincidence. The case also provides uncharacteristic revelations of Watson’s personal life, providing details of his return to medical practice after his marriage.

SHORTLY AFTER MY marriage² I had bought a connection³ in the Paddington district. Old Mr. Farquhar, from whom I purchased it, had at one time an excellent general practice, but his age, and an affliction of the nature of St. Vitus's dance⁴ from which he suffered, had very much thinned it. The public not unnaturally goes on the principle that he who would heal others must himself be whole, and looks askance at the curative powers of the man whose own case is beyond the reach of his drugs. Thus, as my predecessor weakened his practice declined, until when I purchased it from him it had sunk from twelve hundred to little more than three hundred a year. I had confidence, however, in my own youth and energy,⁵ and was convinced that in a very few years the concern would be as flourishing as ever.

For three months after taking over the practice I was kept very closely at work, and saw little of my friend Sherlock Holmes, for I was too busy to visit Baker Street, and he seldom went anywhere himself save upon professional business. I was surprised, therefore, when one morning in June, as I sat reading the *British Medical Journal*⁶ after breakfast, I heard a ring at the bell followed by the high, somewhat strident, tones of my old companion's voice.

"Ah, my dear Watson," said he, striding into the room, "I am very delighted to see you. I trust that Mrs. Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of the 'Sign of Four'?"

"Thank you, we are both very well," said I, shaking him warmly by the hand.

"And I hope also," he continued, sitting down in the rocking-chair, "that the cares of medical practice have not entirely obliterated the interest which you used to take in our little deductive problems."

"On the contrary," I answered; "it was only last night that I was looking over my old notes, and classifying some of our past results."

"I trust that you don't consider your collection closed?"

"Not at all. I should wish nothing better than to have some more of such experiences."

"To-day, for example?"

"Yes; to-day, if you like."

"And as far off as Birmingham?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"And the practice?"

"I do my neighbour's when he goes. He is always ready to work off the debt."⁷

"Ha! nothing could be better!" said Holmes, leaning back in his chair and

looking keenly at me from under his half-closed lids. "I perceive that you have been unwell lately. Summer colds are always a little trying."

"I was confined to the house by a severe chill for three days last week. I thought, however, that I had cast off every trace of it."

"So you have. You look remarkably robust."

"How, then, did you know of it?"

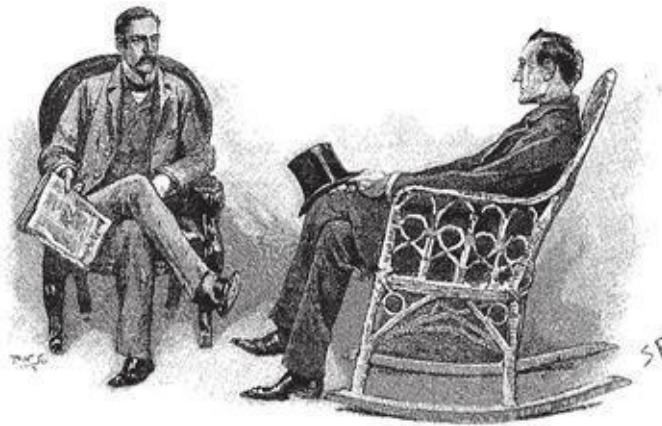
"My dear fellow, you know my methods."

"You deduced it, then?"

"Certainly."

"And from what?"

"From your slippers."



“‘Nothing could be better,’ said Holmes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

I glanced down at the new patent-leathers which I was wearing. "How on earth—" I began, but Holmes answered my question before it was asked.

"Your slippers are new," he said. "You could not have had them more than a few weeks. The soles which you are at this moment presenting to me are slightly scorched. For a moment I thought they might have got wet and been burned in the drying. But near the instep there is a small circular wafer of paper with the shopman's hieroglyphics upon it. Damp would of course have removed this. You had then been sitting with your feet outstretched to the fire, which a man would hardly do even in so wet a June as this if he were in his full health."

Like all Holmes's reasoning, the thing seemed simplicity itself when it was once explained. He read the thought upon my features, and his smile had a tinge of bitterness.

"I am afraid that I rather give myself away when I explain," said he. "Results without causes are much more impressive. You are ready to come to

Birmingham, then?”

“Certainly. What is the case?”

“You shall hear it all in the train. My client is outside in a four-wheeler. Can you come at once?”

“In an instant.” I scribbled a note to my neighbour, rushed upstairs to explain the matter to my wife, and joined Holmes upon the doorstep.

“Your neighbour is a doctor?” said he, nodding at the brass plate.⁸

“Yes, he bought a practice as I did.”

“An old-established one?”

“Just the same as mine. Both have been ever since the houses were built.”

“Ah, then you got hold of the best of the two.”

“I think I did. But how do you know?”

“By the steps, my boy. Yours are worn three inches deeper than his. But this gentleman in the cab is my client, Mr. Hall Pycroft. Allow me to introduce you to him.”

“Whip your horse up, cabby, for we have only just time to catch our train.”

The man whom I found myself facing was a well-built, fresh-complexioned young fellow with a frank, honest face and a slight, crisp, yellow moustache. He wore a very shiny top-hat and a neat suit of sober black, which made him look what he was—a smart young City man, of the class who have been labelled cockneys,⁹ but who give us our crack Volunteer regiments,¹⁰ and who turn out more fine athletes and sportsmen than any body of men in these islands. His round, ruddy face was naturally full of cheeriness, but the corners of his mouth seemed to me to be pulled down in a half-comical distress. It was not, however, until we were in a first-class carriage and well started upon our journey to Birmingham, that I was able to learn what the trouble was which had driven him to Sherlock Holmes.

“We have a clear run here of seventy minutes,” Holmes remarked. “I want you, Mr. Hall Pycroft, to tell my friend your very interesting experience exactly as you have told it to me, or with more detail if possible. It will be of use to me to hear the succession of events again. It is a case, Watson, which may prove to have something in it, or may prove to have nothing, but which at least presents those unusual and outré features which are as dear to you as they are to me. Now, Mr. Pycroft, I shall not interrupt you again.”

Our young companion looked at me with a twinkle in his eye.

“The worst of the story is,” said he, “that I show myself up as such a confounded fool. Of course, it may work out all right, and I don’t see that I could have done otherwise; but if I have lost my crib and get nothing in exchange, I

shall feel what a soft Johnny¹¹ I have been. I'm not very good at telling a story, Dr. Watson, but it is like this with me.



Our young companion looked at me with a twinkle in his eye.

Milton Werschkul, Sunday Portland *Oregonian*, September 24, 1911

“I used to have a billet at Coxon & Woodhouse’s, of Drapers’ Gardens, but they were let in¹² early in the spring through the Venezuelan loan,¹³ as no doubt you remember, and came a nasty cropper.¹⁴ I have been with them five years, and old Coxon gave me a ripping good testimonial when the smash came; but of course, we clerks were all turned adrift, the twenty-seven of us. I tried here and tried there, but there were lots of other chaps on the same lay¹⁵ as myself, and it was a perfect frost for a long time. I had been taking three pounds a week at Coxon’s, and I had saved about seventy of them, but I soon worked my way through that and out at the other end. I was fairly at the end of my tether at last, and could hardly find the stamps to answer the advertisements or the envelopes to stick them to. I had worn out my boots paddling up office stairs, and I seemed just as far from getting a billet as ever.

“At last I saw a vacancy at Mawson & Williams’, the great stockbroking firm in Lombard Street. I dare say E. C.¹⁶ is not much in your line, but I can tell you that this is about the richest house in London. The advertisement was to be answered by letter only. I sent in my testimonial and application, but without the least hope of getting it. Back came an answer by return, saying that if I would appear next Monday I might take over my new duties at once, provided that my appearance was satisfactory.¹⁷ No one knows how these things are worked.

Some people say that the manager just plunges his hand into the heap and takes the first that comes. Anyhow, it was my innings¹⁸ that time, and I don't ever wish to feel better pleased. The screw¹⁹ was a pound a week rise, and the duties just about the same as at Coxon's.

“And now I come to the queer part of the business. I was in diggings²⁰ out Hampstead way—17, Potter's Terrace. Well, I was sitting doing a smoke that very evening after I had been promised the appointment, when up came my landlady with a card which had ‘Arthur Pinner, Financial Agent,’ printed upon it. I had never heard the name before, and could not imagine what he wanted with me, but of course I asked her to show him up. In he walked—a middle-sized, dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-bearded man, with a touch of the Sheeny²¹ about his nose. He had a brisk kind of way with him and spoke sharply, like a man who knew the value of time.



In walked a middle-sized, dark-haired, dark-eyed, black-bearded man.

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“ ‘Mr. Hall Pycroft, I believe?’ said he.

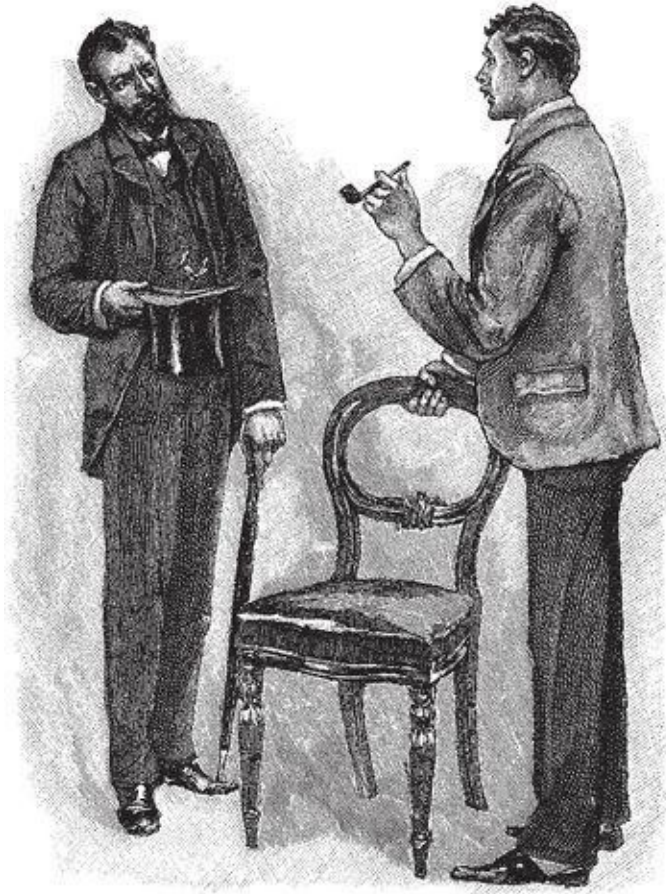
“ ‘Yes, sir,’ I answered and pushed a chair towards him.

“ ‘Lately engaged at Coxon & Woodhouse's?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘And now on the staff of Mawson's.’

“ ‘Quite so.’



“ ‘Mr. Hall Pycroft, I believe?’ said he.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘Well,’ said he, ‘the fact is that I have heard some really extraordinary stories about your financial ability. You remember Parker, who used to be Coxon’s manager? He can never say enough about it.’

“ ‘Of course I was pleased to hear this. I had always been pretty smart in the office, but I had never dreamed that I was talked about in the City in this fashion.

“ ‘You have a good memory?’ said he.

“ ‘Pretty fair,’ I answered, modestly.

“ ‘Have you kept in touch with the market while you have been out of work?’ he asked.

“ ‘Yes; I read the Stock Exchange²² List every morning.’

“ ‘Now that shows real application!’ he cried. ‘That is the way to prosper! You won’t mind my testing you, will you? Let me see! How are Ayrshires?’

“ ‘One hundred and five to one hundred and five and a quarter.’²³

“ ‘And New Zealand Consolidated?’

“ ‘A hundred and four.’

“ ‘And British Broken Hills?’

“ ‘Seven to seven and six.’

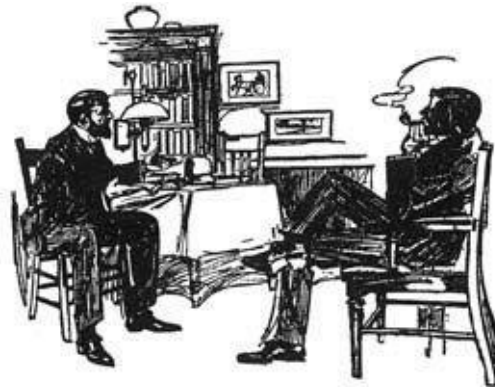
“Wonderful!’ he cried with his hands up.²⁴ ‘This quite fits in with all that I had heard. My boy, my boy, you are very much too good to be a clerk at Mawson’s!’



The Royal Exchange.

Victorian and Edwardian London

“This outburst rather astonished me, as you can think. ‘Well,’ said I, ‘other people don’t think quite so much of me as you seem to do, Mr. Pinner. I had a hard enough fight to get this berth, and I am very glad to have it.’



“My boy, my boy, you are much too good to be a clerk at
Mawson’s.”

Dan Smith, *Sunday Portland Oregonian*, October 22, 1905

“ ‘Pooh, man, you should soar above it. You are not in your true sphere. Now, I’ll tell you how it stands with me. What I have to offer is little enough when measured by your ability, but when compared with Mawson’s it’s light to dark.

Let me see! When do you go to Mawson's?

“ ‘On Monday.’

“ ‘Ha! ha! I think I would risk a little sporting flutter²⁵ that you don't go there at all.’

“ ‘Not go to Mawson's?’

“ ‘No, sir. By that day you will be the business manager of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, Limited, with one hundred and thirty-four branches in the towns and villages of France, not counting one in Brussels and one in San Remo.’

“This took my breath away. ‘I never heard of it,’ said I.

“ ‘Very likely not. It has been kept very quiet, for the capital was all privately subscribed, and it's too good a thing to let the public into. My brother, Harry Pinner, is promoter, and joins the board after allotment as managing director. He knew that I was in the swim²⁶ down here and asked me to pick up a good man cheap—a young, pushing man with plenty of snap about him. Parker spoke of you, and that brought me here to-night. We can only offer you a beggarly five hundred to start with—’

“ ‘Five hundred a year!’ I shouted.

“ ‘Only that at the beginning, but you are to have an over-riding commission of 1 per cent. on all business done by your agents, and you may take my word for it that this will come to more than your salary.’

“ ‘But I know nothing about hardware.’

“ ‘Tut, my boy, you know about figures.’

“My head buzzed, and I could hardly sit still in the chair. But suddenly a little chill of doubt came upon me.

“ ‘I must be frank with you,’ said I. ‘Mawson only gives me two hundred, but Mawson is safe. Now, really, I know so little about your company that—’

“ ‘Ah, smart, smart!’ he cried in a kind of ecstasy of delight. ‘You are the very man for us! You are not to be talked over, and quite right, too. Now, here's a note for a hundred pounds; and if you think that we can do business, you may just slip it into your pocket as an advance upon your salary.’

“ ‘That is very handsome,’ said I. ‘When should I take over my new duties?’

“ ‘Be in Birmingham to-morrow at one,’ said he. ‘I have a note in my pocket here which you will take to my brother. You will find him at 126B, Corporation Street, where the temporary offices of the company are situated. Of course he must confirm your engagement, but between ourselves it will be all right.’

“ ‘Really, I hardly know how to express my gratitude, Mr. Pinner,’ said I.

“ ‘Not at all, my boy. You have only got your deserts. There are one or two

small things—mere formalities—which I must arrange with you. You have a bit of paper beside you there. Kindly write upon it, “I am perfectly willing to act as business manager to the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, Limited, at a minimum salary of £500.’ ”

“I did as he asked, and he put the paper in his pocket.

“‘There is one other detail,’ said he. ‘What do you intend to do about Mawson’s?’

“I had forgotten all about Mawson’s in my joy. ‘I’ll write and resign,’ said I.

“ ‘Precisely what I don’t want you to do. I had a row over you with Mawson’s manager. I had gone up to ask him about you, and he was very offensive—accused me of coaxing you away from the service of the firm, and that sort of thing. At last I fairly lost my temper. “If you want good men you should pay them a good price,” said I. “He would rather have our small price than your big one,” said he. “I’ll lay you a fiver,” said I, “that when he has my offer you’ll never so much as hear from him again.” “Done!” said he. “We picked him out of the gutter, and he won’t leave us so easily.” Those were his very words.’

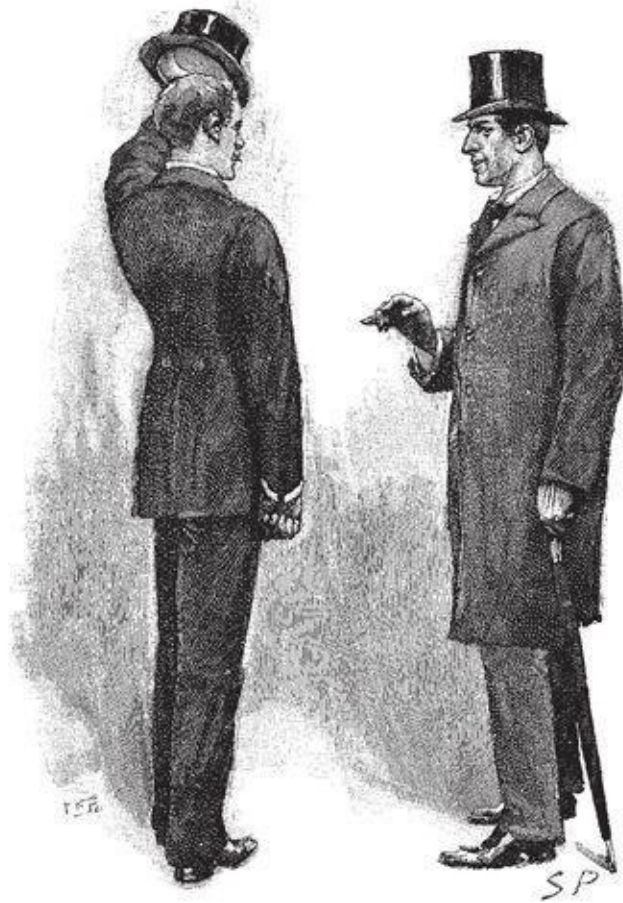
“ ‘The impudent scoundrel!’ I cried. ‘I’ve never so much as seen him in my life. Why should I consider him in any way? I shall certainly not write if you would rather that I didn’t.’

“ ‘Good! That’s a promise!’ said he, rising from his chair. ‘Well, I’m delighted to have got so good a man for my brother. Here’s your advance of a hundred pounds, and here is the letter. Make a note of the address, 126B, Corporation Street, and remember that one o’clock to-morrow is your appointment. Good-night, and may you have all the fortune that you deserve!’

“That’s just about all that passed between us, as near as I can remember. You can imagine, Dr. Watson, how pleased I was at such an extraordinary bit of good fortune. I sat up half the night hugging myself over it, and next day I was off to Birmingham in a train that would take me in plenty time for my appointment. I took my things to an hotel in New Street, and then I made my way to the address which had been given me.

“It was a quarter of an hour before my time, but I thought that would make no difference. 126B was a passage between two large shops,²⁷ which led to a winding stone stair, from which there were many flats, let as offices to companies or professional men. The names of the occupants were painted up at the bottom on the wall, but there was no such name as the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, Limited. I stood for a few minutes with my heart in my boots, wondering whether the whole thing was an elaborate hoax or not, when up came a man and addressed me. He was very like the chap I had seen the night before, the same figure and voice, but he was clean shaven and his hair was

lighter.



“Up came a man and addressed me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘Are you Mr. Hall Pycroft?’ he asked.

“ ‘Yes,’ said I.

“ ‘Ah! I was expecting you, but you are a trifle before your time. I had a note from my brother this morning, in which he sang your praises very loudly.’

“ ‘I was just looking for the offices when you came.’

“ ‘We have not got our name up yet, for we only secured these temporary premises last week. Come up with me and we will talk the matter over.’

“I followed him to the top of a very lofty stair, and there right under the slates were a couple of empty dusty little rooms, uncarpeted and uncurtained, into which he led me. I had thought of a great office with shining tables and rows of clerks such as I was used to, and I daresay I stared rather straight at the two deal chairs and one little table, which with a ledger and a waste-paper basket, made

up the whole furniture.

“ ‘Don’t be disheartened, Mr. Pycroft,’ said my new acquaintance, seeing the length of my face. ‘Rome was not built in a day, and we have lots of money at our backs, though we don’t cut much dash yet in offices. Pray sit down and let me have your letter.’

“I gave it to him, and he read it over very carefully.

“ ‘You seem to have made a vast impression upon my brother Arthur,’ said he, ‘and I know that he is a pretty shrewd judge. He swears by London, you know, and I by Birmingham, but this time I shall follow his advice. Pray consider yourself definitely engaged.’

“ ‘What are my duties?’ I asked.

“ ‘You will eventually manage the great depot in Paris, which will pour a flood of English crockery into the shops of a hundred and thirty-four agents in France. The purchase will be completed in a week, and meanwhile you will remain in Birmingham and make yourself useful.’

“ ‘How?’

“For answer, he took a big red book out of a drawer.

“ ‘This is a directory of Paris,’ said he, ‘with the trades after the names of the people. I want you to take it home with you, and to mark off all the hardware-sellers, with their addresses. It would be of the greatest use to me to have them.’

“ ‘Surely, there are classified lists?’ I suggested.

“ ‘Not reliable ones. Their system is different from ours. Stick at it, and let me have the lists by Monday, at twelve. Good-day, Mr. Pycroft. If you continue to show zeal and intelligence you will find the company a good master.’

“I went back to the hotel with the big book under my arm, and with very conflicting feelings in my breast. On the one hand, I was definitely engaged and had a hundred pounds in my pocket; on the other, the look of the offices, the absence of name on the wall, and other of the points which would strike a business man had left a bad impression as to the position of my employers. However, come what might, I had my money, so I settled down to my task. All Sunday I was kept hard at work, and yet by Monday I had only got as far as H. I went round to my employer, found him in the same dismantled kind of room, and was told to keep at it until Wednesday, and then come again. On Wednesday it was still unfinished, so I hammered away until Friday—that is, yesterday. Then I brought it round to Mr. Harry Pinner.

“ ‘Thank you very much,’ said he, ‘I fear that I underrated the difficulty of the task. This list will be of very material assistance to me.’

“ ‘It took some time,’ said I.

“ ‘And now,’ said he, ‘I want you to make a list of the furniture shops, for

they all sell crockery.’

“ ‘Very good.’

“ ‘And you can come up to-morrow evening at seven and let me know how you are getting on. Don’t overwork yourself. A couple of hours at Day’s Music Hall²⁸ in the evening would do you no harm after your labours.’ He laughed as he spoke, and I saw with a thrill that his second tooth upon the left-hand side had been very badly stuffed with gold.”

Sherlock Holmes rubbed his hands with delight, and I stared with astonishment at our client.

“You may well look surprised, Dr. Watson, but it is this way,” said he: “When I was speaking to the other chap in London, at the time that he laughed at my not going to Mawson’s, I happened to notice that his tooth was stuffed in this very identical fashion. The glint of the gold in each case caught my eye, you see. When I put that with the voice and figure being the same, and only those things altered which might be changed by a razor or a wig, I could not doubt that it was the same man. Of course you expect two brothers to be alike, but not that they should have the same tooth stuffed in the same way. He bowed me out, and I found myself in the street, hardly knowing whether I was on my head or my heels. Back I went to my hotel, put my head in a basin of cold water, and tried to think it out. Why had he sent me from London to Birmingham? Why had he got there before me? And why had he written a letter from himself to himself? It was altogether too much for me, and I could make no sense of it. And then suddenly it struck me that what was dark to me might be very light to Mr. Sherlock Holmes. I had just time to get up to town by the night train to see him this morning, and to bring you both back with me to Birmingham.”

There was a pause after the stockbroker’s clerk had concluded his surprising experience. Then Sherlock Holmes cocked his eye at me, leaning back on the cushions with a pleased and yet critical face, like a connoisseur who has just taken his first sip of a comet vintage.²⁹

“Rather fine, Watson, is it not?” said he. “There are points in it which please me. I think that you will agree with me that an interview with Mr. Arthur Harry³⁰ Pinner in the temporary offices of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, Limited, would be a rather interesting experience for both of us.”

“But how can we do it?” I asked.

“Oh, easily enough,” said Hall Pycroft, cheerily. “You are two friends of mine who are in want of a billet, and what could be more natural than that I should bring you both round to the managing director?”

“Quite so! Of course!” said Holmes. “I should like to have a look at the

gentleman and see if I can make anything of his little game. What qualities have you, my friend, which would make your services so valuable? Or is it possible that—” He began biting his nails and staring blankly out of the window, and we hardly drew another word from him until we were in New Street.



At seven o'clock that evening we were walking, the three of us, down Corporation Street to the company's offices.

“It is no use our being at all before our time,” said our client. “He only comes there to see me apparently, for the place is deserted up to the very hour he names.”

“That is suggestive,” remarked Holmes.

“By Jove, I told you so!” cried the clerk. “That's he walking ahead of us there.”

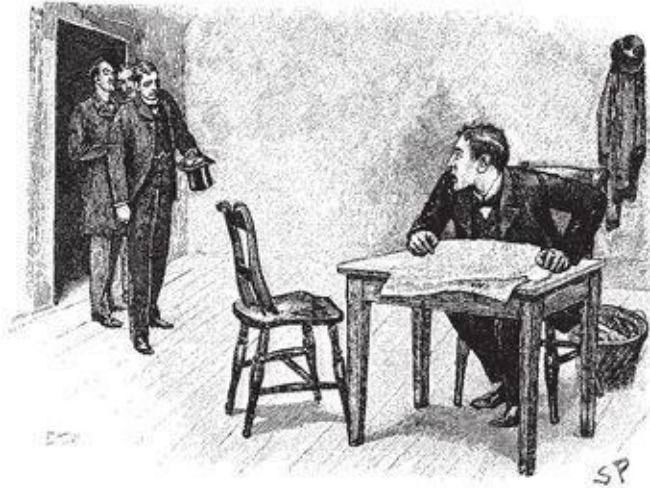
He pointed to a smallish, blond,³¹ well-dressed man, who was bustling along the other side of the road. As we watched him he looked across at a boy who was bawling out the latest edition of the evening paper, and, running over among the cabs and 'buses, he bought one from him. Then, clutching it in his hand, he vanished through a doorway.

“There he goes!” cried Hall Pycroft. “Those are the company's offices into which he has gone. Come with me and I'll fix it up as easily as possible.”

Following his lead we ascended five stories, until we found ourselves outside a half-opened door, at which our client tapped. A voice within bade us “Come-in,” and we entered a bare, unfurnished room such as Hall Pycroft had described. At the single table sat the man whom we had seen in the street, with his evening paper spread out in front of him, and as he looked up at us it seemed to me that I had never looked upon a face which bore such marks of grief, and of something beyond grief—of a horror such as comes to few men in a lifetime. His brow glistened with perspiration, his cheeks were of the dull dead white of a fish's belly, and his eyes were wild and staring. He looked at his clerk as though he failed to recognise him, and I could see, by the astonishment depicted upon our conductor's face, that this was by no means the usual appearance of his employer.

“You look ill, Mr. Pinner!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, I am not very well,” answered the other, making obvious efforts to pull himself together, and licking his dry lips before he spoke. “Who are these gentlemen whom you have brought with you?”



“He looked up at us.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“One is Mr. Harris, of Bermondsey, and the other is Mr. Price, of this town,” said our clerk, glibly. “They are friends of mine, and gentlemen of experience, but they have been out of a place for some little time, and they hoped that perhaps you might find an opening for them in the company’s employment.”



“I never looked upon a face which bore such marks of
grief.”

W. H. Hyde, *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (Harpers, 1893)

“Very possibly! very possibly!” cried Mr. Pinner, with a ghastly smile. “Yes, I

have no doubt that we shall be able to do something for you. What is your particular line, Mr. Harris?"

"I am an accountant," said Holmes.

"Ah, yes, we shall want something of the sort. And you, Mr. Price?"

"A clerk," said I.

"I have every hope that the company may accommodate you. I will let you know about it as soon as we come to any conclusion. And now I beg that you will go. For God's sake leave me to myself!"

These last words were shot out of him, as though the constraint which he was evidently setting upon himself had suddenly and utterly burst asunder. Holmes and I glanced at each other, and Hall Pycroft took a step towards the table.

"You forget, Mr. Pinner, that I am here by appointment to receive some directions from you," said he.

"Certainly, Mr. Pycroft, certainly," the other resumed in a calmer tone. "You may wait here a moment and there is no reason why your friends should not wait with you. I will be entirely at your service in three minutes, if I might trespass upon your patience so far." He rose with a very courteous air, and, bowing to us, he passed out through a door at the farther end of the room, which he closed behind him.

"What now?" whispered Holmes. "Is he giving us the slip?"

"Impossible," answered Pycroft.

"Why so?"

"That door leads into an inner room."

"There is no exit?"

"None."

"Is it furnished?"

"It was empty yesterday."

"Then what on earth can he be doing? There is something which I don't understand in this matter. If ever a man was three parts mad with terror, that man's name is Pinner. What can have put the shivers on him?"

"He suspects that we are detectives," I suggested.

"That's it," cried Pycroft.

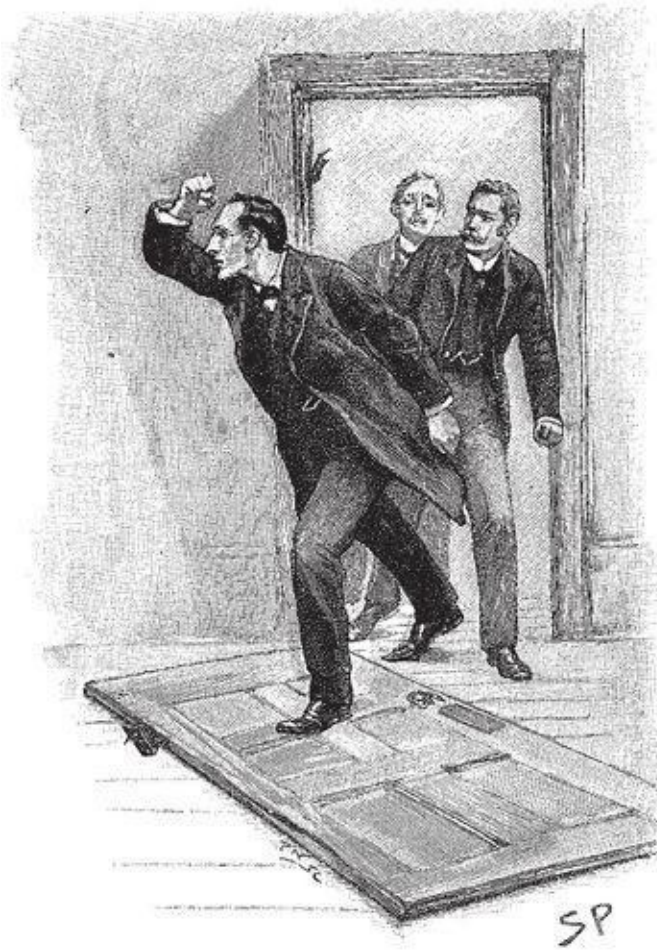
Holmes shook his head. "He did not turn pale. He was pale when we entered the room," said he. "It is just possible that—"

His words were interrupted by a sharp rat-tat from the direction of the inner door.

"What the deuce is he knocking at his own door for?" cried the clerk.

Again and much louder came the rat-tat-tat. We all gazed expectantly at the closed door. Glancing at Holmes I saw his face turn rigid, and he leaned forward

in intense excitement. Then suddenly came a low gurgling, gargling sound and a brisk drumming upon woodwork. Holmes sprang frantically across the room and pushed at the door. It was fastened on the inner side. Following his example, we threw ourselves upon it with all our weight. One hinge snapped, then the other, and down came the door with a crash. Rushing over it, we found ourselves in the inner room.



“We found ourselves in the inner room.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

It was empty.

But it was only for a moment that we were at fault. At one corner, the corner nearest the room which we had left, there was a second door. Holmes sprang to it, and pulled it open. A coat and waistcoat were lying on the floor, and from a hook behind the door, with his own braces round his neck, was hanging the managing director of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company. His knees were drawn up, his head hung at a dreadful angle to his body, and the clatter of his

heels against the door made the noise which had broken in upon our conversation. In an instant I had caught him round the waist and held him up, while Holmes and Pycroft untied the elastic bands which had disappeared between the livid creases of skin. Then we carried him into the other room, where he lay with a slate-coloured face, puffing his purple lips in and out with every breath—a dreadful wreck of all that he had been but five minutes before.

“What do you think of him, Watson?” asked Holmes.

I stooped over him and examined him. His pulse was feeble and intermittent, but his breathing grew longer, and there was a little shivering of his eyelids which showed a thin white slit of ball beneath.

“It has been touch and go with him,” said I, “but he’ll live now. Just open that window, and hand me the water carafe.” I undid his collar, poured the cold water over his face, and raised and sank his arms until he drew a long, natural breath.³²

“It’s only a question of time now,” said I as I turned away from him.

Holmes stood by the table, with his hands deep in his trousers pockets and his chin upon his breast.

“I suppose we ought to call the police in now,” said he; “and yet I confess that I’d like to give them a complete case when they come.”

“It’s a blessed mystery to me,” cried Pycroft, scratching his head. “Whatever they wanted to bring me all the way up here for, and then—”

“Pooh! All that is clear enough,” said Holmes, impatiently. “It is this last sudden move.”

“You understand the rest, then?”

“I think that it is fairly obvious. What do you say, Watson?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “I must confess that I am out of my depths,” said I.

“Oh, surely, if you consider the events at first they can only point to one conclusion.”

“What do you make of them?”

“Well, the whole thing hinges upon two points. The first is the making of Pycroft write a declaration by which he entered the service of this preposterous company. Do you not see how very suggestive that is?”

“I am afraid I miss the point.”

“Well, why did they want him to do it? Not as a business matter, for these arrangements are usually verbal, and there was no earthly business reason why this should be an exception. Don’t you see, my young friend, that they were very anxious to obtain a specimen of your handwriting, and had no other way of doing it?”

“And why?”

“Quite so. Why? When we answer that we have made some progress with our

little problem. Why? There can be only one adequate reason. Someone wanted to learn to imitate your writing, and had to procure a specimen of it first. And now if we pass on to the second point we find that each throws light upon the other. That point is the request made by Pinner that you should not resign your place, but should leave the manager of this important business in the full expectation that a Mr. Hall Pycroft, whom he had never seen, was about to enter the office upon the Monday morning.”

“My God!” cried our client, “what a blind beetle I have been!”

“Now you see the point about the handwriting. Suppose that someone turned up in your place who wrote a completely different hand from that in which you had applied for the vacancy, of course the game would have been up. But in the interval the rogue had learnt to imitate you, and his position was therefore secure, as I presume that nobody in the office had ever set eyes upon you.”

“Not a soul,” groaned Hall Pycroft.

“Very good. Of course it was of the utmost importance to prevent you from thinking better of it, and also to keep you from coming into contact with anyone who might tell you that your double was at work in Mawson’s office. Therefore, they gave you a handsome advance on your salary, and ran you off to the Midlands, where they gave you enough work to do to prevent your going to London, where you might have burst their little game up. That is all plain enough.”

“But why should this man pretend to be his own brother?”

“Well, that is pretty clear also. There are evidently only two of them in it. The other is personating you at the office. This one acted as your engager, and then found that he could not find you an employer without admitting a third person into his plot. That he was most unwilling to do. He changed his appearance as far as he could, and trusted that the likeness, which you could not fail to observe, would be put down to a family resemblance. But for the happy chance of the gold stuffing, your suspicions would probably have never been aroused.”

Hall Pycroft shook his clenched hands in the air. “Good Lord!” he cried. “While I have been fooled in this way, what has this other Hall Pycroft been doing at Mawson’s? What should we do, Mr. Holmes? Tell me what to do!”

“We must wire to Mawson’s.”

“They shut at twelve on Saturdays.”



“Pycroft shook his clenched hands in the air.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Never mind; there may be some door-keeper or attendant—”

“Ah, yes; they keep a permanent guard there on account of the value of the securities that they hold. I remember hearing it talked of in the City.”

“Very good, we shall wire to him, and see if all is well, and if a clerk of your name is working there. That is clear enough, but what is not so clear is why at sight of us one of the rogues should instantly walk out of the room and hang himself.”

“The paper!” croaked a voice behind us. The man was sitting up, blanched and ghastly, with returning reason in his eyes, and hands which rubbed nervously at the broad red band which still encircled his throat.

“The paper! Of course!” yelled Holmes, in a paroxysm of excitement. “Idiot that I was! I thought so much of our visit that the paper never entered my head for an instant. To be sure, the secret must lie there.” He flattened it out upon the table, and a cry of triumph burst from his lips. “Look at this, Watson!” he cried. “It is a London paper, an early edition of the *Evening Standard*.³³ Here is what we want. Look at the headlines:—‘Crime in the City. Murder at Mawson &

Williams's. Gigantic Attempted Robbery; Capture of the Criminal.' Here, Watson, we are all equally anxious to hear it, so kindly read it aloud to us."

It appeared from its position in the paper to have been the one event of importance in town, and the account of it ran in this way:—

A desperate attempt at robbery, culminating in the death of one man and the capture of the criminal, occurred this afternoon in the City. For some time back Mawson & Williams', the famous financial house, have been the guardians of securities which amount in the aggregate to a sum of considerably over a million sterling. So conscious was the manager of the responsibility which devolved upon him in consequence of the great interests at stake, that safes of the very latest construction have been employed, and an armed watchman has been left day and night in the building. It appears that last week a new clerk, named Hall Pycroft, was engaged by the firm.³⁴ This person appears to have been none other than Beddington, the famous forger and cracksman,³⁵ who, with his brother, has only recently emerged from a five years' spell of penal servitude. By some means, which are not yet clear, he succeeded in winning, under a false name, this official position in the office, which he utilized in order to obtain mouldings of various locks, and a thorough knowledge of the position of the strongroom and the safes.



Succeeded after a most desperate resistance in arresting
him.

Milton Werschkul, Sunday Portland *Oregonian*, September 24, 1911

It is customary at Mawson's for the clerks to leave at midday on Saturday. Sergeant Tuson, of the City Police, was somewhat surprised, therefore, to see a gentleman with a carpet bag come down the steps at twenty minutes past one. His suspicions being aroused, the sergeant followed the man, and with the aid of Constable Pollock succeeded, after a most desperate resistance, in arresting him. It was at once clear that a daring and gigantic robbery had been committed. Nearly a hundred thousand pounds' worth of American railway bonds, with a large amount of scrip³⁶ in other mines and companies, were discovered in the bag.

On examining the premises the body of the unfortunate watchman was found doubled up and thrust into the largest of the safes, where it would not have been discovered until Monday morning had it not been for the prompt action of Sergeant Tuson. The man's skull had been shattered by a blow from a poker delivered from behind. There could be no doubt that Beddington had obtained entrance by pretending that he had left something behind him, and having murdered the watchman, rapidly rifled the large safe, and then made off with his booty. His brother, who usually works with him, has not appeared in this job, as far as can at present be ascertained, although the police are making energetic inquiries as to his whereabouts.

“Well, we may save the police some little trouble in that direction,” said Holmes, glancing at the haggard figure huddled up by the window. “Human nature is a strange mixture, Watson. You see that even a villain and a murderer can inspire such affection that his brother turns to suicide when he learns that his neck is forfeited. However, we have no choice as to our action.³⁷ The doctor and I will remain on guard, Mr. Pycroft, if you will have the kindness to step out for the police.”³⁸



“Glancing at the haggard figure.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

1 “The StockBroker’s Clerk” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in March 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on March 11, 1893.

2 Although some scholars conjure up as many as six different wives for John H. Watson, this is plainly a reference to Watson’s marriage to Mary Morstan, for Holmes later says: “I trust that Mrs. Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of the ‘Sign of Four.’ ” The precise date is considered in the *Chronological Table*.

3 Prior to his marriage to Mary Morstan, Watson had shown no inclination to take up private practice. He had gone straight from his schooling and residency into the army. On his return to London, Watson had effectively given up medicine. Although he was able to save Mr. Melas from carbon monoxide poisoning (in “The Greek Interpreter”) and opine on Thaddeus Sholto’s heart condition (in *The Sign of Four*), and although he continued to read medical literature (a text on pathology is mentioned in *The Sign of Four*, and he was evidently familiar with Dr. Trevelyan’s work in “The Resident Patient”), he conducted no practice of medicine. His writing career was in its early stages, with only *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* in print, neither of which would have brought him fortune. Therefore, not surprisingly, he had to consider how to support his wife and himself. Perhaps observation of his friend Conan Doyle convinced him that building a practice on his own could be a long and unfruitful effort, and so he turned to the more rapid means of buying another doctor’s practice.

Yet one wonders how the cash-strapped Watson could have afforded such a purchase. The usual price for a practice at that time, according to June Thomson’s biography of Holmes and Watson, was one to one and a half times the annual income, and in *The Sign of Four*, Watson bemoans his poor financial condition when he first thinks of courting Mary. Ian McQueen points out that his activities in that case did nothing to improve his situation but goes on to concede, “Possibly his bankers obliged him with a loan; or maybe Mary was able to realise some money on her pearls.”

4 The former name for chorea or Sydenham’s chorea, St. Vitus’s dance is a disease of the nervous system characterized by involuntary, irregular contractions of facial and other muscles. (St. Vitus was the patron saint of dancers, and in the Middle Ages, those afflicted with the disease were said to worship at his shrine.) Sydenham’s chorea is a children’s disease and frequently arises as a complication of rheumatic fever; Mr.

Farquhar, whose malady was “of the nature” of St. Vitus’s dance, presumably suffered instead from the more serious Huntington’s disease, which is hereditary and tends to be diagnosed first in middle age.

5 “Youth is, after all, a somewhat elastic term,” Samuel R. Meaker, M.D., writes, “but Watson was a ripe 36 when he started. As to energy, he admitted frankly at his first meeting with Holmes that he was extremely lazy, and there is no evidence to show that he later reformed in this respect, except for brief periods.”

6 That is, the journal of the British Medical Association, founded in 1832. This organisation made significant progress in reforming the medical profession by lobbying for the passage of the 1858 Medical Act, which established a register of qualified physicians, and the 1886 Medical Act, which required doctors to train in medicine, surgery, and midwifery rather than in one of those fields alone.

7 The accommodating neighbour is also mentioned in “The Final Problem.” But is it Anstruther (mentioned in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery”) or Jackson (mentioned in “The Crooked Man”) or D. Martin Dakin, leaning to the latter choice, comments, “As Watson had only been on the job three months, it is astonishing to learn that both [Watson and Jackson] in that time had had enough days off to set up what appears by now to have been an established routine. One wonders what . . . their respective patients thought of these frequent switches . . .”

8 Didn’t Watson just tell him that?

9 Popular folklore has it that only those who live within hearing distance of the bells of the church St. Mary le Bow (the “Bow Bells”) in Cheapside, East London, can rightly refer to themselves as Cockney. Residents of that area’s neighbourhoods—which in the Victorian era were often desperately overcrowded—considered themselves “true” Londoners, given that they tended to be born and raised in the City itself.

A Cockney is distinguished and even defined by his accent, for better or for worse. E. Cobham Brewer, in his monumental *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, describes a Cockney as “one possessing London peculiarities of speech, etc.; one wholly ignorant of country sports, country life, farm animals, plants, and so on.” And in George Bernard Shaw’s 1913 play *Pygmalion*, Shaw makes a valiant attempt to reproduce Eliza Doolittle’s cockney accent, laboriously sounding out only a few lines before abandoning the effort altogether.

THE FLOWER GIRL: Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y’ de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel’s flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f’them? [Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London.]

(Whether or not Audrey Hepburn did Eliza’s accent justice in the film *My Fair Lady* is a matter best left to the experts.)

Mr. Hall Pycroft’s speech as described by Watson does not seem to have anything near that sort of colour, though whether this is attributable to Watson’s inability to re-create his accent or to the fact that Pycroft’s station as a “smart young City man” is considerably higher than that of a poor flower girl remains open to interpretation.

10 These regiments were part of a long British tradition of part-time military service, formally organised in 1863 to aid the larger, recruitment-based militia in repelling any threatened invasion of Britain. (Volunteer units had also previously served in the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.) By 1890, the number of volunteers stood at a quarter of a million. With the creation of the Territorial Force—later the Territorial Army—in 1907, however, combining the militia and the volunteers, the volunteer regiments became obsolete. Shortly before the outbreak of World War I, Arthur Conan Doyle took it upon himself to revive the volunteer service, a movement he undertook when his enlistment application was denied. (Doyle was fifty-five at the time.) Following the formation of Doyle’s own local Crowborough Company of the Sixth

Royal Sussex Volunteer Regiment, the new force quickly grew to 200,000 men.

11 Pycroft, speaking in the modern slang of the day, refers here to an inexperienced youngster or a new recruit. Presumably, the expression is related to the more familiar American term for a newcomer, “Johnny-come-lately.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* reports “Johnny Raw” as an expression referring to inexperienced soldiers as early as 1813. Numerous sources have been used in preparing this edition to discern the meaning of obscure words in the Canon, and no particular source can be regarded as definitive. One favourite of this editor, John Camden Hotten’s *The Slang Dictionary*, published in London in 1865, lists over 120 similar works in its bibliography!

12 That is, victimised.

13 Throughout much of the 1800s, Venezuela was beset by financial and political difficulties owing to an unfortunate combination of civil wars, bad administration, debt, and complications arising from the construction of railways and other public works. During this period, the main export of Venezuela (which had become an independent state in 1830) was coffee; when prices plummeted in the 1840s, a series of political struggles and volatile military dictatorships followed suit. The longest rule of this latter half of the century belonged to dictator General Antonio Guzmán Blanco (1870–1888), who restored peace but, having filled his own coffers in the process, was ousted from office in 1888 and eventually succeeded by his ally, General Joaquín Crespo (1892–1897). During Crespo’s troubled regime, relations with Great Britain deteriorated. Venezuela had in fact broken off diplomatic ties with Great Britain in 1887 over a territorial dispute, which concerned land claimed by both Venezuela and British Guiana (now Guyana). The United States intervened, settling upon terms mostly favourable to Great Britain in 1899.

In the years to come, Venezuela’s economic climate would decline even further. So substantial would accumulated unpaid foreign loans become that in 1902, Great Britain, Germany, and Italy blockaded Venezuela until the outstanding claims, mediated by the United States, were adjusted in Caracas in 1903.

14 To fail.

15 Position.

16 The East Central postal district houses virtually all of the London stockbrokerage enterprises. In the United Telephone Company’s list of subscribers classified by trade, published in 1885, over 200 firms are listed under “Brokers (Stock and Share),” all in E.C.

17 Vern Goslin is astonished by the unnamed manager of Mawson & Williams, who hired an unknown candidate without a personal interview.

18 Turn.

19 The pay.

20 Lodgings.

21 A pejorative term for a Jew. Although the precise origin of the word is unknown, some suggest that it comes from the Yiddish expression *miesse meshina*, a curse; other sources, such as *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang*, point to the Yiddish *shayner*, which literally means “beautiful” but is more familiarly used to signify a pious person or a traditional Jew (often wearing a full beard). Assimilated Jews, such as those who had emigrated from Germany to England in the early part of the nineteenth century, would use the term to mock those who followed for being old-fashioned and tied to the ways of the old country.

22 The Stock Exchange, familiarly known in the City as “the house,” was formed in 1773 by a group of stockbrokers that had been trading securities informally at Jonathan’s Coffee House in Change Alley. (The practice of conducting business out of coffeehouses was not uncommon; ship owners and shipping

underwriters often met at Edward Lloyd's Coffee House, which later became Lloyd's of London.) In 1801 a group of the members raised money for the construction of the building, and rules for the exchange were established the following year; the rules subsequently have been amended several times. In 1973 the exchange merged with several regional stock exchanges in Great Britain.

23 Pinner is here testing Pycroft's knowledge of current stock prices, information which the clerks were expected to carry about in their heads. In the *Strand Magazine* and some American editions of the Canon, the bid and asked prices are given as "One hundred and six and a quarter to one hundred and five and seven-eighths." Invariably, prices are quoted as "bid" and "asked" (that is, the amount for which the broker will buy the shares and the amount for which the broker will sell the shares) and therefore range from low to high (that is, the broker expects to make a profit by selling shares for more than the broker's purchase price). Watson made this correction in the first English book publication of "The StockBroker's Clerk."

24 R. M. McLaren suggests that "Ayrshires" probably refers to the stock of the former Glasgow and South Western Railway. The other two companies also ceased to conduct business before the end of the nineteenth century.

25 A bet.

26 On the inside, "in the know."

27 After extensive examination of extant buildings in Birmingham, as well as maps and published guidebooks, Philip Weller identifies the location of the company's offices as No. 3 Corporation Street, a five-storey building on the downhill stretch of Corporation Street.

28 The 1894 *Baedeker's Great Britain* lists a Day's Music Hall at Smallbrook Street in Birmingham. Music halls, quite popular at that time, originated in the London pubs, where patrons were encouraged to sing along with local performers. So widespread did this type of entertainment become that a law was passed in 1843 that allowed pubs to license specific rooms for theatrical use. Concentrated in the East End of London and catering primarily to the middle classes, music halls spawned such personalities as Dan Leno, an immensely gifted comic performer and "pantomime dame" (who dressed up in shawl, wig, and button boots to play a character named "Mother Goose"), and Marie Lloyd, whose rags-to-riches story and rough fearlessness enabled "this weird-looking girl with buck teeth and thin hair," according to A. N. Wilson, "to electrify an audience of cynical drunks from the moment she got up and sang 'The boy I love is up in the gallery.' "

29 That is, the vintage of a particularly good year. In ancient times, the superstition grew up that the passage of a comet affected the quality of the grape harvest and hence the wine produced from the harvest.

30 In the English book text, the middle name is given as "Henry." "Harry" is a common English diminutive for "Henry"; see "The Crooked Man," where Henry Wood refers to himself as "Harry Wood."

31 In the American texts, Harry Pinner is described as "dark," not "blond." This is consistent with Pycroft's earlier description of Pinner, but Pycroft already indicated that he concluded that the man he described as "dark-haired" was wearing a wig. The "blond" hair must be Pinner's own hair.

32 This method of restoration of breathing was devised by Dr. Henry Robert Silvester (1829–1908), who described it in an 1858 *British Medical Journal* article entitled "A new method of resuscitating still-born children, and for restoring persons apparently drowned or dead." Silvester advocated raising the patient's arms above his or her head to expand the rib cage; lowering the arms against the chest forced the expiration of breath. Silvester's method was adopted by the Humane Society and the National Life Boat Institution. An article in the *Lancet* of August 11, 1877, described a new method advocated by one Dr. B. Howard of America, using pressure on the chest from above (the patient being placed on his back). At the meeting of

the British Medical Association at Manchester in 1877, Dr. Howard demonstrated his method. (Neither method prescribes a dose of cold water thrown in the face.) The Schafer method, (published in 1904), in which the patient was placed face-down and pressure applied to the back, superseded these techniques, to be in turn replaced by the Holger Nielsen method (1932), which involved a combination of back pressure and a lifting of the arms. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation did not become the standard until the 1950s, perhaps owing to a Victorian discomfort with any rescue effort that required strangers to touch lips.

33 Mr. Pinner's possession of the early edition of the paper is an act of wizardry indeed. "If everything went well it would have been just possible to get a few [copies] of that [issue of the *Evening Standard*] to Birmingham by 7 P.M.," John Hyslop writes in "Sherlock Holmes and the Press." But, Hyslop concludes, it could only have been a *late* edition of the paper. Furthermore, the Birmingham *Evening Despatch*, with a much fuller story, ought to have been readily available by this time.

34 "When the new clerk presented himself for duty," reasons Vern Goslin, "surely the manager must have been puzzled to meet, not 'a smart young City man' in his twenties, but a middle-aged man, with traces of foreign origin."

35 A burglar. Arthur Conan Doyle's brother-in-law, E. W. Hornung, wrote a highly successful series of stories, the first of which are collected in *The Amateur Cracksman* (1899), featuring gentleman-thief A. J. Raffles and his companion, Bunny.

36 Meaning a temporary certificate or receipt for shares subscribed. The mysterious "Mr. Cornelius" ("The Norwood Builder") also had scrip in his portfolio.

37 Vern Goslin is highly critical of what he terms Holmes's "inept handling" of the case. Holmes wasted his time by hurrying to Birmingham in the morning, even though he could not see Pinner until early evening. Instead, he should have been interviewing the manager of Mawson's and alerted the police. Holmes could have captured Beddington, saving the watchman's life, and still have been in Birmingham before seven o'clock to deal with Mr. Pinner.

38 Several scholars point out the similarities of the criminal plot in "The StockBroker's Clerk" (which likely occurred in 1889 or earlier), "The Red-Headed League" (1890), and "The Three Garridebs" (1902). Robert E. Robinson, in "The Beddington Plot," explains that although "The StockBroker's Clerk" had not been published at the time of the events recorded in "The Red-Headed League," the criminal John Clay could have learned the details of Beddington's plan from newspaper accounts; Killer Evans, the villain of "The Three Garridebs," could have read Watson's published account of "The StockBroker's Clerk" and borrowed the idea from Beddington. Holmes evidently learned from the events as well. While in "The StockBroker's Clerk," Holmes was miles from the scene of the crime when it occurred, by the time of "The Red-Headed League" and "The Three Garridebs," Holmes recognized the "Beddington plot" immediately and was prepared for the criminals. But, Robinson notes, "[w]hile Holmes was profiting by each exposure to the Beddington Plot, Watson was learning nothing at all. In spite of his participation in the Pycroft matter, his reaction to [the events of "The Red-Headed League" and "The Three Garridebs"] was one of total bewilderment."

THE “GLORIA SCOTT”¹

Virtually all that we know of Holmes before his fateful meeting with Watson in 1881 is contained in “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” and the case that follows, “The Musgrave Ritual.” The former is a recollection by Holmes, in which he tells Watson of his first case, brought to him by Victor Trevor (one of only three persons ever acknowledged by Holmes to be his friend) while attending college. Trevor’s father, about whom Holmes makes some startling deductions, sets Holmes on the path to his career as a consulting detective. Holmes helps Victor to discover the truth about his father when the latter dies suddenly, but Holmes’s skills are less than impressive: He solves a simple cipher and reads a confession. Watson has no active rôle in the account, so we must count this case as the first example of Holmes’s own narrative voice. There are many gaps in Holmes’s account of those early years—most intriguingly, what college he attended. The clues in this tale and several others have

fueled generations of speculation.

I HAVE SOME PAPERS here,” said my friend Sherlock Holmes, as we sat one winter’s night on either side of the fire, “which I really think, Watson, that it would be worth your while to glance over. These are the documents in the extraordinary case of the *Gloria Scott*,² and this is the message which struck Justice of the Peace Trevor dead with horror when he read it.”

He had picked from a drawer a little tarnished cylinder, and, undoing the tape, he handed me a short note scrawled upon a half sheet of slate-grey paper.

The supply of game for London is going steadily up. Head-keeper Hudson, we believe, has been now told to receive all orders for fly paper and for preservation of your hen pheasant’s life.

As I glanced up from reading this enigmatical message I saw Holmes chuckling at the expression upon my face.

“You look a little bewildered,” said he.

“I cannot see how such a message as this could inspire horror. It seems to me to be rather grotesque than otherwise.”

“Very likely. Yet the fact remains that the reader, who was a fine, robust old man, was knocked clean down by it, as if it had been the butt end of a pistol.”

“You arouse my curiosity,” said I. “But why did you say just now that there were very particular reasons why I should study this case?”

“Because it was the first in which I was ever engaged,”

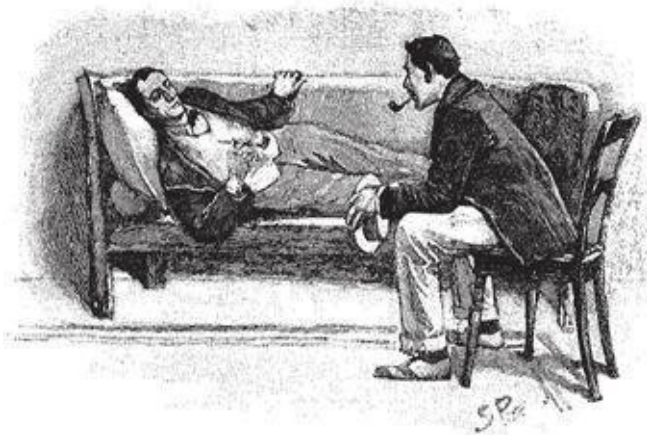
I had often endeavoured to elicit from my companion what had first turned his mind in the direction of criminal research, but had never caught him before in a communicative humour. Now he sat forward in his arm-chair and spread out the documents upon his knees. Then he lit his pipe and sat for some time smoking and turning them over.

“You never heard me talk of Victor Trevor?” he asked. “He was the only friend I made during the two years that I was at college.³ I was never a very sociable fellow, Watson, always rather fond of moping in my rooms and working out my own little methods of thought, so that I never mixed much with the men of my year. Bar fencing and boxing⁴ I had few athletic tastes, and then

my line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows, so that we had no points of contact at all. Trevor was the only man I knew, and that only through the accident of his bull-terrier⁵ freezing⁶ on to my ankle one morning as I went down to chapel.

“It was a prosaic way of forming a friendship, but it was effective. I was laid by the heels for ten days, and Trevor used to come in to inquire after me. At first it was only a minute’s chat, but soon his visits lengthened, and before the end of the term we were close friends. He was a hearty, full-blooded fellow, full of spirits and energy, the very opposite to me in most respects; but we had some subjects in common, and it was a bond of union when I found that he was as friendless as I. Finally, he invited me down to his father’s place at Donnithorpe, in Norfolk, and I accepted his hospitality for a month of the long vacation.

“Old Trevor was evidently a man of some wealth and consideration, a J.P.⁷ and a landed proprietor. Donnithorpe is a little hamlet just to the north of Langmere,⁸ in the country of the Broads.⁹ The house was an old-fashioned, wide-spread, oak-beamed brick building, with a fine lime-lined avenue leading up to it. There was excellent wild duck shooting in the fens, remarkably good fishing,¹⁰ a small but select library, taken over, as I understood, from a former occupant, and a tolerable cook, so that he would be a fastidious man who could not put in a pleasant month there.



“Trevor used to come in to inquire after me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Trevor senior was a widower, and my friend was his only son.

“There had been a daughter, I heard, but she had died of diphtheria¹¹ while on a visit to Birmingham. The father interested me extremely. He was a man of little culture, but with a considerable amount of rude strength, both physically

and mentally. He knew hardly any books, but he had travelled far, had seen much of the world, and had remembered all that he had learned. In person he was a thick-set, burly man, with a shock of grizzled hair, a brown, weather-beaten face, and eyes which were keen to the verge of fierceness. Yet he had a reputation for kindness and charity on the country side, and was noted for the leniency of his sentences from the bench.

“One evening, shortly after my arrival, we were sitting over a glass of port¹² after dinner, when young Trevor began to talk about those habits of observation and inference which I had already formed into a system, although I had not yet appreciated the part which they were to play in my life. The old man evidently thought that his son was exaggerating in his description of one or two trivial feats which I had performed.

“ ‘Come now, Mr. Holmes,’ said he, laughing good-humouredly, ‘I’m an excellent subject, if you can deduce anything from me.’

“ ‘I fear there is not very much,’ I answered. ‘I might suggest that you have gone about in fear of some personal attack within the last twelve months.’

“The laugh faded from his lips, and he stared at me in great surprise.

“ ‘Well, that’s true enough,’ said he. ‘You know, Victor,’ turning to his son, ‘when we broke up that poaching gang¹³ they swore to knife us; and Sir Edward Hoby¹⁴ has actually been attacked. I’ve always been on my guard since then, though I have no idea how you know it.’

“ ‘You have a very handsome stick,’ I answered. ‘By the inscription, I observed that you had not had it more than a year. But you have taken some pains to bore the head of it, and pour melted lead into the hole, so as to make it a formidable weapon. I argued that you would not take such precautions unless you had some danger to fear.’

“ ‘Anything else?’ he asked, smiling.

“ ‘You have boxed a good deal in your youth.’

“ ‘Right again. How did you know it? Is my nose knocked a little out of the straight?’

“ ‘No,’ said I. ‘It is your ears. They have the peculiar flattening and thickening which marks the boxing man.’

“ ‘Anything else?’

“ ‘You have done a good deal of digging by your callosities.’¹⁵

“ ‘Made all my money at the gold-fields.’

“ ‘You have been in New Zealand.’

“ ‘Right again.’

“ ‘You have visited Japan.’

“ ‘Quite true.’

“ ‘And you have been most intimately associated with someone whose initials were J. A., and whom you afterwards were eager to entirely forget.’

“Mr. Trevor stood slowly up, fixing his large eyes upon me with a strange wild stare, and then pitched forward, with his face among the nutshells which strewed the cloth, in a dead faint.

“You can imagine, Watson, how shocked both his son and I were. His attack did not last long, however, for when we undid his collar and sprinkled the water from one of the finger glasses¹⁶ over his face, he gave a gasp or two and sat up.

“ ‘Ah, boys!’ said he, forcing a smile. ‘I hope I haven’t frightened you. Strong as I look, there is a weak place in my heart, and it does not take much to knock me over. I don’t know how you manage this, Mr. Holmes, but it seems to me that all the detectives of fact and of fancy would be children in your hands. That’s your line of life, sir, and you may take the word of a man who has seen something of the world.’

“And that recommendation, with the exaggerated estimate of my ability with which he prefaced it, was, if you will believe me, Watson, the very first thing which ever made me feel that a profession might be made out of what had up to that time been the merest hobby. At the moment, however, I was too much concerned at the sudden illness of my host to think of anything else.

“ ‘I hope that I have said nothing to pain you.’ said I.

“ ‘Well, you certainly touched upon rather a tender point. Might I ask how you know, and how much you know?’ He spoke now in a half jesting fashion, but a look of terror still lurked at the back of his eyes.



“Fixed his large blue eyes upon me with a strange wild stare.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“ ‘It is simplicity itself,’ said I. ‘When you bared your arm to draw that fish into the boat I saw that J. A. had been tattooed in the bend of the elbow. The letters were still legible, but it was perfectly clear from their blurred appearance, and from the staining of the skin round them, that efforts had been made to obliterate them. It was obvious, then, that those initials had once been very familiar to you, and that you had afterwards wished to forget them.’

“ ‘What an eye you have!’ he cried with a sigh of relief. ‘It is just as you say. But we won’t talk of it. Of all ghosts, the ghosts of our old loves are the worst. Come into the billiard-room and have a quiet cigar.’

“From that day, amid all his cordiality, there was always a touch of suspicion in Mr. Trevor’s manner towards me. Even his son remarked it. ‘You’ve given the governor such a turn,’ said he, ‘that he’ll never be sure again of what you know and what you don’t know.’ He did not mean to show it, I am sure, but it was so strongly in his mind that it peeped out at every action. At last I became so convinced that I was causing him uneasiness, that I drew my visit to a close. On the very day, however, before I left an incident occurred which proved in the sequel to be of importance.

“We were sitting out upon the lawn on garden chairs, the three of us, basking in the sun and admiring the view across the Broads, when the maid came out to say that there was a man at the door who wanted to see Mr. Trevor.

“ ‘What is his name?’ asked my host.

“ ‘He would not give any.’

“ ‘What does he want, then?’

“ ‘He says that you know him, and that he only wants a moment’s conversation.’

“ ‘Show him round here.’ An instant afterwards there appeared a little wizened fellow with a cringing manner and a shambling style of walking. He wore an open jacket, with a splotch of tar on the sleeve, a red-and-black check shirt, dungaree¹⁷ trousers, and heavy boots badly worn. His face was thin and brown and crafty, with a perpetual smile upon it, which showed an irregular line of yellow teeth, and his crinkled hands were half closed in a way that is distinctive of sailors. As he came slouching across the lawn I heard Mr. Trevor make a sort of hiccoughing noise in his throat, and, jumping out of his chair, he ran into the house. He was back in a moment, and I smelt a strong reek of brandy as he passed me.

“ ‘Well, my man,’ said he. ‘What can I do for you?’

“The sailor stood looking at him with puckered eyes, and with the same loose-lipped smile upon his face.

“ ‘You don’t know me?’ he asked.

“ ‘Why, dear me, it is surely Hudson!’¹⁸ said Mr. Trevor in a tone of surprise.

“ ‘Hudson it is, sir,’ said the seaman. ‘Why, it’s thirty year and more since I saw you last. Here you are in your house, and me still picking my salt meat out of the harness cask.’¹⁹

“ ‘Tut, you will find that I have not forgotten old times,’ cried Mr. Trevor, and, walking towards the sailor, he said something in a low voice. ‘Go into the kitchen,’ he continued out loud, ‘and you will get food and drink. I have no doubt that I shall find you a situation.’

“ ‘Thank you, sir,’ said the seaman, touching his forelock. ‘I’m just off a two-yearer in an eight-knot tramp,²⁰ short-handed at that, and I wants a rest. I thought I’d get it either with Mr. Beddoes or with you.’



“ ‘Hudson, it is, sir,’ said the seaman.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘Ah!’ cried Mr. Trevor. ‘You know where Mr. Beddoes is?’

“ ‘Bless you, sir, I know where all my old friends are,’ said the fellow, with a sinister smile, and he slouched off after the maid to the kitchen. Mr. Trevor mumbled something to us about having been shipmate with the man when he was going back to the diggings, and then, leaving us on the lawn, he went indoors. An hour later, when we entered the house we found him stretched dead drunk upon the dining-room sofa. The whole incident left a most ugly impression upon my mind, and I was not sorry next day to leave Donnithorpe behind me, for I felt that my presence must be a source of embarrassment to my friend.

“All this occurred during the first month of the long vacation. I went up to my

London rooms,²¹ where I spent seven weeks working out a few experiments in organic chemistry. One day, however, when the autumn was far advanced and the vacation drawing to a close, I received a telegram from my friend imploring me to return to Donnithorpe, and saying that he was in great need of my advice and assistance. Of course I dropped everything, and set out for the north²² once more.

“He met me with the dog-cart at the station, and I saw at a glance that the last two months had been very trying ones for him. He had grown thin and careworn, and had lost the loud, cheery manner for which he had been remarkable.

“ ‘The governor is dying,’ were the first words he said.

“ ‘Impossible!’ I cried. ‘What is the matter?’

“ ‘Apoplexy.²³ Nervous shock. He’s been on the verge all day. I doubt if we shall find him alive.’

“I was, as you may think, Watson, horrified at this unexpected news.

“ ‘What has caused it?’ I asked.

“ ‘Ah, that is the point. Jump in, and we can talk it over while we drive. You remember that fellow who came upon the evening before you left us?’

“ ‘Perfectly.’

“ ‘Do you know who it was that we let into the house that day?’

“ ‘I have no idea.’

“ ‘It was the Devil, Holmes,’ he cried.

“I stared at him in astonishment.

“ ‘Yes; it was the Devil himself. We have not had a peaceful hour since—not one. The governor has never held up his head from that evening, and now the life has been crushed out of him, and his heart broken, all through this accursed Hudson.’

“ ‘What power had he, then?’

“ ‘Ah, that is what I would give so much to know. The kindly, charitable, good old governor! How could he have fallen into the clutches of such a ruffian? But I am so glad that you have come, Holmes. I trust very much to your judgment and discretion, and I know that you will advise me for the best.’

“We were dashing along the smooth, white country road, with the long stretch of Broads in front of us glimmering in the red light of the setting sun. From a grove upon our left I could already see the high chimneys and the flagstaff which marked the squire’s dwelling.

“ ‘My father made the fellow gardener,’ said my companion, ‘and then, as that did not satisfy him, he was promoted to be butler. The house seemed to be at his mercy, and he wandered about and did what he chose in it. The maids

complained of his drunken habits and his vile language. The dad raised their wages all round to recompense them for the annoyance. The fellow would take the boat and my father's best gun and treat himself to little shooting parties. And all this with such a sneering, leering, insolent face that I would have knocked him down twenty times over if he had been a man of my own age. I tell you, Holmes, I have had to keep a tight hold upon myself all this time; and now I am asking myself whether, if I had let myself go a little more, I might not have been a wiser man.

“ ‘Well, matters went from bad to worse with us, and this animal, Hudson, became more and more intrusive, until at last, on his making some insolent reply to my father in my presence one day, I took him by the shoulders and turned him out of the room. He slunk away with a livid face, and two venomous eyes which uttered more threats than his tongue could do. I don't know what passed between the poor dad and him after that, but the dad came to me next day and asked me whether I would mind apologizing to Hudson. I refused, as you can imagine, and asked my father how he could allow such a wretch to take such liberties with himself and his household.

“ ‘ “Ah, my boy,” said he, “it is all very well to talk, but you don't know how I am placed. But you shall know, Victor. I'll see that you shall know, come what may! You wouldn't believe harm of your poor old father, would you, lad?” He was very much moved and shut himself up in the study all day, where I could see through the window that he was writing busily.

“ ‘That evening there came what seemed to me to be a grand release, for Hudson told us that he was going to leave us. He walked into the dining-room as we sat after dinner, and announced his intention in the thick voice of a half-drunken man.

“ ‘ “I've had enough of Norfolk,” said he. “I'll run down to Mr. Beddoes, in Hampshire. He'll be as glad to see me as you were, I daresay.”

“ ‘ “You're not going away in an unkind spirit, Hudson, I hope?” said my father with a tameness which made my blood boil.

“ ‘ “I've not had my 'pology,” said he, sulkily, glancing in my direction.

“ ‘ “Victor, you will acknowledge that you have used this worthy fellow rather roughly,” said the dad, turning to me.

“ ‘ “On the contrary, I think that we have both shown extraordinary patience towards him,” I answered.

“ ‘ “Oh, you do, do you?” he snarled. “Very good, mate. We'll see about that!” He slouched out of the room and half an hour afterwards left the house, leaving my father in a state of pitiable nervousness. Night after night I heard him pacing his room, and it was just as he was recovering his confidence that the

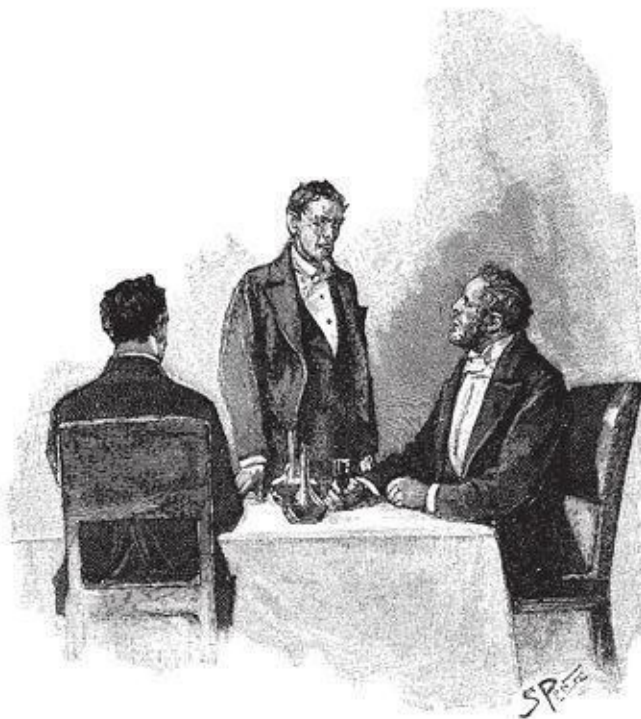
blow did at last fall.’

“ ‘And how?’ I asked, eagerly.



The Broads.

“ ‘In a most extraordinary fashion. A letter arrived for my father yesterday evening, bearing the Fordingbridge postmark. My father read it, clapped both his hands to his head and began running round the room in little circles like a man who has been driven out of his senses. When I at last drew him down on to the sofa, his mouth and eyelids were all puckered on one side, and I saw that he had a stroke. Dr. Fordham came over at once, and we put him to bed; but the paralysis has spread, he has shown no sign of returning consciousness, and I think that we shall hardly find him alive.’



“ ‘I’ve not had my ’pology,’ said he, sulkily.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘You horrify me, Trevor!’ I cried. ‘What, then, could have been in this letter to cause so dreadful a result?’

“ ‘Nothing. There lies the inexplicable part of it. The message was absurd and trivial. Ah, my God, it is as I feared!’

“As he spoke we came round the curve of the avenue, and saw in the fading light that every blind in the house had been drawn down. As we dashed up to the door, my friend’s face convulsed with grief, a gentleman in black emerged from it.

“ ‘When did it happen, doctor?’ asked Trevor.

“ ‘Almost immediately after you left.’

“ ‘Did he recover consciousness?’

“ ‘For an instant before the end.’

“ ‘Any message for me?’

“ ‘Only that the papers were in the back drawer of the Japanese cabinet.’

“My friend ascended with the doctor to the chamber of death, while I remained in the study, turning the whole matter over and over in my head, and feeling as sombre as ever I had done in my life. What was the past of this Trevor: pugilist, traveller, and gold-digger, and how had he placed himself in the power of this acid-faced seaman? Why, too, should he faint at an allusion to the half-effaced initials upon his arm, and die of fright when he had a letter from Fordingbridge? Then I remembered that Fordingbridge was in Hampshire, and that this Mr. Beddoes, whom the seaman had gone to visit, and presumably to blackmail, had also been mentioned as living in Hampshire. The letter, then, might either come from Hudson, the seaman, saying that he had betrayed the guilty secret which appeared to exist, or it might come from Beddoes, warning an old confederate that such a betrayal was imminent. So far it seemed clear enough. But, then, how could this letter be trivial and grotesque, as described by the son? He must have misread it. If so, it must have been one of those ingenious secret codes which mean one thing while they seem to mean another. I must see this letter. If there were a hidden meaning in it, I was confident that I could pluck it forth. For an hour I sat pondering over it in the gloom, until at last a weeping maid brought in a lamp, and close at her heels came my friend Trevor, pale but composed, with these very papers²⁴ which lie upon my knee held in his grasp. He sat down opposite to me, drew the lamp to the edge of the table, and handed me a short note scribbled, as you see, upon a single sheet of grey paper. ‘The supply of game for London is going steadily up,’ it ran. ‘Head-keeper Hudson,

we believe, has been now told to receive all orders for fly-paper and for preservation of your hen pheasant's life.'

"I daresay my face looked as bewildered as yours did just now when first I read this message. Then I re-read it very carefully. It was evidently as I had thought, and some second meaning must lie buried in this strange combination of words. Or could it be that there was a prearranged significance to such phrases as 'fly-paper' and 'hen pheasant'? Such a meaning would be arbitrary, and could not be deduced in any way. And yet, I was loth to believe that this was the case, and the presence of the word 'Hudson' seemed to show that the subject of the message was as I had guessed, and that it was from Beddoes rather than the sailor. I tried it backward, but the combination 'Life pheasant's hen' was not encouraging. Then I tried alternate words, but neither 'the of for' nor 'supply game London' promised to throw any light upon it.

"And then in an instant the key of the riddle was in my hands, and I saw that every third word beginning with the first would give a message which might well drive old Trevor to despair.²⁵

"It was short and terse, the warning, as I now read it to my companion:—

The game is up. Hudson has told all. Fly for your life.

"Victor Trevor sank his face into his shaking hands. 'It must be that, I suppose,' said he. 'This is worse than death, for it means disgrace as well. But what is the meaning of these "head-keepers" and "hen pheasants"?'²⁶

" 'It means nothing to the message, but it might mean a good deal to us if we had no other means of discovering the sender. You see that he has begun by writing, "the . . . game . . . is," and so on. Afterwards he had, to fulfil the prearranged cipher to fill in any two words in each space. He would naturally use the first words which came to his mind, and if there were so many which referred to sport among them, you may be tolerably sure that he is either an ardent shot or interested in breeding. Do you know anything of this Beddoes?'

" 'Why, now that you mention it,' said he, 'I remember that my poor father used to have an invitation from him to shoot over his preserves every autumn.'

" "Then it is undoubtedly from him that the note comes,' said I. 'It only remains for us to find out what this secret was which the sailor Hudson seems to have held over the heads of these two wealthy and respected men.'

" 'Alas, Holmes, I fear that it is one of sin and shame!' cried my friend. 'But from you I shall have no secrets. Here is the statement which was drawn up by my father when he knew that the danger from Hudson had become imminent. I found it in the Japanese cabinet, as he told the doctor. Take it and read it to me,

for I have neither the strength nor the courage to do it myself.’

“These are the very papers, Watson, which he handed to me, and I will read them to you, as I read them in the old study that night to him. They are indorsed outside, as you see: ‘Some particulars of the voyage of the barque *Gloria Scott*,²⁷ from her leaving Falmouth on the 8th October, 1855, to her destruction in N. Lat. 15° 20′, W. Long. 25° 14′, on November 6th.’ It is in the form of a letter,



and runs in this way:—

“The key of the riddle was in my hands.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘My dear, dear son,—Now that approaching disgrace begins to darken the closing years of my life, I can write with all truth and honesty that it is not the terror of the law, it is not the loss of my position in the county, nor is it my fall in the eyes of all who have known me, which cuts me to the heart; but it is the thought that you should come to blush for me—you who love me, and who have seldom, I hope, had reason to do other than respect me. But if the blow falls which is for ever hanging over me, then I should wish you to read this, that you may know straight from me how far I have been to blame. On the other hand, if all should go well (which may kind God Almighty grant!), then if by any chance this paper should be still undestroyed, and should fall into your hands, I conjure you, by all you hold sacred, by the memory of your dear mother, and by the love which has been between us, to hurl it into the fire, and to never give one thought to it again.

“ ‘If, then, your eye goes on to read this line, I know that I shall already have been exposed and dragged from my home, or, as is more likely—for you know that my heart is weak—be lying with my tongue sealed for ever in death. In either case the time for suppression is past, and every word which I tell you is the naked truth; and this I swear as I hope for mercy.

“ ‘My name, dear lad, is not Trevor. I was James Armitage²⁸ in my younger days, and you can understand now the shock that it was to me a few weeks ago, when your college friend addressed me in words which seemed to imply that he had surprised my secret. As Armitage it was that I entered a London banking house, and as Armitage I was convicted of breaking my country’s laws, and was sentenced to transportation. Do not think very harshly of me, laddie. It was a debt of honour, so-called, which I had to pay, and I used money which was not my own to do it, in the certainty that I could replace it before there could be any possibility of its being missed. But the most dreadful ill-luck pursued me. The money which I had reckoned upon never came to hand, and a premature examination of accounts exposed my deficit. The case might have been dealt leniently with, but the laws were more harshly administered thirty years ago than now, and on my twenty-third birthday I found myself chained as a felon with thirty-seven other convicts in the ‘tween decks of the barque *Gloria Scott*, bound for Australia.²⁹

“ ‘It was the year ’55, when the Crimean War³⁰ was at its height,³¹ and the old convict ships had been largely used as transports in the Black Sea. The Government was compelled, therefore, to use smaller and less suitable vessels for sending out their prisoners. The *Gloria Scott* had been in the Chinese tea trade, but she was an old-fashioned, heavy-bowed, broad-beamed craft, and the new clippers³² had cut her out. She was a five-hundred-ton boat; and besides her thirty-eight gaol-birds, she carried twenty-six of a crew, eighteen soldiers, a captain, three mates, a doctor, a chaplain, and four warders. Nearly a hundred souls were in her, all told, when we set sail from Falmouth.

“ ‘The partitions between the cells of the convicts instead of being of thick oak, as is usual in convict-ships, were quite thin and frail. The man next to me upon the aft side was one whom I had particularly noticed when we were led down to the quay. He was a young man with a clear, hairless face, a long, thin nose, and rather nutcracker jaws. He carried his head very jauntily in the air, had a swaggering style of walking, and was above all else remarkable for his extraordinary height. I don’t think any of our heads would have come up to his shoulder, and I am sure that he could not have measured less than six and a half feet. It was strange among so many sad and weary faces to see one which was full of energy and resolution. The sight of it was to me like a fire in a snowstorm. I was glad then to find that he was my neighbour, and gladder still when, in the dead of the night, I heard a whisper close to my ear and found that he had managed to cut an opening in the board which separated us.

“ ‘ ‘Halloa, chummy!’ said he, ‘what’s your name, and what are you here

for?”

“ ‘I answered him, and asked in turn who I was talking with.

“ ‘ “I’m Jack Prendergast,”³³ said he, “and, by God, you’ll learn to bless my name before you’ve done with me.”

“ ‘I remembered hearing of his case, for it was one which had made an immense sensation throughout the country, some time before my own arrest. He was a man of good family and of great ability, but of incurably vicious habits, who had, by an ingenious system of fraud, obtained huge sums of money from the leading London merchants.

“ ‘ “Ah, ha! You remember my case?” said he proudly.

“ ‘ “Very well indeed.”

“ ‘ “Then maybe you remember something queer about it?”

“ ‘ “What was that, then?”

“ ‘ “I’d had nearly a quarter of a million,³⁴ hadn’t I?”

“ ‘ “So it was said.”

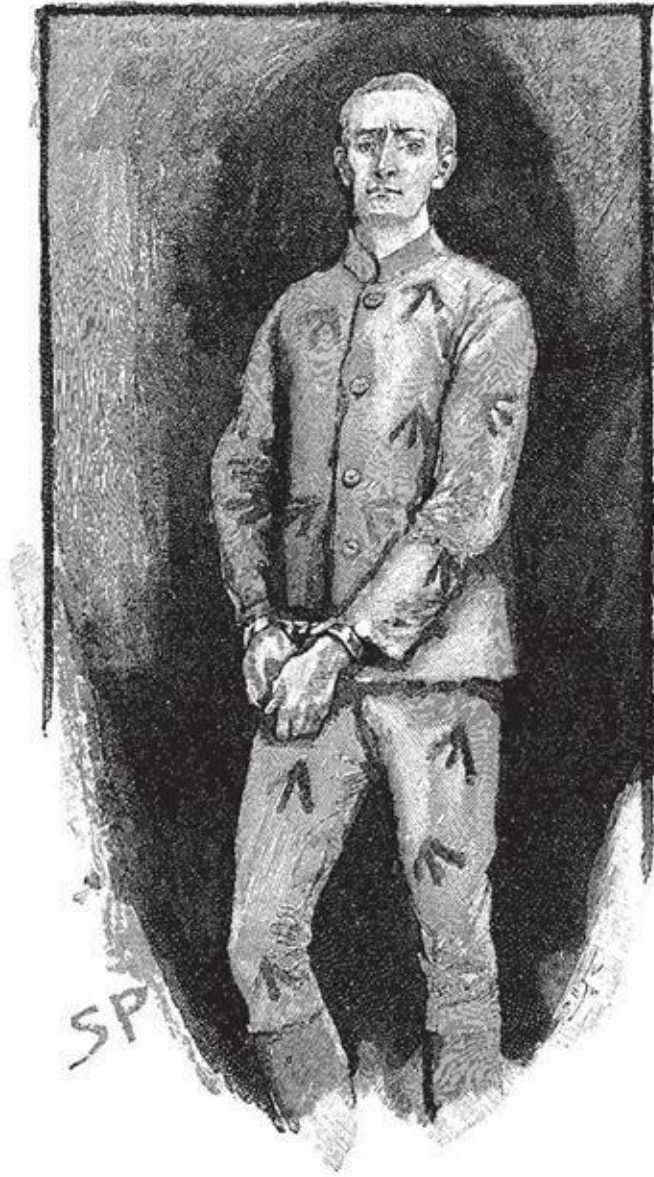
“ ‘ “But none was recovered, eh?”

“ ‘ “No.”

“ ‘ “Well, where d’ye suppose the balance is?” he asked.

“ ‘ “I have no idea,” said I.

“ ‘ “Right between my finger and thumb,” he cried. “By God, I’ve got more pounds to my name than you’ve hairs on your head. And if you’ve money, my son, and know how to handle it and spread it, you can do anything. Now, you don’t think it likely that a man who could do anything is going to wear his breeches out sitting in the stinking hold of a rat-gutted, beetle-ridden, mouldy old coffin of a China coaster. No, sir, such a man will look after himself, and will look after his chums. You may lay to that! You hold on to him, and you may kiss the Book that he’ll haul you through.”



Jack Prendergast.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘That was his style of talk, and at first I thought it meant nothing; but after a while, when he had tested me and sworn me in with all possible solemnity, he let me understand that there really was a plot to gain command of the vessel. A dozen of the prisoners had hatched it before they came aboard; Prendergast was the leader, and his money was the motive power.

“ ‘ “I’d a partner,” said he, “a rare good man, as true as a stock to a barrel. He’s got the dibbs,³⁵ he has, and where do you think he is at this moment? Why, he’s the chaplain of this ship—the chaplain, no less! He came aboard with a

black coat and his papers right, and money enough in his box to buy the thing right up from keel to main-truck.³⁶ The crew are his, body and soul. He could buy 'em at so much a gross with a cash discount, and he did it before ever they signed on. He's got two of the warders and Mereer, the second mate, and he'd get the captain himself if he thought him worth it."

" " "What are we to do, then?" I asked.

" " "What do you think?" said he. "We'll make the coats of some of these soldiers redder than ever the tailor did."³⁷

" " "But they are armed," said I.

" " "And so shall we be, my boy. There's a brace of pistols for every mother's son of us, and if we can't carry this ship, with the crew at our back, it's time we were all sent to a young Miss's boarding school. You speak to your mate on the left tonight, and see if he is to be trusted."

" 'I did so and found my other neighbour to be a young fellow in much the same position as myself, whose crime had been forgery. His name was Evans, but he afterwards changed it, like myself, and he is now a rich and prosperous man in the south of England. He was ready enough to join the conspiracy, as the only means of saving ourselves, and before we had crossed the bay³⁸ there were only two of the prisoners who were not in the secret. One of these was of weak mind, and we did not dare to trust him, and the other was suffering from jaundice and could not be of any use to us.

" 'From the beginning there was really nothing to prevent us from taking possession of the ship. The crew were a set of ruffians, specially picked for the job. The sham chaplain came into our cells to exhort us, carrying a black bag, supposed to be full of tracts; and so often did he come that by the third day we had each stowed away at the foot of our beds a file, a brace of pistols, a pound of powder, and twenty slugs. Two of the warders were agents of Prendergast, and the second mate was his right-hand man. The captain, the two mates, two warders, Lieutenant Martin, his eighteen soldiers, and the doctor were all that we had against us. Yet, safe as it was, we determined to neglect no precaution, and to make our attack suddenly by night. It came, however, more quickly than we expected, and in this way:— " 'One evening, about the third week after our start, the doctor had come down to see one of the prisoners, who was ill, and, putting his hand down on the bottom of his bunk, he felt the outline of the pistols. If he had been silent he might have blown the whole thing; but he was a nervous little chap, so he gave a cry of surprise and turned so pale, that the man knew what was up in an instant and seized him. He was gagged before he could give the alarm, and tied down upon the bed. He had unlocked the door that led to the

deck, and we were through it in a rush. The two sentries were shot down, and so was a corporal who came running to see what was the matter. There were two more soldiers at the door of the state-room, and their muskets seemed not to be loaded, for they never fired upon us, and they were shot while trying to fix their bayonets. Then we rushed on into the captain's cabin, but as we pushed open the door there was an explosion from within, and there he lay with his head on the chart of the Atlantic³⁹ which was pinned upon the table, while the chaplain stood with a smoking pistol in his hand at his elbow. The two mates had both been seized by the crew, and the whole business seemed to be settled.



“The chaplain stood with a smoking pistol in his hand.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘The state-room was next the cabin, and we flocked in there and flopped down on the settees, all speaking together, for we were just mad with the feeling that we were free once more. There were lockers all round, and Wilson, the sham chaplain, knocked one of them in, and pulled out a dozen of brown sherry. We cracked off the necks of the bottles, poured the stuff out into tumblers, and were just tossing them off, when in an instant, without warning, there came the roar of muskets in our ears, and the saloon was so full of smoke that we could not see across the table. When it cleared again the place was a shambles. Wilson and eight others were wriggling on the top of each other on the floor, and the blood and the brown sherry on that table turn me sick now when I think of it. We were so cowed by the sight that I think we should have given the job up if it had not been for Prendergast. He bellowed like a bull and rushed for the door with all

that were left alive at his heels. Out we ran, and there on the poop were the lieutenant and ten of his men. The swing skylights above the saloon table had been a bit open, and they had fired on us through the slit. We got on them before they could load, and they stood to it like men; but we had the upper hand of them, and in five minutes it was all over. My God! was there ever a slaughter-house like that ship? Prendergast was like a raging devil, and he picked the soldiers up as if they had been children and threw them overboard, alive or dead. There was one sergeant that was horribly wounded, and yet kept on swimming for a surprising time, until someone in mercy blew out his brains. When the fighting was over there was no one left of our enemies except just the warders, the mates, and the doctor.

“ ‘It was over them that the great quarrel arose. There were many of us who were glad enough to win back our freedom, and yet who had no wish to have murder on our souls. It was one thing to knock the soldiers over with their muskets in their hands, and it was another to stand by while men were being killed in cold blood. Eight of us, five convicts and three sailors, said that we would not see it done. But there was no moving Prendergast and those who were with him. Our only chance of safety lay in making a clean job of it, said he, and he would not leave a tongue with power to wag in a witness-box. It nearly came to our sharing the fate of the prisoners, but at last he said that if we wished we might take a boat and go. We jumped at the offer, for we were already sick of these bloodthirsty doings, and we saw that there would be worse before it was done. We were given a suit of sailors’ togs each, a barrel of water, two casks, one of junk⁴⁰ and one of biscuits, and a compass. Prendergast threw us over a chart, told us that we were shipwrecked mariners whose ship had foundered in Lat. 15° and Long. 25° W.,⁴¹ and then cut the painter,⁴² and let us go.

“ ‘And now I come to the most surprising part of my story, my dear son. The seamen had hauled the foreyard aback during the rising, but now as we left them they brought it square again, and as there was a light wind from the north and east, the barque began to draw slowly away from us. Our boat lay rising and falling upon the long, smooth rollers, and Evans and I, who were the most educated of the party, were sitting in the sheets working out our position and planning what coast we should make for. It was a nice question, for the Cape de Verds were about five hundred miles to the north of us, and the African coast about seven hundred miles to the east.⁴³ On the whole, as the wind was coming round to the north, we thought that Sierra Leone⁴⁴ might be best, and turned our head in that direction, the barque being at that time nearly hull down⁴⁵ on our starboard quarter. Suddenly, as we looked at her, we saw a dense black cloud of

smoke shoot up from her, which hung like a monstrous tree upon the sky-line. A few seconds later a roar like thunder burst upon our ears, and as the smoke thinned away there was no sign left of the *Gloria Scott*. In an instant we swept the boat's head round again, and pulled with all our strength for the place where the haze, still trailing over the water, marked the scene of this catastrophe.

“ ‘It was a long hour before we reached it, and at first we feared that we had come too late to save anyone. A splintered boat and a number of crates and fragments of spars rising and falling on the waves showed us where the vessel had foundered, but there was no sign of life, and we had turned away in despair, when we heard a cry for help, and saw at some distance a piece of wreckage with a man lying stretched across it. When we pulled him aboard the boat he proved to be a young seaman of the name of Hudson, who was so burned and exhausted that he could give us no account of what had happened until the following morning.

“ ‘It seemed that, after we had left, Prendergast and his gang had proceeded to put to death the five remaining prisoners: the two warders had been shot and thrown overboard, and so also had the third mate. Prendergast then descended into the 'tween-decks and with his own hands cut the throat of the unfortunate surgeon. There only remained the first mate, who was a bold and active man. When he saw the convict approaching him with the bloody knife in his hand, he kicked off his bonds, which he had somehow contrived to loosen, and rushing down the deck he plunged into the after-hold.



“We pulled him aboard the boat.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘A dozen convicts who descended with their pistols in search of him found

him with a match-box in his hand seated beside an open powder-barrel, which was one of the hundred carried on board, and swearing that he would blow all hands up if he were in any way molested. An instant later the explosion occurred, though Hudson thought it was caused by the misdirected bullet of one of the convicts rather than the mate's match.⁴⁶ Be the cause what it may, it was the end of the *Gloria Scott*, and of the rabble who held command of her.

“ ‘Such, in a few words, my dear boy, is the history of this terrible business in which I was involved. Next day we were picked up by the brig *Hotspur*, bound for Australia, whose captain found no difficulty in believing that we were the survivors of a passenger ship which had foundered.⁴⁷ The transport ship, *Gloria Scott*, was set down by the Admiralty as being lost at sea, and no word has ever leaked out as to her true fate. After an excellent voyage the *Hotspur* landed us at Sydney, where Evans and I changed our names and made our way to the diggings,⁴⁸ where, among the crowds who were gathered from all nations, we had no difficulty in losing our former identities.

“ ‘The rest I need not relate. We prospered, we travelled, we came back as rich Colonials to England, and we bought country estates. For more than twenty years we have led peaceful and useful lives, and we hoped that our past was for ever buried. Imagine, then, my feelings when in the seaman who came to us I recognised instantly the man who had been picked off the wreck. He had tracked us down somehow, and had set himself to live upon our fears. You will understand now how it was that I strove to keep the peace with him, and you will in some measure sympathize with me in the fears which fill me, now that he has gone from me to his other victim with threats upon his tongue.’⁴⁹

“Underneath that is written in a hand so shaky as to be hardly legible, ‘Beddoes writes in cipher to say that H. has told all. Sweet Lord, have mercy on our souls!’

“That was the narrative which I read that night⁵⁰ to young Trevor, and I think, Watson, that under the circumstances it was a dramatic one. The good fellow was heartbroken at it, and went out to the Terai⁵¹ tea planting, where I hear that he is doing well. As to the sailor and Beddoes, neither of them was ever heard of again after that day on which the letter of warning was written. They both disappeared utterly and completely. No complaint had been lodged with the police, so that Beddoes had mistaken a threat for a deed. Hudson had been seen lurking about, and it was believed by the police that he had done away with Beddoes, and had fled. For myself, I believe that the truth was exactly the opposite. I think that it is most probable that Beddoes, pushed to desperation, and believing himself to have been already betrayed, had revenged himself upon

Hudson, and had fled from the country with as much money as he could lay his hands on. Those are the facts of the case, Doctor, and if they are of any use to your collection, I am sure that they are very heartily at your service.”⁵²

1 “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in April 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on April 15, 1893.

2 In “The Sussex Vampire,” Holmes peruses the “V” volume of his “good old index” and reads: “ ‘Voyage of the *Gloria Scott*.’ That was a bad business. I have some recollection that you made a record of it, Watson, though I was unable to congratulate you upon the result.” Why this was indexed under “V” is a subject beyond the scope of this tale.

3 A bewildering array of scholarly arguments assigns Sherlock Holmes to study in numerous educational institutions. The principal points considered by the dozens of scholars are the following:

- The bull terrier that bit Holmes’s ankle and whether the dog would have been permitted in the college.
- The setting of “The Three Students” and Holmes’s familiarity with the setting.
- The setting of “The Missing Three-Quarter” and Holmes’s *lack* of familiarity with the setting.
- Reginald Musgrave’s (“The Musgrave Ritual”) blue-blooded background and the choice of university he would be likely to make.
- Which school the author of the theory attended.

Most agree that Holmes attended one of the great universities, either Oxford or Cambridge, although a few suggest that he attended both and several scholars propose a supplemental course at London University. The intricacies of the arguments, depending heavily on the culture of each of the schools, are well beyond the scope of this work. However, notwithstanding his partiality, Nicholas Utechin, long editor of the *Sherlock Holmes Journal* published by the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, has produced a fine work entitled *Sherlock Holmes at Oxford*, which affords an excellent summary of the arguments.

4 Those who argue that Holmes’s university was Oxford include in their evidence the fact that there was an excellent school of boxing there, according to E. B. Mitchell, *The Badminton Library’s* authority on boxing and sparring in 1889. See also “The Yellow Face,” note 4.

5 Trevor’s bull terrier “has been a subject more disputed by scholars in the Sherlockian world than any other—animal, vegetable, or mineral,” writes Nicholas Utechin, in *Sherlock Holmes at Oxford*. Ronald Knox states flatly that a dog would not have been allowed past the college gates of either Oxford or Cambridge. Dorothy L. Sayers goes on to “prove” that Holmes attended Cambridge, because Oxford did not permit students to live “off-campus” during their first two years of college. But citing a letter from Charles L. Dodgson, a former Christ Church College man, who achieved literary fame as Lewis Carroll, Utechin demonstrates conclusively that dogs were permitted at Oxford colleges, undercutting Sayers’s reasoning.

6 To render powerless. According to E. Cobham Brewer, the allusion is to the stocks, in which vagrants and other petty offenders were confined by the ankles.

7 An inferior magistrate appointed in England to keep the peace within the county for which he is appointed. As late as Victorian times, the J.P. received no compensation. “But being chosen from the limited class of country gentlemen in counties,” remarks the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th Ed.), “they are

sometimes exposed to the suspicion of the general public, particularly when they have to administer laws which are considered to confer special privileges on their own class. Further, as they do not generally possess a professional knowledge of the law, their decisions are occasionally inconsiderate and ill-informed.” As a result, in London and other populous areas, paid justices were appointed, and critics advocated abolition of the old “citizen-judge” system. Public outcry also brought about the appointment of tradesmen, Nonconformist ministers, and working-men to the post, to rectify the perceived imbalance of political views. In modern England, the J.P. has only minor responsibilities and may not, except in very limited circumstances, impose a sentence of more than six months’ imprisonment.

8 Neither “Donnithorpe” nor “Langmere” is to be found on the map, but N. P. Metcalfe suggests (in “Oxford or Cambridge or Both?”) that *Fordham*, later mentioned as the name of the doctor, “is also the name of a village near Downham Market in the fen country” and therefore may be helpful in identifying the true site of Squire Trevor’s home. David L. Hammer, in *The Game Is Afoot*, identifies “Donnithorpe” with Coltishall, a village near Norwich, and further identifies Heggatt Hall as the Trevor home. However, Bernard Davies, in “Vacations and Stations,” demonstrates that Hammer’s identification is impossible and in one stroke identifies Rollesby Hall, in the town of Rollesby, as the Trevor home, the date as 1874, and Holmes’s university as Oxford.

9 Generally, in England, broads are areas of fresh water, formed by the widening of a river, or a marshy territory with plentiful waterways. Here, the “Broads” is a reference to the Norfolk Broads, an area of large, marshy wetlands covering 5,000 acres. In the Victorian era, the Broads were a popular holiday destination for middle-and upper-class vacationers interested in fishing and sailing; today, it is both a recreational centre and a protected wildlife preserve.

10 Holmes’s fishing interests are apparent again in “Shoscombe Old Place.”

11 Diphtheria, a highly contagious bacterial infection, usually afflicts young children, creating a membrane in the throat which can lead to suffocation or related heart damage. In the late 1800s, epidemics were frequent, often spread by adulterated milk, and mortality rates were high. Crucial to containment of the disease were the efforts to regulate milk production and sale and the researches of German physician Emil von Behring, who helped develop the use of antitoxins to treat both diphtheria and tetanus (the diphtheria experiments he conducted from 1893 to 1895 led to his being awarded the first Nobel Prize for medicine in 1901); and Hungarian-American pediatrician Bela Schick, who in 1913 developed a skin test—the appropriately named “Schick test”—that could determine whether or not a child was susceptible to the disease. Diphtheria is also treatable today with penicillin, which was not discovered until 1928 by Scottish biologist Sir Alexander Fleming.

Esther Longfellow, in “The Distaff Side of Baker Street,” speculates that Holmes had a liaison with this daughter and that her premature death permanently blighted his relationships with women, but there is no evidence for such a claim.

12 The consumption of port by Holmes is mentioned only three times in the Canon, the other times occurring in “The Creeping Man” (when Holmes and Watson sit in the Chequers Inn and enjoy a bottle) and in *The Sign of Four* (when Holmes, Watson, and Athelney Jones fortify themselves with a bumper of port before the river chase). Port, a fortified wine, was very popular in England throughout the nineteenth century and on into the 1920s. Port proved to be less affected by the *phylloxera* plague that destroyed so many European wines, and as early as the 1887 vintage, in honour of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, great ports were thought to have returned to form. The events of “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” are generally placed in the early part of the 1870s, and Trevor may well have served one of the fine 1870 vintage, the last of the pre-*phylloxera* ports. Michael Broadbent tasted a Warre’s 1870 in March 1985 and called it “quite good” (*The New Great Vintage Wine Book*).

13 In law, “poaching” is the shooting, trapping, or taking of game or fish from private property or from a

place where such practices are specially reserved or forbidden. Until the twentieth century most poaching was subsistence poaching—that is, the taking of game or fish by impoverished peasants to augment a scanty diet. With the introduction of gamekeepers and other security measures in the seventeenth century, subsistence poaching necessarily became a more specialized activity; during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gangs of organized poachers often engaged in fierce battles against gamekeepers, and mantraps and spring guns were hidden in the underbrush to catch intruders. As a justice of the peace, Trevor senior would be bound to put down the practice within his jurisdiction.

14 Presumably the descendant of Sir Edward Hoby (1560–1617), a figure at the Court of James I and later a member of Parliament and justice of the peace. He had one child, an illegitimate son, Peregrine. The name is “Holly” in the American editions.

15 Holmes was later to write “a curious little work” (mentioned in *The Sign of Four*) concerning the influence of a trade upon the form of the hand, with “lithotypes of the hands of slaters, sailors, cork-cutters, compositors, weavers, and diamond-polishers.” “That is a matter of great practical interest to the scientific detective—especially in cases of unclaimed bodies, or in discovering the antecedents of criminals,” Holmes remarked. Clearly, Holmes considered this sort of observation one of his more prized skills, commenting as he did in “The Copper Beeches”: “Pshaw, my dear fellow, what do the public, the great unobservant public, who could hardly tell a weaver by his tooth or a compositor by his left thumb, care about the finer shades of analysis and deduction!” Archibald Hart contends that Holmes’s monograph was fraudulently reprinted by one Gilbert Forbes as “Some Observations on Occupational Markings” in 1946.

16 Finger bowls, used to hold water to rinse the fingers.

17 From a Hindi word, *dungri*; a coarse cloth, generally worn by sailors. Dungaree is roughly equivalent to what today is called “denim.” (The word “denim,” incidentally, is thought to come from the French *serge de Nimes*, after the cotton fabric produced in the southern French town of Nimes; “jeans” from Genoa, Italy, where a similar type of cloth was worn, again, by sailors.) **18** The name *Hudson* appears repeatedly in the Canon. There is *Morse Hudson* of “The Six Napoleons,” an art dealer in the Kennington Road, the “Hudson” referred to in “The Five Orange Pips,” who was apparently in America in March 1869, and of course *Mrs. Hudson*. While many have attempted to trace a relationship among the Hudsons, there is no convincing evidence.

19 A cask with a rimmed cover used on board ship for keeping salt meats.

20 A two-year service on a freight-carrying vessel running on no regular line or timetable, with a maximum speed of eight knots.

21 William S. Baring-Gould believes that these “London rooms” are not those in Montague Street that Holmes mentions in “The Musgrave Ritual.”

22 Holmes seems to have a strange perception of English geography, perhaps in the same manner as the New Yorker who perceives everything outside of the city limits as “out West.” “[N]o normal Briton refers to Norfolk [a mere 120 miles from London on its northeast] as ‘the North,’ ” writes Paul H. Gore-Booth (Lord Gore-Booth), in “The Journeys of Sherlock Holmes.” Compare Holmes’s description in “The Priory School” of Dr. Huxtable’s railway ticket as “a return ticket from Mackleton [located in Derbyshire, about 130 miles to the northwest of London], in the *north* of England” (emphasis added).

23 A cerebrovascular accident.

24 Why would Victor Trevor give the original papers—his last remembrance of “the dad”—to Holmes to keep, rather than retain them to reread the messages of love they contain? Perhaps Victor, too, concluded that they were filled with lies and unworthy of rereading.

25 Holmes was later to write “a trifling monograph” on the subject of secret writings, in which he analyzed 160 separate ciphers (“The Dancing Men”), although this message, with its childlike coding, would not likely find its way into Holmes’s treatise.

26 Note that “head-keeper” (as well as “fly-paper,” hyphenated in the *Strand Magazine* and American texts, and “hen pheasants,” hyphenated in the *Strand Magazine*) must be counted as two words for the code to be decipherable.

27 A barque (known today as a bark) is a three-masted vessel with fore and main masts square-rigged. Richard W. Clarke, in “On the Nomenclature of Watson’s Ships,” theorises that this particular barque was not actually named *Gloria Scott*, but that Watson assigned her the name in writing up the story—that, in fact, Gloria Scott, Norah Creina (a ship mentioned in “The Resident Patient”), and Sophy Anderson (the ship mentioned in “The Five Orange Pips”) were all women from Watson’s past, to whom the tender-hearted doctor paid tribute.

28 No apparent relation to Percy Armitage of “The Speckled Band.”

29 In the seventeenth century, even convicts who had committed minor offenses were “transported” to America to work seven-year sentences for the Virginia Company, recounts Robert Hughes in *The Fatal Shore*; but after the colonies gained their independence, that practice was no longer feasible. The territory of Australia begin receiving convicts in 1788, when eleven ships carrying over seven hundred male and female prisoners landed at Botany Bay, to work for either the government or for private employers. For the next several decades, convicts poured into eastern Australian colonies such as the one on the island of Van Diemen’s Land (now Tasmania). In 1850, reports Hughes, just as efforts to abolish the policy were bearing fruit, “the embryo colony of Western Australia announced . . . that it would like some convicts too.” In all, some 150,000 convicts were sent to eastern Australia and another 10,000 to western Australia until the practice was done away with in 1868. (See also “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” note 14.) Working conditions for convicts in Australia were not, by all accounts, unduly harsh. Yet those opposed to the policy saw the provision of free labour to private citizens as tantamount to slavery, and for the young James Armitage, the prospect of being exiled to possible hard labour in an unknown land must have seemed like grim punishment indeed. He must have felt like young Simon Taylor, who wrote to his father from shipboard in 1841: The distant shores of England strikes from Sight
and all shores seem dark that once was pure and Bright,
But now a convict dooms me for a time
To suffer hardships in a forein clime
Farewell a long farewell to my own my native Land
O would to God that i was free upon thy Strugling Strand.

30 The Crimean War (1853–1856) pitted Russia against the allied forces of Great Britain, France, Sardinia, and the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. Causes of the war included Russia’s desire to protect Slav Christians living under Turkish rule, as well as a Russian-French dispute over who had rightful guardianship over the holy places in Palestine. Mismanagement on both sides was endemic; one famous example could be seen at Balaclava, where, after initial allied success against Russian forces, a British commander received bungled orders and led his light cavalry brigade straight into a heavily defended valley. Two-thirds of his 673 men were killed or wounded, but the members of the doomed cavalry fought with desperate courage, leading one Russian officer to refer to them with dumbfounded admiration as “valiant lunatics.” Tennyson immortalized the event in his 1854 poem “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” (Balaclava is also famed for providing the name of the woolen knit cap favoured by mountain climbers, skiers, and bank robbers.) Nonetheless, key allied victories and Austria’s threatened alliance with Great Britain and France forced Russia to abandon its Sevastopol fortress and sign the Treaty of Paris in 1856. The Crimean War severely weakened the

relationship between Austria and Russia, lessened Russian influence in Europe, and made a hero of Florence Nightingale, who organised the military hospitals in Turkey. (Treatment of the troops was appalling—there were more casualties caused by disease, such as dysentery and cholera, than by warfare.) It was also a war avidly followed by the British public, which was suddenly in the unprecedented position of being able to “witness” military action through the dispatches of journalist William Howard Russell, reporting in *The Times*. “Never before,” says A. N. Wilson, “had the public heard such candid, or such immediate, descriptions of the reality of war, the bungling as well as the heroism, the horrible deaths by disease, as well as the bloody consequences of battle.”

31 The dating of “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” is in many ways a paradigm of the problems of the chronologists (see *Chronological Table*). If 1855 was “thirty years ago,” then Trevor’s account was rendered in 1885. But according to *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes and Watson first met a few years after Watson joined the army in 1878. Clearly Trevor, whose story is being listened to by the undergraduate Sherlock Holmes, could not have written his account several years after Holmes and Watson met. Either “the year ’55, when the Crimean War was at its height,” is wrong, or the “thirty years” is wrong. Consider: 1. The “thirty year and more” since Hudson said he last saw Trevor coincides with Trevor’s own recollection of events having occurred “thirty years ago.”

2. Trevor senior was “a fine, robust old man” at the time of his meeting with Holmes; he celebrated his twenty-third birthday on board the ship sailing from Falmouth. This corroborates the passing of at least thirty years.

3. If Holmes was born around 1854 (so that he was “about sixty” in 1914, as recorded in “His Last Bow”) and the younger Victor Trevor was his contemporary, Victor must have been born at around the same time. Trevor senior states he had returned to England “more than twenty years” ago, married, and had a son. Because “The ‘Gloria Scott’ ” must be dated before 1880 or 1881 (the latest date for *A Study in Scarlet*), “more than twenty years ago” puts the date of the return in the mid-1850s. This would make Trevor’s age about the same as Holmes’s and supports the veracity of the “more than twenty years ago.”

4. Later in the story, Trevor refers to making his way to the “diggings”; if he were referring to the Australian gold diggings, those did not commence until 1851, and so he could not have been there “thirty years ago.” See note 48, below.

5. Although several chronologists, having been misled by false information that transportation to Australia ended in 1846, attempt to show that Trevor’s sailing could not have occurred as late as 1855, the true history of the convict transportation system (see note 29, above) belies that effort and is of no help in verifying or disproving old Trevor’s story.

What is one to make of this contradictory data? The problem seems insuperable.

32 The forerunner of the clipper ship was the Baltimore clipper, a light, quick coastal schooner used by the U.S. Navy to run blockades against British merchant ships in the War of 1812. From this evolved the true clipper (or Yankee clipper), a long, slim, fast-sailing vessel with billowing sails on three masts. Some of the fastest clippers were built between 1850 and 1856, a period that saw many high-profile races as the quest for speed grew ever more intense. For the United States, shorter travelling times were paramount in the stampede to California during the Gold Rush (the *Flying Cloud*, launched in 1851, broke records when it sailed from New York City to San Francisco in eighty-nine days); for Britain, fierce competition in the Chinese tea and opium trades meant that the swiftest clippers would never be idle—particularly if they could bring home the first tea of the season. Britain’s most famous clipper, the beautifully designed *Cutty Sark*, was launched in 1869, but by then vast improvements in steamships meant that the heyday of clipper ships was effectively over.

33 Holmes came to the aid of one Major Prendergast in connection with the Tankerville Club scandal (“The Five Orange Pips”), but whether he is related to the criminal here is unknown.

[34](#) Some \$1,250,000—a fantastic sum for the time, almost \$22 million in current purchasing power.

[35](#) Money.

[36](#) The cap at the top of the mast.

[37](#) As any child who has heard the story of Paul Revere might know (“The Redcoats are coming! The Redcoats are coming!”), the British army uniform has, throughout history, featured red as its dominant colour. According to *The Thin Red Line: Uniforms of the British Army between 1751 and 1914*, during this period of time the soldiers would have worn—in addition to red coats—dark caps with chin straps and black trousers with yellow stripes down the outside seams. In the Crimean War itself, many traditional trappings such as plumes, epaulettes, and gloves were temporarily set aside.

[38](#) In sailing to Australia, the ship would have crossed the English Channel, sailed past Brest (at the northern end of the Bay of Biscay), and on around Spain, passing the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, and continued on around Africa and Cape Horn or southwest to Rio, southeast to Cape Town, and around Cape of Good Hope. Most commercial clipper runs from England to Australia sailed from Liverpool to Melbourne. The *Marco Polo*, billed as “the fastest ship in the world,” generally made the trip in about seventy-two days; its sister ship, *Lightning*, was clocked at about 500 kilometers per day for a seven-day period. A straight run from Falmouth to the southern edge of the Bay of Biscay (La Coruña, Spain) is about 1,000 kilometers; therefore we may infer that the voyage had lasted three or four days at this point in Trevor’s account.

[39](#) The American edition text reads, “There he lay with his brains smeared over the chart of the Atlantic . . .”

[40](#) Salt beef.

[41](#) “Lat. 15°” means 15° north, according to the title of Trevor’s narrative; this would mean that the ship foundered virtually in the middle of the Cape Verde Islands off the west coast of Africa. See note 43, below.

[42](#) The rope attached to the bow.

[43](#) The location that Trevor gives here fails to correspond even remotely to that given for his ship’s supposed sinking, leading readers to wonder which statement is the incorrect one. According to Ernst Bloomfield Zeisler’s calculations, in his *Baker Street Chronology*, assuming that the position of the shipwreck is given accurately, Cape Verde would be only some 140 miles north of there and the African coast some 150 miles east. If, instead, Trevor and his party were indeed 500 miles south of the Islands and 700 miles west of Africa, then the ship had presumably been somewhere around 10° N., 24° W. Note, however, that Prendergast does not actually say that the *Gloria Scott* was at N. 15° W. 25°, only that the castaways would *claim* that the shipwreck occurred there. This was poor thinking by Prendergast, for a glance at a chart would have shown that if in fact the shipwreck were there, the crew could have easily put in at the Cape Verde Islands.

[44](#) A reasonable destination given Trevor’s stated position; Sierra Leone is just south of Guinea on the west coast of Africa.

[45](#) A term denoting a distance from which only the sails and mast of a ship are visible, the hull of the ship being hidden by the curvature of the earth.

[46](#) Why did Hudson have an opinion? Could it be that he was *not* “a young seaman” but one of the “dozen convicts”? It seems unlikely that as Hudson and perhaps a few others were blown into the water, they were discussing exactly what happened.

[47](#) H. W. Bell, who concludes that Trevor's entire tale was fictional, finds it inconceivable that the captain of the *Hotspur* would not have closely questioned the nine castaways. If they had really told the skimpy "cover" story suggested by Prendergast, such interrogation would have quickly led to the discovery and arrest of the mutineers. That it did not is one more piece of evidence discrediting the tale. See note 50, below.

[48](#) The "diggings" undoubtedly refers to the gold diggings in and around Bathurst and other neighbouring Australian locales. (See "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" for more on the Ballarat gold rush.) Gold was not discovered in Australia until February 1851, and by 1854 the "boom" was largely over, with Melbourne and other cities suffering severe depressions. It is difficult to square these facts with the dates provided by Trevor, unless the "prosperity" he and Evans found was not from gold but other endeavours. However, the reference to the "diggings" makes nonsense of any efforts to place Trevor in Australia before 1851. See note 31, above.

[49](#) Why would Hudson threaten exposure when he was plainly equally guilty? ("The crew are [Prendergast's partner's], body and soul. He could buy 'em . . . and he did it before ever they signed on.") Did he have so little to lose that he thought blackmail worth the risk?

[50](#) Although Holmes may have been taken in by Trevor's tale, H. W. Bell, for one, after reviewing all of the inconsistencies of place and date in Trevor's tale, cannot believe it. That said, he contends that the tale spun by Trevor, "a man of little culture," would have been very close to the truth, for why else would a man confess to embezzlement, transportation, and mutiny except in an effort to conceal even more heinous crimes? Bell proposes that Trevor, "Beddoes," and Hudson were perpetrators in an affair involving piracy, murder of the crew, and scuttling of the *Gloria Scott*. The former two abandoned or crossed Hudson and kept his share of the loot; the revelation that Hudson, presumed dead, "was alive and out for revenge," Bell argues, "would be ample reason for Trevor to have 'gone about in fear of some personal attack' " (as the young Holmes cannily observed upon first meeting Trevor senior).

[51](#) Also spelled Tarai, a region of northern India and southern Nepal running parallel to the lower Himalayan ranges. Reflecting its name, which means "moist land," the area comprises subtropical flatlands—in stark contrast to the mountainous terrain of much of the rest of Nepal—covered by forests and field. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th Ed.) proclaimed, "Everywhere it is most unhealthy, and inhabited only by tribes who seem proof against malaria."

[52](#) Several writers suggest that the discrepancies in dates and the similarity of the story to "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" support the view that the events of "The 'Gloria Scott' " never occurred and were simply fabricated by Watson, perhaps to console himself after Holmes's "death" or for financial gain.

THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL 1

“The Musgrave Ritual” is one of the most famous “treasure-map” cases of all time. T. S. Eliot, in his great play Murder in the Cathedral, borrows deliberately from it, and the recitation of the Ritual itself has become a rite of The Baker Street Irregulars annual dinner. Set, as is “The ‘Gloria Scott,’ ” in the pre-Watson years, it tells of another case brought to Holmes by a college classmate. As in “The ‘Gloria Scott,’ ” Holmes unconsciously reveals his youthful naivete, for it appears unlikely that his verdict of “accidental death” may be sustained. The story’s frame, recorded by Dr. Watson, also teases us with several unpublished cases and reveals Holmes the decorator, as he draws a large “V. R.” on the apartment wall with gunshots!

A_N ANOMALY WHICH often struck me in the character of my friend Sherlock

Holmes was that, although in his methods of thought he was the neatest and most methodical of mankind, and although also he affected a certain quiet primness of dress, he was none the less in his personal habits one of the most untidy men that ever drove a fellow-lodger to distraction. Not that I am in the least conventional in that respect myself. The rough-and-tumble work in Afghanistan, coming on the top of a natural Bohemianism of disposition, has made me rather more lax than befits a medical man. But with me there is a limit, and when I find a man who keeps his cigars in the coal-scuttle, his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper, and his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very centre of his wooden mantelpiece, then I begin to give myself virtuous airs. I have always held, too, that pistol practice should distinctly be an open-air pastime; and when Holmes in one of his queer humours would sit in an arm-chair with his hair-trigger and a hundred Boxer cartridges,² and proceed to adorn the opposite wall with a patriotic V. R.³ done in bullet-pocks, I felt strongly that neither the atmosphere nor the appearance of our room was improved by it.

Our chambers were always full of chemicals and of criminal relics, which had a way of wandering into unlikely positions, and of turning up in the butter-dish, or in even less desirable places. But his papers were my great crux. He had a horror of destroying documents, especially those which were connected with his past cases, and yet it was only once in every year or two that he would muster energy to docket and arrange them;⁴ for, as I have mentioned somewhere in these incoherent memoirs,⁵ the outbursts of passionate energy when he performed the remarkable feats with which his name is associated were followed by reactions of lethargy, during which he would lie about with his violin and his books, hardly moving save from the sofa to the table. Thus month after month his papers accumulated, until every corner of the room was stacked with bundles of manuscript which were on no account to be burned, and which could not be put away save by their owner. One winter's night, as we sat together by the fire, I ventured to suggest to him that as he had finished pasting extracts into his commonplace book, he might employ the next two hours in making our room a little more habitable. He could not deny the justice of my request, so with a rather rueful face he went off to his bedroom, from which he returned presently pulling a large tin box behind him. This he placed in the middle of the floor, and squatting down upon a stool in front of it he threw back the lid. I could see that it was already a third full of bundles of paper tied up with red tape into separate packages.

“There are cases enough here, Watson,” said he, looking at me with

mischievous eyes. “I think that if you knew all that I have in this box you would ask me to pull some out instead of putting others in.”

“These are the records of your early work, then?” I asked. “I have often wished that I had notes of those cases.”

“Yes, my boy; these were all done prematurely, before my biographer had come to glorify me.”⁶ He lifted bundle after bundle in a tender, caressing sort of way. “They are not all successes, Watson,” said he. “But there are some pretty little problems among them. Here’s the record of the Tarleton murders, and the case of Vamberry,⁷ the wine merchant, and the adventure of the old Russian woman, and the singular affair of the aluminium crutch,⁸ as well as a full account of Ricoletti⁹ of the club foot, and his abominable wife.¹⁰ And here—ah, now! this really is something a little *recherché*.”

He dived his arm down to the bottom of the chest, and brought up a small wooden box, with a sliding lid, such as children’s toys are kept in. From within he produced a crumpled piece of paper, an old-fashioned brass key, a peg of wood with a ball of string attached to it, and three rusty old discs of metal.

“Well, my boy, what do you make of this lot?” he asked, smiling at my expression.

“It is a curious collection.”

“Very curious; and the story that hangs round it will strike you as being more curious still.”

“These relics have a history, then?”

“So much so that they are history.”

“What do you mean by that?”

Sherlock Holmes picked them up one by one and laid them along the edge of the table. Then he reseated himself in his chair, and looked them over with a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.



“A curious collection.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“These,” said he, “are all that I have left to remind me of the episode of the Musgrave Ritual.”

I had heard him mention the case more than once, though I had never been able to gather the details. “I should be so glad,” said I, “if you would give me an account of it.”

“And leave the litter as it is?” he cried, mischievously. “Your tidiness won’t bear much strain, after all, Watson. But I should be glad that you should add this case to your annals, for there are points in it which make it quite unique in the criminal records of this or, I believe, of any other country. A collection of my trifling achievements would certainly be incomplete which contained no account of this very singular business.

“You may remember how the affair of the *Gloria Scott*, and my conversation with the unhappy man whose fate I told you of, first turned my attention in the direction of the profession which has become my life’s work. You see me now when my name has become known far and wide, and when I am generally recognised both by the public and by the official force as being a final court of appeal in doubtful cases. Even when you knew me first, at the time of the affair which you have commemorated in ‘A Study in Scarlet,’ I had already established a considerable, though not a very lucrative, connection. You can hardly realise, then, how difficult I found it at first,¹¹ and how long I had to wait before I succeeded in making any headway.

“When I first came up to London I had rooms in Montague Street,¹² just round

the corner from the British Museum,¹³ and there I waited, filling in my too abundant leisure time by studying all those branches of science which might make me more efficient.¹⁴ Now and again cases came in my way, principally through the introduction of old fellow students, for during my last years at the university there was a good deal of talk there about myself and my methods. The third¹⁵ of these cases was that of the Musgrave Ritual, and it is to the interest which was aroused by that singular chain of events, and the large issues which proved to be at stake, that I trace my first stride towards the position which I now hold.



The British Museum.

The Queen's London (1897) “Reginald Musgrave had been in the same college as myself,¹⁶ and I had some slight acquaintance with him. He was not generally popular among the undergraduates, though it always seemed to me that what was set down as pride was really an attempt to cover extreme natural diffidence. In appearance he was a man of an exceedingly aristocratic type, thin, high-nosed, and large-eyed, with languid and yet courtly manners. He was indeed a scion of one of the very oldest families in the kingdom, though his branch was a cadet one¹⁷ which had separated from the Northern Musgraves some time in the sixteenth century, and had established itself in Western Sussex, where the manor house of Hurlstone is perhaps the oldest inhabited building in the county.¹⁸ Something of his birthplace seemed to cling to the man, and I never looked at his pale, keen face or the poise of his head without associating him with grey archways and mullioned windows¹⁹ and all the venerable wreckage of a feudal keep. Now and again we drifted into talk, and I can remember that more than once he expressed a keen interest in my methods of observation and inference.



Reginald Musgrave.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“For four years I had seen nothing of him until one morning he walked into my room in Montague Street. He had changed little, was dressed like a young man of fashion—he was always a bit of a dandy—and preserved the same quiet, suave manner which had formerly distinguished him.

“ ‘How has all gone with you, Musgrave?’ I asked, after we had cordially shaken hands.

“ ‘You probably heard of my poor father’s death,’ said he. ‘He was carried off about two years ago. Since then I have, of course, had the Hurlstone estates to manage, and as I am member for my district²⁰ as well, my life has been a busy one; but I understand, Holmes, that you are turning to practical ends those powers with which you used to amaze us.’

“ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘I have taken to living by my wits.’²¹

“ ‘I am delighted to hear it, for your advice at present would be exceedingly valuable to me. We have had some very strange doings at Hurlstone, and the police have been able to throw no light upon the matter. It is really the most extraordinary and inexplicable business.’

“You can imagine with what eagerness I listened to him, Watson, for the very chance for which I had been panting during all those months of inaction seemed to have come within my reach. In my inmost heart I believed that I could

succeed where others failed, and now I had the opportunity to test myself.

“ ‘Pray let me have the details,’ I cried.

“Reginald Musgrave sat down opposite to me, and lit the cigarette which I had pushed toward him.

“‘You must know,’ said he, ‘that though I am a bachelor I have to keep up a considerable staff of servants at Hurlstone, for it is a rambling old place, and takes a good deal of looking after. I preserve,²² too, and in the pheasant months²³ I usually have a house party, so that it would not do to be shorthanded. Altogether there are eight maids, the cook, the butler, two footmen, and a boy. The garden and the stables, of course, have a separate staff.

“ ‘Of these servants the one who had been longest in our service was Brunton, the butler.²⁴ He was a young schoolmaster out of place when he was first taken up by my father, but he was a man of great energy and character, and he soon became quite invaluable in the household. He was a well-grown, handsome man, with a splendid forehead, and though he has been with us for twenty years he cannot be more than forty now. With his personal advantages and his extraordinary gifts, for he can speak several languages and play nearly every musical instrument, it is wonderful that he should have been satisfied so long in such a position, but I suppose that he was comfortable and lacked energy to make any change. The butler of Hurlstone is always a thing that is remembered by all who visit us.

“ ‘But this paragon has one fault. He is a bit of a Don Juan, and you can imagine that for a man like him it is not a very difficult part to play in a quiet country district. When he was married it was all right, but since he has been a widower we have had no end of trouble with him. A few months ago we were in hopes that he was about to settle down again, for he became engaged to Rachel Howells, our second housemaid, but he has thrown her over since then and taken up with Janet Tregellis, the daughter of the head gamekeeper. Rachel, who is a very good girl, but of an excitable Welsh temperament, had a sharp touch of brain fever and goes about the house now—or did until yesterday—like a black-eyed shadow of her former self. That was our first drama at Hurlstone, but a second one came to drive it from our minds, and it was prefaced by the disgrace and dismissal of Butler Brunton.

“ ‘This was how it came about. I have said that the man was intelligent, and this very intelligence has caused his ruin, for it seems to have led to an insatiable curiosity about things which did not in the least concern him. I had no idea of the lengths to which this would carry him until the merest accident opened my eyes to it.

“ ‘I have said that the house is a rambling one. One night last week—on Thursday night, to be more exact—I found that I could not sleep, having foolishly taken a cup of strong *café noir* after my dinner. After struggling against it until two in the morning I felt that it was quite hopeless, so I rose and lit the candle with the intention of continuing a novel which I was reading. The book, however, had been left in the billiard-room, so I pulled on my dressing-gown and started off to get it.

“ ‘In order to reach the billiard-room I had to descend a flight of stairs, and then to cross the head of a passage which led to the library and the gun-room. You can imagine my surprise when as I looked down this corridor I saw a glimmer of light coming from the open door of the library. I had myself extinguished the lamp and closed the door before coming to bed. Naturally my first thought was of burglars. The corridors at Hurlstone have their walls largely decorated with trophies of old weapons. From one of these I picked a battle-axe, and then, leaving my candle behind me, I crept on tiptoe down the passage and peeped in at the open door.

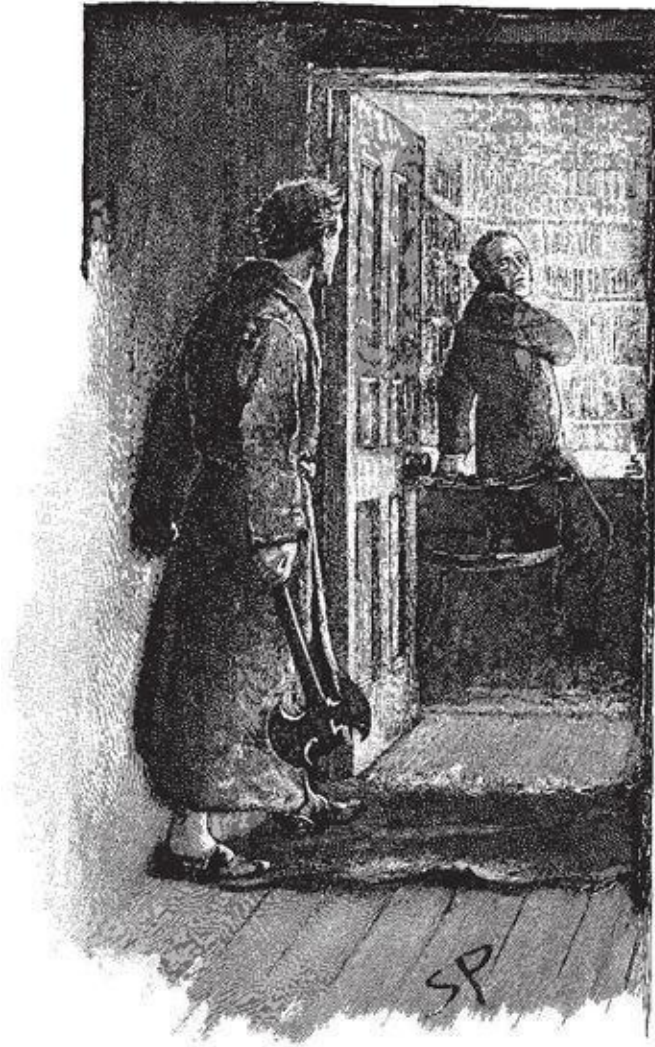
“ ‘Brunton, the butler, was in the library. He was sitting, fully dressed, in an easy chair, with a slip of paper, which looked like a map, upon his knee, and his forehead sunk forward upon his hand in deep thought. I stood, dumb with astonishment, watching him from the darkness. A small taper on the edge of the table shed a feeble light, which sufficed to show me that he was fully dressed. Suddenly, as I looked, he rose from his chair, and walking over to a bureau at the side, he unlocked it and drew out one of the drawers. From this he took a paper, and, returning to his seat, he flattened it out beside the taper on the edge of the table, and began to study it with minute attention. My indignation at this calm examination of our family documents overcame me so far that I took a step forward, and Brunton looking up saw me standing in the doorway. He sprang to his feet, his face turned livid with fear, and he thrust into his breast the chart-like paper which he had been originally studying.



“He began to study it with minute attention.”

W. W. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“ ‘ “So!” said I. “This is how you repay the trust which we have reposed in you! You will leave my service to-morrow.”



“He sprang to his feet.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘He bowed with the look of a man who is utterly crushed, and slunk past me without a word. The taper was still on the table, and by its light I glanced to see what the paper was which Brunton had taken from the bureau. To my surprise it was nothing of any importance at all, but simply a copy of the questions and answers in the singular old observance called the Musgrave Ritual. It is a sort of ceremony peculiar to our family, which each Musgrave for centuries past has gone through on his coming of age—a thing of private interest, and perhaps of some little importance to the archeologist, like our own blazonings and charges,²⁵ but of no practical use whatever.’²⁶

“ ‘We had better come back to the paper afterwards,’ said I.

“ ‘If you think it really necessary,’ he answered, with some hesitation. ‘To

continue my statement, however; I re-locked the bureau, using the key which Brunton had left, and I had turned to go, when I was surprised to find that the butler had returned and was standing before me.

“ ‘ “Mr. Musgrave, sir,” he cried, in a voice which was hoarse with emotion. “I can’t bear disgrace, sir. I’ve always been proud above my station in life, and disgrace would kill me. My blood will be on your head, sir—it will, indeed—if you drive me to despair. If you cannot keep me after what has passed, then for God’s sake let me give you notice and leave in a month, as if of my own free will. I could stand that, Mr. Musgrave, but not to be cast out before all the folk that I know so well.”

“ ‘ “You don’t deserve much consideration, Brunton,” I answered. “Your conduct has been most infamous. However, as you have been a long time in the family, I have no wish to bring public disgrace upon you. A month, however, is too long. Take yourself away in a week, and give what reason you like for going.”

“ ‘ “Only a week, sir?” he cried in a despairing voice. “A fortnight—say at least a fortnight!”

“ ‘ “A week,” I repeated, “and you may consider yourself to have been very leniently dealt with.”

“ ‘ He crept away, his face sunk upon his breast, like a broken man, while I put out the light and returned to my room.

“ ‘ For two days after this Brunton was most assiduous in his attention to his duties. I made no allusion to what had passed, and waited with some curiosity to see how he would cover his disgrace. On the third morning, however, he did not appear, as was his custom, after breakfast to receive my instructions for the day. As I left the dining-room I happened to meet Rachel Howells, the maid. I have told you that she had only recently recovered from an illness, and was looking so wretchedly pale and wan that I remonstrated with her for being at work.

“ ‘ “You should be in bed,” I said. “Come back to your duties when you are stronger.”

“ ‘ She looked at me with so strange an expression that I began to suspect that her brain was affected.

“ ‘ “I am strong enough, Mr. Musgrave,” said she.

“ ‘ “We will see what the doctor says,” I answered. “You must stop work now, and when you go downstairs just say that I wish to see Brunton.”

“ ‘ “The butler is gone,” said she.

“ ‘ “Gone! Gone where?”

“ ‘ “He is gone. No one has seen him. He is not in his room. Oh, yes, he is gone—he is gone!” She fell back against the wall with shriek after shriek of

laughter, while I, horrified at this sudden hysterical attack, rushed to the bell to summon help. The girl was taken to her room, still screaming and sobbing, while I made inquiries about Brunton. There was no doubt about it that he had disappeared. His bed had not been slept in; he had been seen by no one since he had retired to his room the night before; and yet it was difficult to see how he could have left the house, as both windows and doors were found to be fastened in the morning. His clothes, his watch, and even his money were in his room but the black suit which he usually wore was missing. His slippers, too, were gone, but his boots were left behind. Where, then, could Butler Brunton have gone in the night, and what could have become of him now?

“ ‘Of course we searched the house and the outhouses,²⁷ but there was no trace of him. It is, as I have said, a labyrinth of an old building, especially the original wing, which is now practically uninhabited, but we ransacked every room and cellar without discovering the least sign of the missing man. It was incredible to me that he could have gone away leaving all his property behind him, and yet where could he be? I called in the local police, but without success. Rain had fallen on the night before, and we examined the lawn and the paths all round the house, but in vain. Matters were in this state when a new development quite drew our attention away from the original mystery.

“ ‘For two days Rachel Howells had been so ill, sometimes delirious, sometimes hysterical, that a nurse had been employed to sit up with her at night. On the third night after Brunton’s disappearance, the nurse, finding her patient sleeping nicely, had dropped into a nap in the arm-chair when she woke in the early morning to find the bed empty, the window open, and no signs of the invalid. I was instantly aroused, and with the two footmen started off at once in search of the missing girl. It was not difficult to tell the direction which she had taken, for, starting from under her window, we could follow her footmarks easily across the lawn to the edge of the mere,²⁸ where they vanished, close to the gravel path which leads out of the grounds. The lake there is 8ft. deep, and you can imagine our feelings when we saw that the trail of the poor demented girl came to an end at the edge of it.

“ ‘Of course, we had the drags at once, and set to work to recover the remains; but no trace of the body could we find. On the other hand, we brought to the surface an object of a most unexpected kind. It was a linen bag, which contained within it a mass of old rusted and discoloured metal and several dull-coloured pieces of pebble or glass. This strange find was all that we could get from the mere, and although we made every possible search and inquiry yesterday, we know nothing of the fate either of Rachel Howells or of Richard Brunton. The

county police are at their wits' end, and I have come up to you as a last resource.'

"You can imagine, Watson, with what eagerness I listened to this extraordinary sequence of events, and endeavoured to piece them together, and to devise some common thread upon which they might all hang. The butler was gone. The maid was gone. The maid had loved the butler, but had afterwards had cause to hate him. She was of Welsh blood, fiery and passionate.²⁹ She had been terribly excited immediately after his disappearance. She had flung into the lake a bag containing some curious contents. These were all factors which had to be taken into consideration, and yet none of them got quite to the heart of the matter. What was the starting point of this chain of events? There lay the end of this tangled line.

" 'I must see that paper, Musgrave,' said I, 'which this butler of yours thought it worth his while to consult, even at the risk of the loss of his place.'

" 'It is rather an absurd business, this Ritual of ours,' he answered. 'But it has at least the saving grace of antiquity to excuse it. I have a copy of the questions and answers here, if you care to run your eye over them.'

"He handed me the very paper which I have here, Watson, and this is the strange catechism to which each Musgrave had to submit when he came to man's estate. I will read you the questions and answers as they stand:— " 'Whose was it?

" 'His who is gone.

" 'Who shall have it?

" 'He who will come.

" 'What was the month?³⁰

" 'The sixth from the first.

" 'Where was the sun?

" 'Over the oak.

" 'Where was the shadow?

" 'Under the elm.

" 'How was it stepped?

" 'North by ten and by ten, east by five and by five, south by two and by two, west by one and by one, and so under.

" 'What shall we give for it?

" 'All that is ours.

" 'Why should we give it?

" 'For the sake of the trust.'³¹

" 'The original has no date, but is in the spelling of the middle of the

seventeenth century,' remarked Musgrave. 'I am afraid, however, that it can be of little help to you in solving this mystery.'

" 'At least,' said I, 'it gives us another mystery, and one which is even more interesting than the first. It may be that the solution of the one may prove to be the solution of the other. You will excuse me, Musgrave, if I say that your butler appears to me to have been a very clever man, and to have had a clearer insight than ten generations of his masters.'

" 'I hardly follow you,' said Musgrave. 'The paper seems to me to be of no practical importance.'

" 'But to me it seems immensely practical, and I fancy that Brunton took the same view. He had probably seen it before that night on which you caught him.'

" 'It is very possible. We took no pains to hide it.'

" 'He simply wished, I should imagine, to refresh his memory upon that last occasion. He had, as I understand, some sort of map or chart which he was comparing with the manuscript, and which he thrust into his pocket when you appeared.'

" 'That is true. But what could he have to do with this old family custom of ours, and what does this rigmarole mean?'

" 'I don't think that we should have much difficulty in determining that,' said I; 'with your permission we will take the first train down to Sussex and go a little more deeply into the matter upon the spot.'

"The same afternoon saw us both at Hurlstone. Possibly you have seen pictures and read descriptions of the famous old building, so I will confine my account of it to saying that it is built in the shape of an L, the long arm being the more modern portion, and the shorter the ancient nucleus from which the other has developed. Over the low, heavy-lintelled door, in the centre of this old part, is chiselled the date, 1607, but experts are agreed that the beams and stonework are really much older than this. The enormously thick walls and tiny windows of this part had in the last century driven the family into building the new wing, and the old one was used now as a storehouse and a cellar, when it was used at all. A splendid park, with fine old timber, surrounded the house, and the lake, to which my client had referred, lay close to the avenue, about two hundred yards from the building.

"I was already firmly convinced, Watson, that there were not three separate mysteries here, but one only, and that if I could read the Musgrave Ritual aright, I should hold in my hand the clue which would lead me to the truth concerning both the butler Brunton and the maid Howells. To that, then, I turned all my energies. Why should this servant be so anxious to master this old formula? Evidently because he saw something in it which had escaped all those

generations of country squires, and from which he expected some personal advantage. What was it, then, and how had it affected his fate?

“It was perfectly obvious to me, on reading the Ritual, that the measurements must refer to some spot to which the rest of the document alluded, and that if we could find that spot we should be in a fair way towards knowing what the secret was which the old Musgraves had thought it necessary to embalm in so curious a fashion. There were two guides given us to start with, an oak and an elm. As to the oak there could be no question at all. Right in front of the house, upon the left-hand side of the drive, there stood a patriarch among oaks, one of the most magnificent trees that I have ever seen.

“ ‘That was there when your Ritual was drawn up?’ said I as we drove past it.

“ ‘It was there at the Norman Conquest in all probability,’ he answered. ‘It has a girth of 23ft.’

“ ‘Here was one of my fixed points secured.

“ ‘Have you any old elms?’ I asked.

“ ‘There used to be a very old one over yonder, but it was struck by lightning ten years ago, and we cut down the stump.’

“ ‘You can see where it used to be?’

“ ‘Oh, yes.’

“ ‘There are no other elms?’

“ ‘No old ones, but plenty of beeches.’

“ ‘I should like to see where it grew.’

“We had driven up in a dog-cart, and my client led me away at once, without our entering the house, to the scar on the lawn where the elm had stood. It was nearly midway between the oak and the house. My investigation seemed to be progressing.

“ ‘I suppose it is impossible to find out how high the elm was?’ I asked.



“It has a girth of twenty-three feet.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘I can give you it at once. It was 64ft.’

“ ‘How do you come to know it?’ I asked, in surprise.

“ ‘When my old tutor used to give me an exercise in trigonometry it always took the shape of measuring heights. When I was a lad I worked out every tree and building in the estate.

“This was an unexpected piece of luck. My data were coming more quickly than I could have reasonably hoped.

“ ‘Tell me,’ I asked, ‘did your butler ever ask you such a question?’

“Reginald Musgrave looked at me in astonishment. ‘Now that you call it to my mind,’ he answered, ‘Brunton did ask me about the height of the tree some months ago in connection with some little argument with the groom.’

“This was excellent news, Watson, for it showed me that I was on the right road. I looked up at the sun. It was low in the heavens, and I calculated that in less than an hour it would lie just above the topmost branches of the old oak. One condition mentioned in the Ritual would then be fulfilled. And the shadow of the elm must mean the farther end of the shadow, otherwise the trunk would have been chosen as the guide. I had, then, to find where the far end of the shadow would fall when the sun was just clear of the oak.”³²

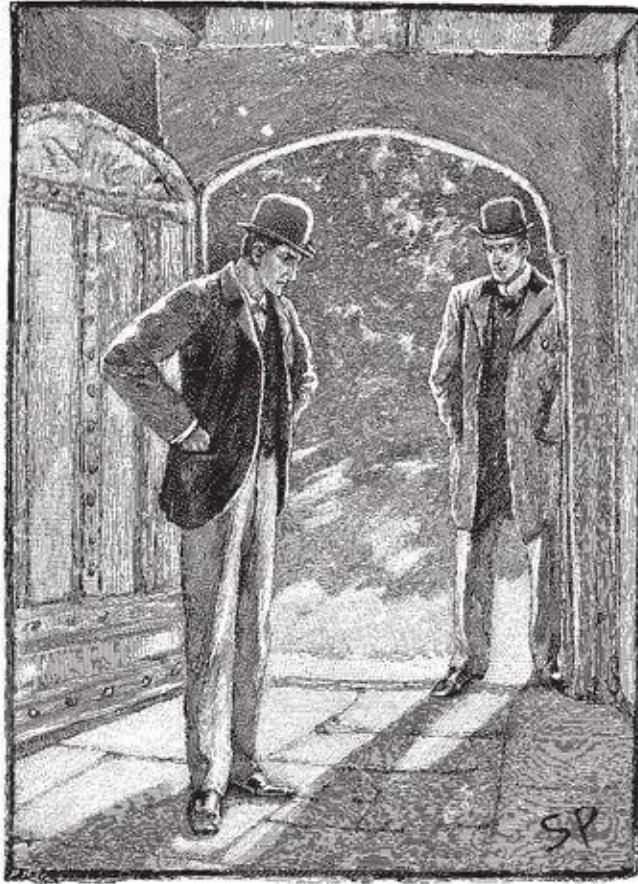
“That must have been difficult, Holmes, when the elm was no longer there.”

“Well, at least, I knew that if Brunton could do it I could also. Besides, there was no real difficulty. I went with Musgrave to his study and whittled myself this peg, to which I tied this long string, with a knot at each yard. Then I took two lengths of a fishing-rod, which came to just six feet, and I went back with my client to where the elm had been. The sun was just grazing the top of the oak. I fastened the rod on end, marked out the direction of the shadow, and measured it. It was 9ft. in length.

“Of course the calculation now was a simple one. If a rod of 6ft. threw a shadow of 9ft., a tree of 64ft. would throw one of 96ft., and the line of the one would of course be the line of the other. I measured out the distance, which brought me almost to the wall of the house, and I thrust a peg into the spot. You can imagine my exultation, Watson, when within 2in. of my peg I saw a conical depression in the ground. I knew that it was the mark made by Brunton in his measurements, and that I was still upon his trail.

“From this starting point I proceeded to step, having first taken the cardinal points by my pocket compass. Ten steps with each foot took me along parallel with the wall of the house, and again I marked my spot with a peg. Then I carefully paced off five to the east and two to the south. It brought me to the very threshold of the old door. Two steps to the west meant now that I was to go two paces down the stone-flagged passage, and this was the place indicated by the Ritual.

“Never have I felt such a cold chill of disappointment, Watson. For a moment it seemed to me that there must be some radical mistake in my calculations. The setting sun shone full upon the passage floor, and I could see that the old, foot-worn grey stones with which it was paved were finely cemented together, and had certainly not been moved for many a long year. Brunton had not been at work here. I tapped upon the floor, but it sounded the same all over, and there was no sign of any crack or crevice. But fortunately, Musgrave, who had begun to appreciate the meaning of my proceedings, and who was now as excited as myself, took out his manuscript to check my calculations.



“This was the place indicated.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘And under,’ he cried. ‘You have omitted the “and under.”’”

“I had thought that it meant that we were to dig, but now of course I saw at once that I was wrong. ‘There is a cellar under this then?’ I cried.

“ ‘Yes, and as old as the house. Down here, through this door.’

“We went down a winding stone stair, and my companion, striking a match, lit a large lantern which stood on a barrel in the corner. In an instant it was obvious that we had at last come upon the true place, and that we had not been the only people to visit the spot recently.

“It had been used for the storage of wood, but the billets, which had evidently been littered over the floor, were now piled at the sides so as to leave a clear space in the middle. In this space lay a large and heavy flagstone with a rusted iron ring in the centre, to which a thick shepherd’s check muffler was attached.³³

“ ‘By Jove!’ cried my client, ‘that’s Brunton’s muffler. I have seen it on him and could swear to it. What has the villain been doing here?’

“At my suggestion a couple of the county police were summoned to be

present, and I then endeavoured to raise the stone by pulling on the cravat. I could only move it slightly, and it was with the aid of one of the constables that I succeeded at last in carrying it to one side. A black hole yawned beneath, into which we all peered, while Musgrave, kneeling at the side, pushed down the lantern.

“A small chamber about 7ft. deep and 4ft. square lay open to us. At one side of this was a squat, brass-bound, wooden box, the lid of which was hinged upward, with this curious old-fashioned key projecting from the lock. It was furred outside by a thick layer of dust, and damp and worms had eaten through the wood, so that a crop of livid fungi was growing on the inside of it. Several discs of metal—old coins apparently—such as I hold here, were scattered over the bottom of the box, but it contained nothing else.

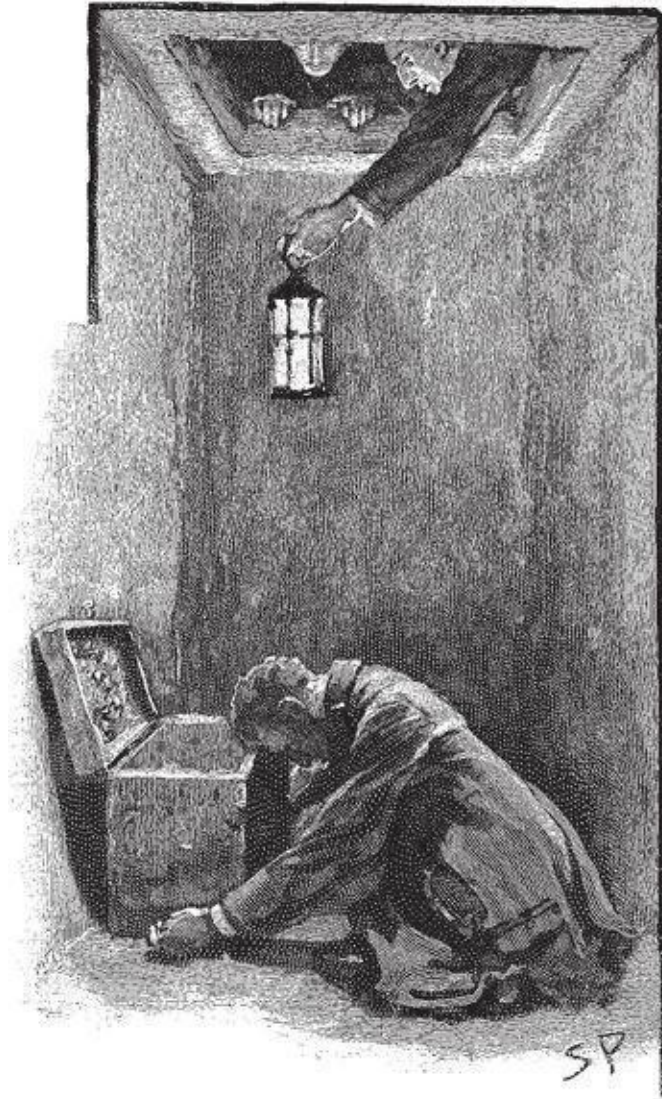


We went down a winding stone stair.

Staff artists “Cargs” and E. S. Morris,

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, January 28, 1912

“At the moment, however, we had no thought for the old chest, for our eyes were riveted upon that which crouched beside it. It was the figure of a man, clad in a suit of black, who squatted down upon his hams with his forehead sunk upon the edge of the box and his two arms thrown out on each side of it. The attitude had drawn all the stagnant blood to the face, and no man could have recognised that distorted, liver-coloured countenance; but his height, his dress, and his hair were all sufficient to show my client, when we had drawn the body up, that it was, indeed, his missing butler. He had been dead some days, but there was no wound or bruise upon his person to show how he had met his dreadful end. When his body had been carried from the cellar we found ourselves still confronted with a problem which was almost as formidable as that with which we had started.



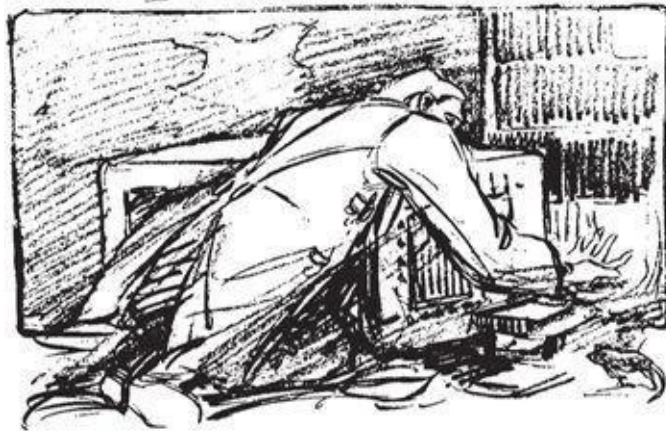
“It was the figure of a man.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“I confess that so far, Watson, I had been disappointed in my investigation. I had reckoned upon solving the matter when once I had found the place referred to in the Ritual; but now I was there, and was apparently as far as ever from knowing what it was which the family had concealed with such elaborate precautions. It is true that I had thrown a light upon the fate of Brunton, but now I had to ascertain how that fate had come upon him, and what part had been played in the matter by the woman who had disappeared. I sat down upon a keg in the corner and thought the whole matter carefully over.

“You know my methods in such cases, Watson: I put myself in the man’s place, and having first gauged his intelligence, I try to imagine how I should

myself have proceeded under the same circumstances. In this case the matter was simplified by Brunton's intelligence being quite first rate, so that it was unnecessary to make any allowance for the personal equation, as the astronomers have dubbed it. He knew that something valuable was concealed. He had spotted the place. He found that the stone which covered it was just too heavy for a man to move unaided. What would he do next? He could not get help from outside, even if he had someone whom he could trust, without the unbarring of doors, and considerable risk of detection. It was better, if he could, to have his helpmate inside the house. But whom could he ask? This girl had been devoted to him. A man always finds it hard to realise that he may have finally lost a woman's love, however badly he may have treated her. He would try by a few attentions to make his peace with the girl Howells, and then would engage her as his accomplice. Together they would come at night to the cellar, and their united force would suffice to raise the stone. So far I could follow their actions as if I had actually seen them.



It was indeed the unfortunate butler.

Staff artists "Cargs" and E. S. Morris,
Seattle Post-Intelligencer, January 28, 1912

"But for two of them, and one a woman, it must have been heavy work, the raising of that stone. A burly Sussex policeman and I had found it no light job. What would they do to assist them? Probably what I should have done myself. I rose and examined carefully the different billets of wood which were scattered round the floor. Almost at once I came upon what I expected. One piece, about 3ft. in length, had a very marked indentation at one end, while several were flattened at the sides as if they had been compressed by some considerable weight. Evidently as they had dragged the stone up they had thrust the chunks of wood into the chink until at last when the opening was large enough to crawl

through, they would hold it open by a billet placed lengthwise, which might very well become indented at the lower end, since the whole weight of the stone would press it down on to the edge of the other slab. So far I was still on safe ground.

“And now how was I to proceed to reconstruct this midnight drama? Clearly, only one could fit into the hole, and that one was Brunton. The girl must have waited above. Brunton then unlocked the box, handed up the contents, presumably—since they were not to be found—and then—and then what happened?

“What smouldering fire of vengeance had suddenly sprung into flame in this passionate Celtic woman’s soul, when she saw the man who had wronged her—wronged her, perhaps, far more than we suspected—in her power? Was it a chance that the wood had slipped and that the stone had shut Brunton into what had become his sepulchre? Had she only been guilty of silence as to his fate? Or had some sudden blow from her hand dashed the support away and sent the slab crashing down into its place? Be that as it might, I seemed to see that woman’s figure still clutching at her treasure trove, and flying wildly up the winding stair, with her ears ringing perhaps with the muffled screams from behind her, and with the drumming of frenzied hands against the slab of stone which was choking her faithless lover’s life out.

“Here was the secret of her blanched face, her shaken nerves, her peals of hysterical laughter on the next morning. But what had been in the box? What had she done with that? Of course, it must have been the old metal and pebbles which my client had dragged from the mere. She had thrown them in there at the first opportunity, to remove the last trace of her crime.

“For twenty minutes I had sat motionless, thinking the matter out. Musgrave still stood with a very pale face, swinging his lantern and peering down into the hole.

“ ‘These are coins of Charles I.,’³⁴ said he, holding out the few which had been in the box. ‘You see we were right in fixing our date for the Ritual.’



“Still clutching at her treasure-trove.”

W. W. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“ ‘We may find something else of Charles I.,’ I cried, as the probable meaning of the first two questions of the Ritual broke suddenly upon me. ‘Let me see the contents of the bag you fished from the mere.’

“ ‘We ascended to his study, and he laid the *débris* before me. I could understand his regarding it as of small importance when I looked at it, for the metal was almost black, and the stones lustreless and dull. I rubbed one of them on my sleeve, however, and it glowed afterwards like a spark, in the dark hollow of my hand. The metal work was in the form of a double ring, but it had been bent and twisted out of its original shape.

“ ‘You must bear in mind,’ said I, ‘that the Royal party made head³⁵ in England even after the death of the King, and that when they at last fled they probably left many of their most precious possessions buried behind them, with the intention of returning for them in more peaceful times.’

“ ‘My ancestor, Sir Ralph Musgrave, was a prominent Cavalier,³⁶ and the right-hand man of Charles II. in his wanderings,’ said my friend.

“ ‘Ah, indeed,’ I answered. ‘Well, now, I think that really should give us the last link that we wanted. I must congratulate you on coming into possession, though in rather a tragic manner, of a relic which is of great intrinsic value, but even of greater importance as an historical curiosity.’

“ ‘What is it, then?’ he gasped, in astonishment.

“ ‘It is nothing less than the ancient crown of the Kings of England.’

“ ‘The crown!’³⁷

“ ‘Precisely. Consider what the Ritual says. How does it run? “Whose was it?” “His who is gone.” That was after the execution of Charles. Then, “Who shall have it?” “He who will come.” That was Charles II.,³⁸ whose advent was already foreseen. There can, I think, be no doubt that this battered and shapeless diadem once encircled the brows of the Royal Stuarts.’

“ ‘And how came it in the pond?’

“ ‘Ah, that is a question that will take some time to answer.’ And with that I sketched out to him the whole long chain of surmise and of proof which I had constructed. The twilight had closed in and the moon was shining brightly in the sky before my narrative was finished.

“ ‘And how was it, then, that Charles did not get his crown when he returned?’ asked Musgrave, pushing back the relic into its linen bag.

“ ‘Ah, there you lay your finger upon the one point which we shall probably never be able to clear up. It is likely that the Musgrave who held the secret died in the interval, and by some oversight left this guide to his descendant without explaining the meaning of it. From that day to this it has been handed down from father to son, until at last it came within reach of a man who tore its secret out of it and lost his life in the venture.’³⁹

“And that’s the story of the Musgrave Ritual, Watson. They have the crown down at Hurlstone—though they had some legal bother, and a considerable sum to pay before they were allowed to retain it.⁴⁰ I am sure that if you mentioned my name they would be happy to show it to you. Of the woman nothing was ever heard, and the probability is that she got away out of England, and carried herself, and the memory of her crime, to some land beyond the seas.”⁴¹ ■

[THE RITUAL OF THE MUSGRAVES](#)

INTERPRETATION of the Ritual is perhaps not as simple as Holmes’s account suggests.

“What was the month? The sixth from the first.”

The first troublesome matter is the question of what month was indicated. Based on the shadows, H. W. Bell places the events recounted by Holmes near the autumnal equinox. The English legal year begins in March, and therefore, concludes H. W. Bell, if six months is added to March, the autumn month of September is indicated. Yet John Hall, in “What Was the Month?” argues that common sense requires the normal Gregorian calendar be used, and that July—

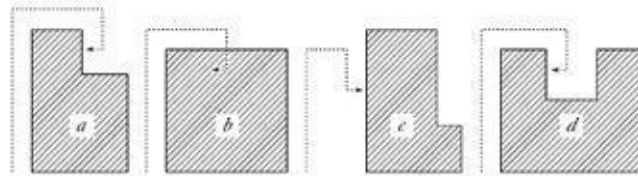
the sixth month from January—would be the proper choice. As confirmation of this interpretation, he points out that Brunton desperately requested a fortnight’s additional time at the manor; the events recounted took place in mid-June, and he wanted to remain employed until July.

Historical events also fall in line with Hall’s theory: The Ritual must have been composed shortly after the defeat of Charles I at Naseby on June 14, 1645. Eleven days were “lost” when the Gregorian calendar was adopted in 1752, and therefore if Sir Ralph Musgrave waited a few weeks after the battle at Naseby to compose the Ritual, it would, in modern dates, have been composed in the middle of July.

“How was it stepped? North by ten and by ten, east by five and by five, south by two and by two, west by one and by one, and so under.”

In order to study the “traverse,” as Edward Merrill terms it in *“For the Sake of the Trust”: Sherlock Holmes and the Musgrave Ritual*, one must make assumptions about both the shape of the house around which Holmes (and Brunton) walked (and in particular the location of the “old door”) and the situation of the house on the property (that is, in which direction it “faced.”) *It is built in the shape of an L, the long arm being the more modern portion, and the shorter the ancient nucleus from which the other has developed.*

First, scholars suggest several choices for the shape of the house, broadly interpreting the “shape of an L.”



Possible shapes of Hurlstone.

Three of the proposed shapes permit the pacing to have been carried out as described, while the fourth admittedly requires a “revisionist” view: 1. Figure A shows the “traditional” view, which requires the presence of a window in the west wall to satisfy Holmes’s description.

2. Figure B has the last steps paced inside the house and hardly can be called L-shaped.

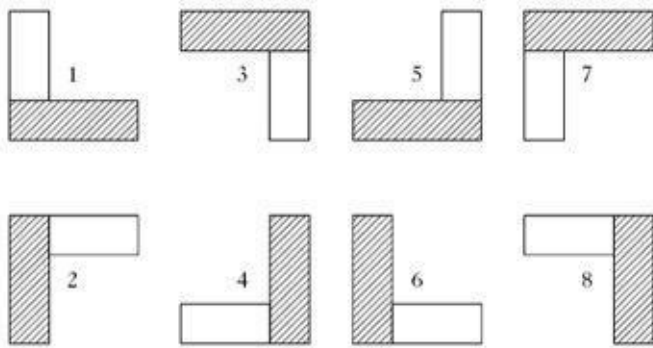
3. Figure C, a “revisionist” theory, amends the “west” to “east,” on the basis of Watson’s handwriting.

4. Finally, Figure D shows Edward Merrill’s suggestion, which neatly explains

the description “centre of this old part” but again plays loose with the phrase “shape of an L.”

All four proposals ultimately put Holmes at a stone-paved passage with an opening to the west and a stone stair descending to a cellar. “What matter” says Merrill, “if, to arrive there, we must (1) accept a long, narrow wing as a reasonable shape for a manor house [Figure A], or (2) change a preposition from ‘to’ to ‘over’ [Figure B], or (3) agree that an interval of twenty-five to thirty feet is ‘almost to the wall’ [Figure C], or (4) adopt a broad construction of the term ‘centre of this old part’ [Figure D].”

Once the shape of the house is established, there are eight possible emplacements (rotations) for the house:



Possible layouts of Hurlstone.

In each case the shaded portion is an ancient nucleus. Nicholas Utechin, in “Hurlstone and the Ritual,” examines each plan with care, comparing the Ritual directions and Holmes’s observations to the plan. He swiftly eliminates Plans 3, 5, and 7 on the basis of the wall lengths required to carry out the walking directions; Plan 8 fails because the oak would no longer be “right in front of the house.” Plan 1 makes nonsense of the “left, right, right” directions. Plan 2 he finds “aesthetically . . . not pleasing.” As between Plans 4 and 6, Utechin prefers Plan 6, while Edward Merrill opts for Plan 4, on the grounds of personal preference. Both admit, however, that we have “come into those realms of conjecture, where the most logical mind may be at fault” (“The Empty House”).

[1](#) “The Musgrave Ritual” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in May 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on May 13, 1893.

[2](#) The name “Boxer” was used in England as a generic name for any centre-fire cartridge, after Colonel

Boxer, R.A., in 1867. Gun enthusiasts debate at length whether such cartridges were available for pistols and whether they were available in sufficiently small calibre to produce the “handwritten” decoration on the wall—or would rather have blown away the entire wall!

[3](#) For Victoria Regina, or Queen Victoria.

[4](#) See “The ‘Gloria Scott,’ ” note 2 for a discussion of this docket.

[5](#) In *A Study in Scarlet*, Chapter 2, Watson writes, “Nothing could exceed [Holmes’s] energy when the working fit was upon him; but now and again a reaction would seize him, and for days on end he would lie upon the sofa in the sitting-room, hardly uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night.”

[6](#) Most chronologists tend to ignore the issue of when Holmes sat with Watson to tell him the tale of “The Musgrave Ritual.” In light of this remark and Holmes’s later comment “You see me now when my name has become known far and wide,” this scene clearly occurs no earlier than 1887, the date Watson’s first efforts were published (D. Martin Dakin puts his estimate at the winter of 1888). While logic might suggest that Holmes was speaking at some date after 1891, when the *Adventures* were published, the detective was in fact absent from 1891 until 1894 (“The Empty House”), whereas “The Musgrave Ritual” was first published in 1893. Therefore, this conversation between Holmes and Watson must have taken place before 1891, when only *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* had been published.

[7](#) Vamberry is identified by several scholars with Arminius, or Armin, Vambery (Hermann Vamberger, 1832–1913), a Hungarian professor of Oriental languages at the University of Buda-Pesth and a renowned wine collector. In his twenties he travelled throughout Armenia and Persia for several months, disguised in native dress, writing about his experiences in such books as *Sketches of Central Asia* (1868), *The Life and Adventures of Arminius Vambery* (1884), and *The Story of My Struggles* (1904). According to David Pelger, Vambery travelled to London in 1885, where he spent three weeks lecturing to the public on the Russian threat in Central Asia. He and Holmes may have met then. The character of Professor Van Helsing in the work *Dracula* is said by some to be drawn from Vambery, whom Bram Stoker may have consulted for his expertise on Romania and vampirism.

[8](#) Aluminium crutches were certainly not commonly available as medical devices at the time of “The Musgrave Ritual.” In 1886, only 15 tonnes of aluminium were produced worldwide, and the modern technique for producing aluminium was not invented until 1886. Before the “Bayer Process” for commercial smelting was developed in 1888, aluminium was far more precious than gold or silver. By 1900, production had risen to 8,000 tonnes, and aluminium became a common industrial metal.

[9](#) D. Martin Dakin points out that the native name for the Abominable Snowman is “yeti” and suggests that what Holmes really said was “the wrinkled yeti of the club foot and his abominable life.”

[10](#) Several other cases may be assigned to this “pre-Watson” period: the matter of Mortimer Maberley (“The Three Gables”), the Farintosh case (“The Speckled Band”), and the forgery case (*A Study in Scarlet*—brought to Holmes by Lestrade). In dangling before Watson the “tantalizing references” of still others, suggests Vincent Starrett in his monumental *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, the detective may very well have been engaging in a bit of sport by proving to his “Boswell” how much he still did not know.

[11](#) How Sherlock Holmes spent his early postgraduate years, between his years at “university” and the time of his move to his Montague Street lodgings, is the subject of much speculation. A number of scholars posit a visit to America during the period, explaining Holmes’s familiarity with things American and his friendship with Wilson Hargreave of New York (“The Dancing Men”). Others take literally Watson’s remark in “A Scandal in Bohemia” (“The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime”) and credit Holmes with a brief acting career. Dorothy L. Sayers thinks that Holmes spent some time at a German university, vacationing in France and Italy (improving his

evident language skills), while several writers believe that Holmes worked briefly as a journalist (evidenced by his several appearances in print) and cabdriver (explaining his intimate knowledge of London's streets).

12 Michael Harrison, in *The London of Sherlock Holmes*, puts Holmes's early London residence at No. 26, Montague Street, Russell Square, a four-storey house that was subsumed by the Lonsdale Hotel sometime around 1900. He reaches this conclusion on the basis that No. 24, Montague Street, next door, was leased by one "Mrs. Holmes" in 1875. "It would be stretching coincidence too far to assume that Mrs. Holmes was not related in some way to young Mr. Holmes, and we may assume that the lady took the house in Montague Street to provide a home for Sherlock when he should come down from the university and begin his professional career in London."

13 The core of the British Museum's original holdings consisted of the vast collection—a museum in its own right—of Sir Hans Sloane, who sold it to the nation for far less than its real value upon his death in 1753. (See "The Three Garridebs," note 20, for more on Sloane.) Sloane's collection, comprising valuable prints, drawings, and manuscripts as well as fossils, precious stones, dried plants, and human and animal skeletons, was housed along with the Harleian library (a collection of legal documents compiled by Robert Harley, the first Earl of Oxford) and Sir Robert Cotton's library of Greek, Hebrew, and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in a house once belonging to the dukes of Montague. The museum was opened to the public in 1759. In its early years, the British Museum was, in historian Roy Porter's words, "ill-managed and inaccessible"; in fact, the seventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* notes that the fields behind the museum were once "so solitary, that they were usually selected as the place for deciding what were called affairs of honour." Throughout the nineteenth century, however, the museum went through several crucial expansions and made many important acquisitions, including the Rosetta Stone, sculptures from the Parthenon, and the books of George III's library. By 1883, the natural history exhibits were moved offsite to a location in South Kensington, ultimately becoming the separate Museum of Natural History in 1963; the British Library was split off as a distinct organisation in 1973.

14 Although he does not say so, one imagines Holmes ensconced in the "Reading Room" of the British Museum, which opened in 1857 and was originally accessible only to those visitors with a "reader's ticket." (It was opened to the general public in 2000.) Every reader was provided with a chair, a folding desk, a small hinged shelf for books, pens, and ink, a blotting-pad, and a peg for his hat. On a visit to the Reading Room in the mid-1970s, this editor obtained a brochure from the Reading Room listing famous readers, including Karl Marx but not including Holmes. When a guard who appeared quite ancient was questioned about this omission, he curtly stated that he had "never seen Holmes here."

15 Sadly, the first two are unknown. Note that "The 'Gloria Scott'" preceded the period about which Holmes is speaking.

16 This remark, and Musgrave's aristocratic ancestry, led many scholars to conclude that Holmes attended Oxford. See "The 'Gloria Scott,'" note 3.

17 A younger branch of the family.

18 David L. Hammer, in *For the Sake of the Game*, identifies "Hurlstone" as "Danny," located in West Sussex, the family seat of the Champion family. William John Champion and the Rev. John Goring (see note 36, below) were the two largest landholders in West Sussex in 1867, according to *Kelly's Directory*.

19 That is, windows with their panes divided by a vertical bar.

20 By which he presumably meant that he was one of the two Members of Parliament elected at large to represent the parliamentary division of western Sussex.

21 Holmes and Musgrave were never more than "slight acquaintance[s]"; thus it is possible that the

struggling young detective saw not a social visit but a business opportunity when Musgrave walked through his door. June Thomson speculates that Holmes may have charged Musgrave a fee for his services, pointing to his “living by my wits” remark as “possibly a hint that he had turned professional and expected to be paid.”

22 To raise and protect game for purposes of sport.

23 October through January, during which the shooting of pheasant is legal in Great Britain.

24 The notion of “the butler did it” is a popular literary device in mystery novels, owing in large part to issues of class. In Victorian England in particular, middle-and upper-class reliance on domestic staff (especially in country manors such as Musgrave’s) was so absolute, and trust in the loyalty of one’s servants so necessary, that many employers privately harboured fears of betrayal or even class revolt. That anxiety is capitalised upon in “whodunnit” tales in which the butler, given his position of authority over the household, quiet obsequiousness, and ability to move easily around the house, often seems the “ideal culprit,” as noted in *The Oxford Companion of Crime and Mystery Writing*. “The Musgrave Ritual” is cited there as the earliest example of a story in which a butler may have been involved in foul play. Still, in many such stories, the butler-as-suspect device is more often than not used as a literary red herring, meant to tease readers and manipulate the plot. “In fact,” *the Oxford Companion* contends, “there are surprisingly few detective novels in which the butler is actually guilty of a crime.” In Dilys Winn’s charming essay “The Butler,” retired butler Mr. John Mills explains the public’s easy assumption that “the butler did it”: “ ‘Oh, I expect that’s because we did everything else.’ ”

25 By this technical term Musgrave refers to the family coat of arms and its details.

26 If this were Musgrave’s view of the importance of the Ritual, why then did he bring it with him to Montague Street? Why would Brunton read the Ritual at night, when he risked discovery, rather than during the day when Musgrave was out?

27 In the *Strand Magazine* and American editions, the phrase “and the outhouses” is replaced by “from cellar to garret.” Perhaps Watson realized later that Musgrave’s search had been less than thorough.

28 A lake, pond, or marsh.

29 Holmes’s perception of the Welsh temperament may have arisen from the somewhat embattled history of Wales, a rugged, individualistic land seemingly constantly under siege: by the Romans, by the English (Wales became a part of England in 1536), and by cultural British impositions such as language, law, Puritanism, and industrialisation. The sheep-farming nation did not take too well to the Industrial Revolution and its push toward coal mining; the Rebecca Riots of 1843, in which poor farmers, dressed in women’s clothing, destroyed toll booths to protest road tolls, were but one manifestation of that conflict. (The “Rebecca” was taken from the Bible: “And they blessed Rebecca and said: Let thy seed possess the gates of those who hate thee.”) Religious tension was another constant, since many Welsh resented having to tithe one-tenth of their incomes to the Church of England when they had established their own denomination, the Calvinist Methodist Church. British displeasure with the obstinacy of Welsh nonconformity was responsible in part for the scathing indictments of the 1847 Report of the Commissioners for Education, which not only lambasted the Welsh educational system but also depicted the Welsh (particularly women) as slovenly, morally corrupt, ignorant, and promiscuous. Given all that, it seems likely that Holmes’s description of Rachel Howells as “fiery and passionate” was not meant as much of a compliment.

30 Edgar W. Smith points out that when “The Musgrave Ritual” was first published in the *Strand Magazine*, May 1893, this couplet (“What was the month? . . .”) was not present; it first appeared in the

English book text, while the American editions, for reasons unknown, have followed the *Strand* text.

31 T. S. Eliot paraphrases the Ritual in *Murder in the Cathedral*:

Thomas: Who shall have it?
Tempter: He who will come.
Thomas: What shall be the month?
Tempter: The last from the first.
Thomas: What shall we give for it?
Tempter: Pretence of priestly power.
Thomas: Why should we give it?
Tempter: For the power and the glory.

After a great deal of literary controversy, Eliot declares in a letter to Nathan L. Bengis: “My use of the Musgrave Ritual was deliberate and wholly conscious.”

32 Unclear from the instructions is the matter of where the observer was supposed to stand, ponders Jay Finley Christ in “Musgrave Mathematics.” While Holmes chose to do so on the former location of *the elm*, the compiler of the Ritual could not have stood there while the elm lived. Furthermore, why does Holmes refer to the shadow of the elm, when the Ritual refers to the shadow *under the elm*? “How did Holmes, or the butler who preceded him,” puzzles Christ, “know what shadow it was?”

33 Musgrave earlier stated that the house had been thoroughly searched from cellar to garret, and he clearly knew of this place. Why was it not searched?

34 Charles I (1600–1649), was king of England, Scotland, and Ireland (1625–1649); his authoritarian rule and quarrels with Parliament provoked a civil war that led to his beheading. Many of the Latin inscriptions on coins issued during Charles’s reign reflect his troubled relations with his subjects and his belief in the divine right of the monarchy: NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT (No one provokes me with impunity); CHRISTO AUSPICE REGNO (I reign under the auspices of Christ); MOR POPULI PRAESIDIUM REGIS (The love of the people is the King’s protection). One inscription that appears in various forms on many Charles I coins, RELIG PRO LEG ANG LIBER PAR, is a kind of Latin shorthand for “the religion of the Protestants, the laws of England and the liberty of Parliament,” or a summation of the “Declaration” that Parliament forced Charles to sign.

35 To resist successfully, or to advance in spite of.

36 In the English Civil Wars (1642–1651), the name was adopted by Charles I’s supporters, who contemptuously called Oliver Cromwell’s Puritans “Roundheads” after their short haircuts. (Cavaliers wore long, fashionable wigs.) At the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the court party preserved the name “Cavalier”; the designation survived until the term “Tory” came to signify support for the royalist cause.

David L. Hammer identifies Sir Ralph Musgrave as General George Goring (1608–1657), an intriguing figure who plotted against Parliament on Charles I’s behalf, betrayed the conspirators by revealing their plans to Parliament, and then reversed himself yet again to declare his support for the king once and for all. Goring’s family remained substantial landholders in West Sussex. See note 18, above.

37 The identification of the artifact rescued by Holmes is the subject of some controversy. The most widely accepted view is that of Nathan Bengis, expressed in “Whose Was It?,” who claims it was the Crown of St. Edward. Thought destroyed by the order of Parliament in 1649, a new “Crown of St. Edward” was made for Charles II’s coronation in 1661, and all of the kings and queens regnant since 1661 (except Queen Victoria) have been crowned with it. The crown discovered at Hurlstone, Bengis alleges, was the original crown, which had been saved from destruction by Musgrave’s ancestor. This view is echoed by no less an authority than Maj. Gen. H. D. W. Sitwell, C.B., M.C., Keeper of H. M. Jewel House, Tower of London.

38 Charles II (1630–1685), son of Charles I, held the throne briefly after the execution of his father, but was forced to flee England in 1651 after being defeated at Worcester by Oliver Cromwell’s parliamentary forces. He was forced to live in poverty-stricken exile for several years in France, Germany, and the Spanish Netherlands, and it is during this period that we may assume the Musgrave Ritual was written. In 1660 Charles was restored to the throne following the brief, unsuccessful rule of Cromwell’s son, Richard.

39 Given the not-so-secret hiding place of the crown—a cellar that was still being used to store wood—it seems curious that the crown was not discovered long before Brunton (and Holmes) came along to decipher the map. As D. Martin Dakin observes, surely someone over the course of two centuries would have noticed the cellar’s unusual ornamentation: “there in the middle of the floor was a flagstone with a ring in it, just shouting out to be lifted up.”

40 “The most amazing feature of the whole story,” Nathan Bengis writes, “is not that this relic survived, but that Reginald Musgrave was allowed by the British Government to retain it.” As a public possession and unique historical relic, one would expect that the crown would have been quickly added to the nation’s treasures in the Tower.

41 Perhaps not surprisingly, many concur with Watson’s initial assessment of “The Musgrave Ritual” as a case in which Holmes erred (see “The Yellow Face”). Although at least one revisionist kindly theorises that Holmes simply made up the entire story, some critics believe that Reginald Musgrave himself murdered Brunton, either to stop Brunton’s blackmail or out of jealousy and greed. Another suggests that Rachel Howells killed Brunton with laudanum (in his bedroom) and that Musgrave helped to move the body.

THE REIGATE SQUIRES1

Holmes is suffering the effects of overwork, having brought to a successful conclusion the “Netherlands-Sumatra Company” case, about which we know virtually nothing. Watson coerces him to vacation in Surrey, at the home of a military companion of Watson (Colonel Hayter, perhaps the only reputable colonel in the entire Canon). Suddenly, his rest ends, as he is thrust into “The Reigate Squires,” an investigation of a robbery-murder. His father-and-son “clients” are strangely reluctant to have Holmes involved, and Holmes appears to be functioning at less than full capacity. Although Holmes’s claim of twenty-three deductions from the handwritten note central to the case sounds preposterous, handwriting analysis was highly regarded in Victorian times, and there is much sound information which can be drawn from the note, even without Holmes’s help. However, no scholar has solved the mystery of the identity of Annie Morrison.

IT WAS SOME time before the health of my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, recovered from the strain caused by his immense exertions in the spring of '87. The whole question of the Netherland-Sumatra Company and of the colossal schemes of Baron Maupertuis is too recent in the minds of the public, and too intimately concerned with politics and finance, to be fitting subjects for this series of sketches. It led, however, in an indirect fashion to a singular and complex problem, which gave my friend an opportunity of demonstrating the value of a fresh weapon among the many with which he waged his life-long battle against crime.

On referring to my notes, I see that it was upon the fourteenth of April that I received a telegram from Lyons which informed me that Holmes was lying ill in the Hotel Dulong.² Within twenty-four hours I was in his sickroom and was relieved to find that there was nothing formidable in his symptoms. Even his iron constitution, however, had broken down under the strain of an investigation which had extended over two months, during which period he had never worked less than fifteen hours a day and had more than once, as he assured me, kept to his task for five days at a stretch. The triumphant issue of his labours could not save him from reaction after so terrible an exertion, and at a time when Europe was ringing with his name, and when his room was literally ankle-deep with congratulatory telegrams,³ I found him a prey to the blackest depression. Even the knowledge that he had succeeded where the police of three countries had failed, and that he had out-manoeuvred at every point the most accomplished swindler in Europe, was insufficient to rouse him from his nervous prostration.



Title.

Three days later we were back in Baker Street together, but it was evident that my friend would be much the better for a change, and the thought of a week of spring-time in the country was full of attractions to me also. My old friend Colonel Hayter, who had come under my professional care in Afghanistan, had now taken a house near Reigate, in Surrey, and had frequently asked me to come down to him upon a visit. On the last occasion he had remarked that if my friend would only come with me, he would be glad to extend his hospitality to him also. A little diplomacy was needed, but when Holmes understood that the establishment was a bachelor one, and that he would be allowed the fullest freedom, he fell in with my plans, and a week after our return from Lyons we were under the Colonel's roof. Hayter was a fine old soldier, who had seen much of the world, and he soon found, as I had expected, that Holmes and he had plenty in common.

On the evening of our arrival we were sitting in the Colonel's gun-room after dinner, Holmes stretched upon the sofa, while Hayter and I looked over his little armory of fire-arms.⁴

"By the way," said he suddenly, "I'll take one of these pistols upstairs with me in case we have an alarm."

"An alarm!" said I.

"Yes, we've had a scare in this part lately. Old Acton, who is one of our county magnates, had his house broken into last Monday. No great damage done, but the fellows are still at large."

"No clue?" asked Holmes, cocking his eye at the Colonel.

"None as yet. But the affair is a petty one, one of our little country crimes, which must seem too small for your attention, Mr. Holmes, after this great international affair."

Holmes waved away the compliment, though his smile showed that it had pleased him.

"Was there any feature of interest?"

"I fancy not. The thieves ransacked the library and got very little for their pains.

"The whole place was turned upside down, drawers burst open and presses⁵ ransacked, with the result that an odd volume of Pope's Homer,⁶ two plated candlesticks, an ivory letter-weight, a small oak barometer, and a ball of twine are all that have vanished."

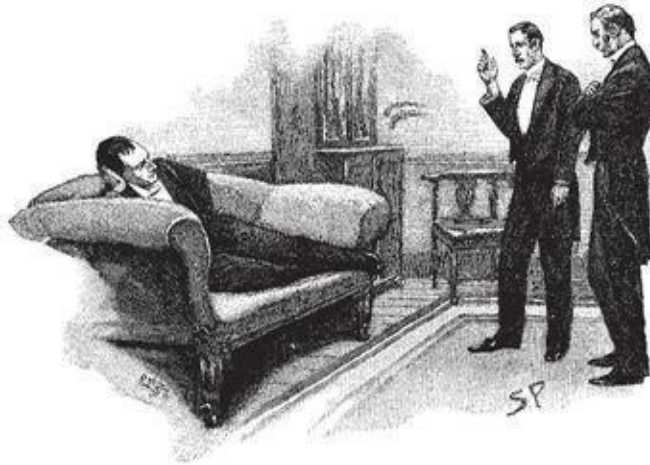
"What an extraordinary assortment!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, the fellows evidently grabbed hold of anything they could get."

Holmes grunted from the sofa.

“The county police ought to make something of that,” said he. “Why, it is surely obvious that—”

But I held up a warning finger.



“I held up a warning finger.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“You are here for a rest, my dear fellow. For heaven’s sake, don’t get started on a new problem when your nerves are all in shreds.”

Holmes shrugged his shoulders with a glance of comic resignation towards the Colonel, and the talk drifted away into less dangerous channels.

It was destined, however, that all my professional caution should be wasted, for next morning the problem obtruded itself upon us in such a way that it was impossible to ignore it, and our country visit took a turn which neither of us could have anticipated. We were at breakfast when the Colonel’s butler rushed in with all his propriety shaken out of him.

“Have you heard the news, sir?” he gasped. “At the Cunninghams’, sir!”

“Burglary?” cried the Colonel, with his coffee cup in mid air.

“Murder!”

The Colonel whistled. “By Jove!” said he. “Who’s killed, then? The J. P. or his son?”

“Neither, sir. It was William, the coachman. Shot through the heart, sir, and never spoke again.”

“Who shot him, then?”

“The burglar, sir. He was off like a shot and got clean away. He’d just broke in at the pantry window when William came on him and met his end in saving his master’s property.”

“What time?”

“It was last night, sir, somewhere about twelve.”

“Ah, then, we’ll step over presently,” said the Colonel, coolly settling down to his breakfast again. “It’s a baddish business,” he added, when the butler had gone; “he’s our leading squire⁷ about here, is old Cunningham, and a very decent fellow too. He’ll be cut up over this, for the man has been in his service for years, and was a good servant. It’s evidently the same villains who broke into Acton’s.”

“And stole that very singular collection,” said Holmes thoughtfully.

“Precisely.”

“Hum! It may prove the simplest matter in the world; but all the same, at first glance this is just a little curious, is it not? A gang of burglars acting in the country might be expected to vary the scene of their operations, and not to crack two cribs in the same district within a few days. When you spoke last night of taking precautions, I remember that it passed through my mind that this was probably the last parish in England to which the thief or thieves would be likely to turn their attention; which shows that I have still much to learn.”

“I fancy it’s some local practitioner,” said the Colonel. “In that case, of course, Acton’s and Cunningham’s are just the places he would go for, since they are far the largest about here.”

“And richest?”

“Well, they ought to be; but they’ve had a lawsuit for some years which has sucked the blood out of both of them, I fancy. Old Acton has some claim on half Cunningham’s estate, and the lawyers have been at it with both hands.”

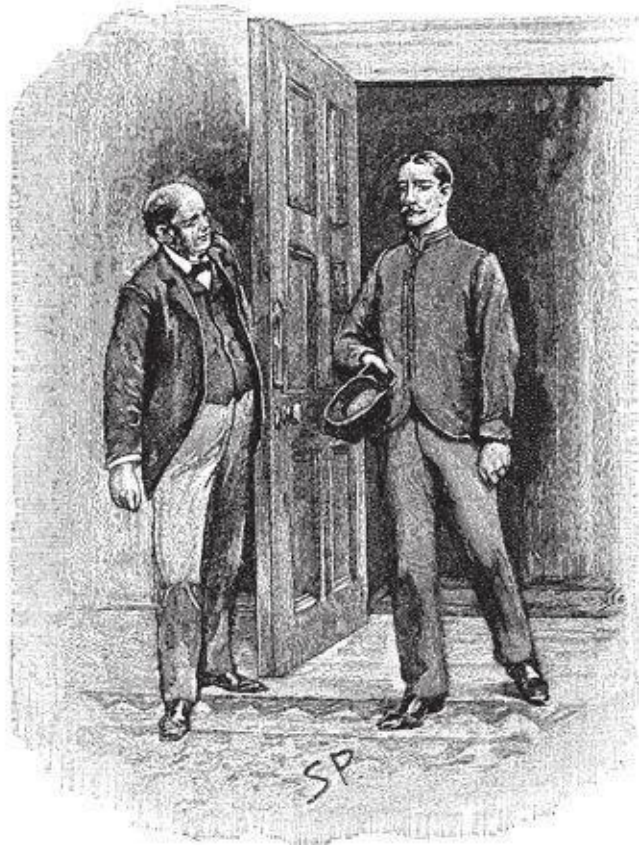
“If it’s a local villain, there should not be much difficulty in running him down,” said Holmes with a yawn. “All right, Watson, I don’t intend to meddle.”

“Inspector Forrester, sir,” said the butler, throwing open the door.

The official, a smart, keen-faced young fellow, stepped into the room. “Good morning, Colonel,” said he. “I hope I don’t intrude, but we hear that Mr. Holmes, of Baker Street, is here.”

The Colonel waved his hand towards my friend, and the Inspector bowed.

“We thought that perhaps you would care to step across, Mr. Holmes.”



“Inspector Forrester.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“The Fates are against you, Watson,” said he, laughing. “We were chatting about the matter when you came in, Inspector. Perhaps you can let us have a few details.” As he leaned back in his chair in the familiar attitude I knew that the case was hopeless.

“We had no clue in the Acton affair. But here we have plenty to go on, and there’s no doubt it is the same party in each case. The man was seen.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, sir. But he was off like a deer after the shot that killed poor William Kirwan was fired. Mr. Cunningham saw him from the bedroom window, and Mr. Alec Cunningham saw him from the back passage. It was a quarter to twelve when the alarm broke out. Mr. Cunningham had just got into bed, and Mister Alec was smoking a pipe in his dressing-gown. They both heard William, the coachman, calling for help, and Mister Alec he ran down to see what was the matter. The back door was open, and as he came to the foot of the stairs he saw two men wrestling together outside. One of them fired a shot, the other dropped, and the murderer rushed across the garden and over the hedge. Mr. Cunningham,

looking out of his bedroom window, saw the fellow as he gained the road, but lost sight of him at once. Mister Alec stopped to see if he could help the dying man, and so the villain got clean away. Beyond the fact that he was a middle-sized man, and dressed in some dark stuff, we have no personal clue, but we are making energetic inquiries, and if he is a stranger we shall soon find him out.”

“What was this William doing there? Did he say anything before he died?”

“Not a word. He lives at the lodge with his mother, and as he was a very faithful fellow, we imagine that he walked up to the house with the intention of seeing that all was right there. Of course, this Acton business has put everyone on their guard. The robber must have just burst open the door—the lock has been forced—when William came upon him.”

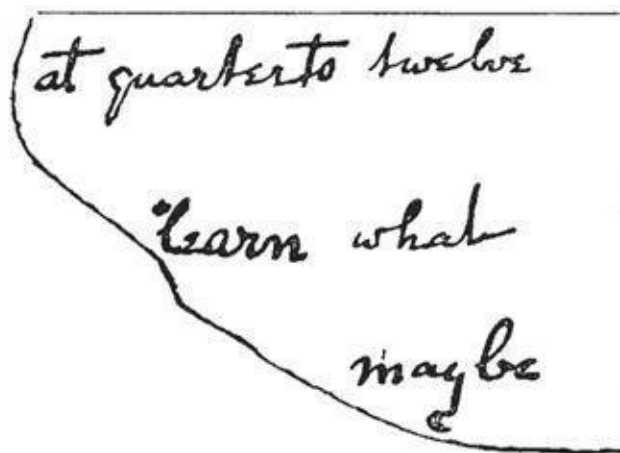
“Did William say anything to his mother before going out?”

“She is very old and deaf, and we can get no information from her. The shock has made her half-witted, but I understand that she was never very bright. There is one very important circumstance, however. Look at this!”

He took a small piece of torn paper from a note-book and spread it out upon his knee.

“This was found between the finger and thumb of the dead man. It appears to be a fragment torn from a larger sheet. You will observe that the hour mentioned upon it is the very time at which the poor fellow met his fate. You see that his murderer might have torn the rest of the sheet from him or he might have taken this fragment from the murderer. It reads almost as though it were an appointment.”

Holmes took up the scrap of paper, a facsimile of which is here reproduced.



at quarters to twelve
learn what
maybe

“Presuming that it is an appointment,” continued the Inspector, “it is, of course, a conceivable theory that this William Kirwan, though he had the

reputation of being an honest man, may have been in league with the thief. He may have met him there, may even have helped him to break in the door, and then they may have fallen out between themselves.”

“This writing is of extraordinary interest,” said Holmes, who had been examining it with intense concentration. “These are much deeper waters than I had thought.” He sank his head upon his hands, while the Inspector smiled at the effect which his case had had upon the famous London specialist.

“Your last remark,” said Holmes presently, “as to the possibility of there being an understanding between the burglar and the servant, and this being a note of appointment from one to the other, is an ingenious and not entirely impossible supposition. But this writing opens up—” He sank his head into his hands again and remained for some minutes in the deepest thought. When he raised his face again I was surprised to see that his cheek was tinged with colour, and his eyes as bright as before his illness. He sprang to his feet with all his old energy.

“I’ll tell you what!” said he, “I should like to have a quiet little glance into the details of this case. There is something in it which fascinates me extremely. If you will permit me, Colonel, I will leave my friend Watson and you, and I will step round with the Inspector to test the truth of one or two little fancies of mine. I will be with you again in half an hour.”

An hour and a half had elapsed before the Inspector returned alone.

“Mr. Holmes is walking up and down in the field outside,” said he. “He wants us all four to go up to the house together.”

“To Mr. Cunningham’s?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What for?”

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t quite know, sir. Between ourselves, I think Mr. Holmes has not quite got over his illness yet. He’s been behaving very queerly, and he is very much excited.”

“I don’t think you need alarm yourself,” said I. “I have usually found that there was method in his madness.”⁸

“Some folk might say there was madness in his method,” muttered the Inspector. “But he’s all on fire to start, Colonel, so we had best go out, if you are ready.”

We found Holmes pacing up and down in the field, his chin sunk upon his breast, and his hands thrust into his trousers pockets.

“The matter grows in interest,” said he. “Watson, your country trip has been a distinct success. I have had a charming morning.”

“You have been up to the scene of the crime, I understand?” said the Colonel.

“Yes; the Inspector and I have made quite a little reconnaissance together.”

“Any success?”

“Well, we have seen some very interesting things. I’ll tell you what we did as we walk. First of all we saw the body of this unfortunate man. He certainly died from a revolver wound, as reported.”

“Had you doubted it, then?”

“Oh, it is as well to test everything. Our inspection was not wasted. We then had an interview with Mr. Cunningham and his son, who were able to point out the exact spot where the murderer had broken through the garden hedge in his flight. That was of great interest.”

“Naturally.”

“Then we had a look at this poor fellow’s mother. We could get no information from her, however, as she is very old and feeble.”

“And what is the result of your investigations?”

“The conviction that the crime is a very peculiar one. Perhaps our visit now may do something to make it less obscure. I think that we are both agreed, Inspector, that the fragment of paper in the dead man’s hand, bearing, as it does, the very hour of his death written upon it, is of extreme importance.”

“It should give a clue, Mr. Holmes.”

“It *does* give a clue. Whoever wrote that note was the man who brought William Kirwan out of his bed at that hour. But where is the rest of that sheet of paper?”

“I examined the ground carefully in the hope of finding it,” said the Inspector.

“It was torn out of the dead man’s hand. Why was someone so anxious to get possession of it? Because it incriminated him. And what would he do with it? Thrust it into his pocket most likely, never noticing that a corner of it had been left in the grip of the corpse. If we could get the rest of that sheet, it is obvious that we should have gone a long way towards solving the mystery.”

“Yes, but how can we get at the criminal’s pocket before we catch the criminal?”

“Well, well, it was worth thinking over. Then there is another obvious point. The note was sent to William. The man who wrote it could not have taken it, otherwise, of course, he might have delivered his own message by word of mouth. Who brought the note, then? Or did it come through the post?”

“I have made inquiries,” said the Inspector. “William received a letter by the afternoon post yesterday. The envelope was destroyed by him.”

“Excellent!” cried Holmes, clapping the Inspector on the back. “You’ve seen the postman. It is a pleasure to work with you. Well, here is the lodge, and if you will come up, Colonel, I will show you the scene of the crime.”

We passed the pretty cottage where the murdered man had lived, and walked up an oak-lined avenue to the fine old Queen Anne house, which bears the date of Malplaquet⁹ upon the lintel of the door. Holmes and the Inspector led us round it until we came to the side gate, which is separated by a stretch of garden from the hedge which lines the road. A constable was standing at the kitchen door.

“Throw the door open, officer,” said Holmes. “Now, it was on those stairs that young Mr. Cunningham stood and saw the two men struggling just where we are. Old Mr. Cunningham was at that window—the second on the left—and he saw the fellow get away just to the left of that bush. So did the son. They are both sure of it on account of the bush. Then Mister Alec ran out and knelt beside the wounded man. The ground is very hard, you see, and there are no marks to guide us.” As he spoke two men came down the garden path, from round the angle of the house. The one was an elderly man, with a strong, deep-lined, heavy-eyed face; the other a dashing young fellow, whose bright, smiling expression and showy dress were in strange contrast with the business which had brought us there.

“Still at it, then?” said he to Holmes. “I thought you Londoners were never at fault. You don’t seem to be so very quick, after all.”

“Ah! you must give us a little time,” said Holmes good-humouredly.

“You’ll want it,” said young Alec Cunningham. “Why, I don’t see that we have any clue at all.”



“Two men came down the garden path.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“There’s only one,” answered the Inspector. “We thought that if we could only find—Good heavens! Mr. Holmes, what is the matter?”

My poor friend’s face had suddenly assumed the most dreadful expression. His eyes rolled upwards, his features writhed in agony, and with a suppressed groan he dropped on his face upon the ground. Horrified at the suddenness and severity of the attack, we carried him into the kitchen where he lay back in a large chair and breathed heavily for some minutes. Finally, with a shame-faced apology for his weakness, he rose once more.

“Watson would tell you that I have only just recovered from a severe illness,” he explained. “I am liable to these sudden nervous attacks.”

“Shall I send you home in my trap?” asked old Cunningham.



“Good heavens! What is the matter?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Well, since I am here, there is one point on which I should like to feel sure. We can very easily verify it.”

“What is it?”

“Well, it seems to me that it is just possible that the arrival of this poor fellow William was not before, but after, the entrance of the burglar into the house. You appear to take it for granted that although the door was forced the robber never got in.”

“I fancy that is quite obvious,” said Mr. Cunningham, gravely. “Why, my son Alec had not yet gone to bed, and he would certainly have heard anyone moving about.”

“Where was he sitting?”

“I was sitting smoking in my dressing-room.”

“Which window is that?”

“The last on the left, next my father’s.”

“Both your lamps were lit, of course?”

“Undoubtedly.”

“There are some very singular points here,” said Holmes, smiling. “Is it not

extraordinary that a burglar—and a burglar who had some previous experience—should deliberately break into a house at a time when he could see from the lights that two of the family were still afoot?”

“He must have been a cool hand.”

“Well, of course, if the case were not an odd one we should not have been driven to ask you for an explanation,” said young Mister Alec. “But as to your ideas that the man had robbed the house before William tackled him, I think it a most absurd notion. Shouldn’t we have found the place disarranged and missed the things which he had taken?”

“It depends on what the things were,” said Holmes. “You must remember that we are dealing with a burglar who is a very peculiar fellow, and who appears to work on lines of his own. Look, for example, at the queer lot of things which he took from Acton’s—what was it?—a ball of string, a letter-weight, and I don’t know what other odds and ends.”

“Well, we are quite in your hands, Mr. Holmes,” said old Cunningham. “Anything which you or the Inspector may suggest will most certainly be done.”

“In the first place,” said Holmes, “I should like you to offer a reward—coming from yourself, for the officials may take a little time before they would agree upon the sum, and these things cannot be done too promptly. I have jotted down the form here, if you would not mind signing it. Fifty pounds was quite enough, I thought.”

“I would willingly give five hundred,” said the J. P., taking the slip of paper and the pencil which Holmes handed to him. “This is not quite correct, however,” he added, glancing over the document.

“I wrote it rather hurriedly.”

“You see you begin: ‘Whereas, at about a quarter to one on Tuesday morning, an attempt was made,’ and so on. It was at a quarter to twelve, as a matter of fact.”

I was pained at the mistake, for I knew how keenly Holmes would feel any slip of the kind. It was his specialty to be accurate as to fact, but his recent illness had shaken him, and this one little incident was enough to show me that he was still far from being himself. He was obviously embarrassed for an instant, while the Inspector raised his eyebrows, and Alec Cunningham burst into a laugh. The old gentleman corrected the mistake, however, and handed the paper back to Holmes.

“Get it printed as soon as possible,” he said. “I think your idea is an excellent one.”

Holmes put the slip of paper carefully away into his pocket-book.

“And now,” said he, “it really would be a good thing that we should all go

over the house together and make certain that this rather erratic burglar did not, after all, carry anything away with him.”

Before entering, Holmes made an examination of the door which had been forced. It was evident that a chisel or strong knife had been thrust in, and the lock forced back with it. We could see the marks in the wood where it had been pushed in.

“You don’t use bars, then?” he asked.

“We have never found it necessary.”

“You don’t keep a dog?”

“Yes; but he is chained on the other side of the house.”

“When do the servants go to bed?”

“About ten.”

“I understand that William was usually in bed also at that hour?”

“Yes.”

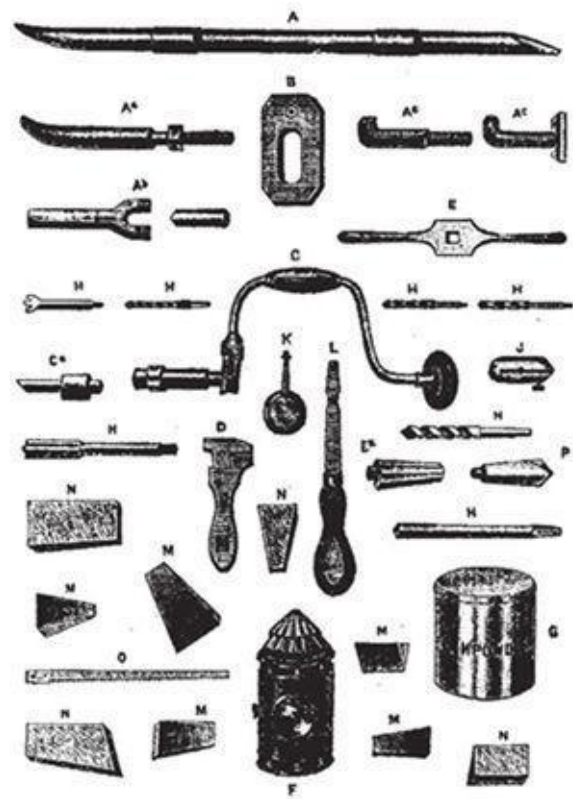
“It is singular that on this particular night he should have been up. Now, I should be very glad if you would have the kindness to show us over the house, Mr. Cunningham.”

A stone-flagged passage, with the kitchens branching away from it, led by a wooden staircase directly to the first floor of the house. It came out upon the landing opposite to a second more ornamental stair which came up from the front hall. Out of this landing opened the drawing-room and several bedrooms, including those of Mr. Cunningham and his son. Holmes walked slowly, taking keen note of the architecture of the house. I could tell from his expression that he was on a hot scent, and yet I could not in the least imagine in what direction his inferences were leading him.

“My good sir,” said Mr. Cunningham, with some impatience, “this is surely very unnecessary. That is my room at the end of the stairs, and my son’s is the one beyond it. I leave it to your judgment whether it was possible for the thief to have come up here without disturbing us.”

“You must try round and get on a fresh scent, I fancy,” said the son with a rather malicious smile.

“Still, I must ask you to humour me a little further. I should like, for example, to see how far the windows of the bedrooms command the front. This, I understand, is your son’s room”—he pushed open the door—“and that, I presume is the dressing-room in which he sat smoking when the alarm was given. Where does the window of that look out to?” He stepped across the bedroom, pushed open the door, and glanced round the other chamber.



A SAFE-BURGLAR'S KIT.
(The whole were conveyed in a handbag.)

<p>A Little Alderman, or Sectional Jenny. Aa Spare Section. Ab Cleaver end, to be screwed into A. Ac Prisms. D Persuasion Plate, for obtaining leverage. C American Brace, or Drill. Ca Centre-bit. D Adjustable Spanner. E Wrench. Ea Rims for Wrench, to enlarge hole.</p>	<p>F Dark Lantern. G Gunpowder. H Various Drills, "twist" drills. J Lock for Drills (to hold them fast). K Oil-can. L Screw-driver. M Steel Wedges, with rasp-like edges. N Wooden Wedges. O Saw for metal. P Counter-sink.</p>
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A cracksmen's tools illustrated in 1889. Gunpowder has not yet been replaced by dynamite

Burglary tools.

“I hope that you are satisfied now?” said Mr. Cunningham tartly.

“Thank you; I think I have seen all that I wished.”

“Then if it is really necessary, we can go into my room.”

“If it is not too much trouble.”

The J. P. shrugged his shoulders, and led the way into his own chamber, which was a plainly furnished and commonplace room. As we moved across it in the direction of the window, Holmes fell back until he and I were the last of the group. Near the foot of the bed was a small square table on which stood a dish of oranges and a carafe of water. As we passed it Holmes, to my unutterable astonishment, leaned over in front of me and deliberately knocked the whole

thing over. The glass smashed into a thousand pieces, and the fruit rolled about into every corner of the room.



“He deliberately knocked the whole thing over.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“You’ve done it now, Watson,” said he coolly. “A pretty mess you’ve made of the carpet.”

I stooped in some confusion and began to pick up the fruit, understanding that for some reason my companion desired me to take the blame upon myself. The others did the same and set the table on its legs again.

“Halloa!” cried the Inspector, “where’s he got to?”

Holmes had disappeared.

“Wait here an instant,” said young Alec Cunningham. “The fellow is off his head, in my opinion. Come with me, father, and see where he has got to!”

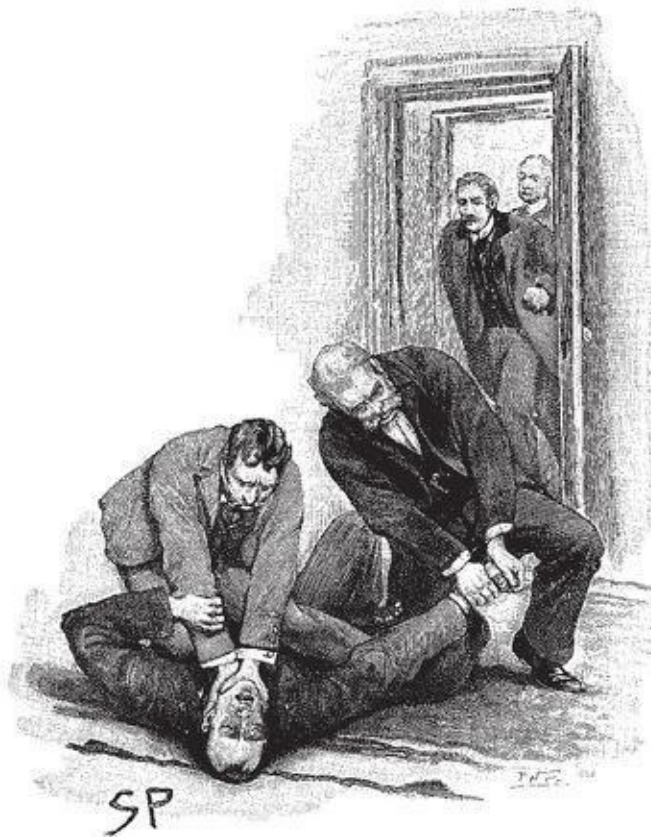
They rushed out of the room, leaving the Inspector, the Colonel, and me staring at each other.

“’Pon my word, I am inclined to agree with Master Alec,” said the official. “It may be the effect of this illness, but it seems to me that—”

His words were cut short by a sudden scream of “Help! Help! Murder!” With a thrill I recognised the voice as that of my friend. I rushed madly from the room

on to the landing. The cries, which had sunk down into a hoarse, inarticulate shouting, came from the room which we had first visited. I dashed in, and on into the dressing-room beyond. The two Cunninghams were bending over the prostrate figure of Sherlock Holmes, the younger clutching his throat with both hands, while the elder seemed to be twisting one of his wrists. In an instant the three of us had torn them away from him, and Holmes staggered to his feet, very pale, and evidently greatly exhausted.

“Arrest these men, Inspector,” he gasped.



“Bending over the prostrate figure of Sherlock Holmes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“On what charge?”

“That of murdering their coachman, William Kirwan.”



Stormy petrel.

“The Inspector stared about him in bewilderment. “Oh, come now, Mr. Holmes,” said he at last, “I’m sure you don’t really mean to—”

“Tut, man, look at their faces!” cried Holmes curtly.

Never, certainly, have I seen a plainer confession of guilt upon human countenances. The older man seemed numbed and dazed, with a heavy, sullen expression upon his strongly marked face. The son, on the other hand, had dropped all that jaunty, dashing style which had characterized him, and the ferocity of a dangerous wild beast gleamed in his dark eyes and distorted his handsome features. The Inspector said nothing, but stepping to the door, he blew his whistle. Two of his constables came at the call.

“I have no alternative, Mr. Cunningham,” said he. “I trust that this may all prove to be an absurd mistake, but you can see that—Ah, would you?—Drop it!” He struck out with his hand, and a revolver, which the younger man was in the act of cocking, clattered down upon the floor.

“Keep that,” said Holmes, quickly putting his foot upon it. “You will find it useful at the trial. But this is what we really wanted.” He held up a little crumpled piece of paper.

“The remainder of the sheet!” cried the Inspector.

“Precisely.”

“And where was it?”

“Where I was sure it must be. I’ll make the whole matter clear to you presently. I think, Colonel, that you and Watson might return now, and I will be with you again in an hour at the furthest. The Inspector and I must have a word with the prisoners, but you will certainly see me back at luncheon time.”

Sherlock Holmes was as good as his word, for about one o’clock he rejoined us in the Colonel’s smoking-room. He was accompanied by a little elderly gentleman, who was introduced to me as the Mr. Acton whose house had been the scene of the original burglary.

“I wished Mr. Acton to be present while I demonstrated this small matter to you,” said Holmes, “for it is natural that he should take a keen interest in the details. I am afraid, my dear Colonel, that you must regret the hour that you took in such a stormy petrel¹⁰ as I am.”

“On the contrary,” answered the Colonel warmly, “I consider it the greatest privilege to have been permitted to study your methods of working. I confess that they quite surpass my expectations, and that I am utterly unable to account for your result. I have not yet seen the vestige of a clue.”

“I am afraid that my explanation may disillusion you, but it has always been my habit to hide none of my methods, either from my friend Watson or from anyone who might take an intelligent interest in them. But, first as I am rather shaken by the knocking about which I had in the dressing-room, I think that I shall help myself to a dash of your brandy, Colonel. My strength has been rather tried of late.”

“I trust you had no more of those nervous attacks.”

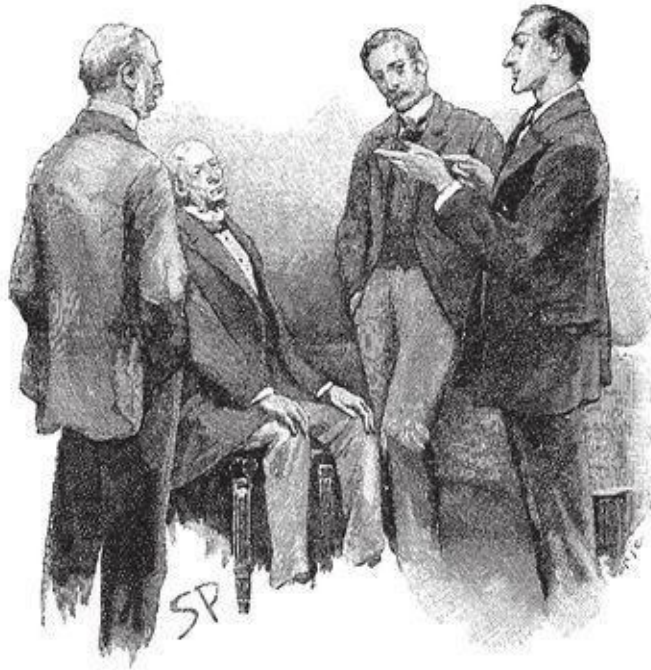
Sherlock Holmes laughed heartily. “We will come to that in its turn,” said he. “I will lay an account of the case before you in its due order, showing you the various points which guided me in my decision. Pray interrupt me if there is any inference which is not perfectly clear to you.

“It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognise out of a number of facts which are incidental and which vital. Otherwise your energy and attention must be dissipated instead of being concentrated. Now, in this case there was not the slightest doubt in my mind from the first that the key of the whole matter must be looked for in the scrap of paper in the dead man’s hand.

“Before going into this, I would draw your attention to the fact that, if Alec Cunningham’s narrative was correct, and if the assailant, after shooting William Kirwan, had *instantly* fled, then it obviously could not be he who tore the paper from the dead man’s hand. But if it was not he, it must have been Alec Cunningham himself, for by the time that the old man had descended several servants were upon the scene. The point is a simple one, but the Inspector had overlooked it because he had started with the supposition that these county magnates had had nothing to do with the matter. Now, I make a point of never having any prejudices and of following docilely wherever fact may lead me, and so in the very first stage of the investigation I found myself looking a little askance at the part which had been played by Mr. Alec Cunningham.

“And now I made a very careful examination of the corner of paper which the Inspector had submitted to us. It was at once clear to me that it formed part of a very remarkable document. Here it is. Do you not now observe something very suggestive about it?”

“It has a very irregular look,” said the Colonel.



“The point is a simple one.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“My dear sir,” cried Holmes, “there cannot be the least doubt in the world that it has been written by two persons doing alternate words. When I draw your attention to the strong t’s of ‘at’ and ‘to’ and ask you to compare them with the weak ones of ‘quarter’ and ‘twelve,’¹¹ you will instantly recognise the fact. A very brief analysis of these four words would enable you to say with the utmost confidence that the ‘learn’ and the ‘maybe’ are written in the stronger hand, and the ‘what’ in the weaker.”¹²

“By Jove, it’s as clear as day!” cried the Colonel. “Why on earth should two men write a letter in such a fashion?”

“Obviously the business was a bad one, and one of the men who distrusted the other was determined that, whatever was done, each should have an equal hand in it. Now, of the two men it is clear that the one who wrote the ‘at’ and ‘to’ was the ringleader.”

“How do you get at that?”

“We might deduce it from the mere character of the one hand as compared with the other. But we have more assured reasons than that for supposing it. If you examine this scrap with attention you will come to the conclusion that the man with the stronger hand wrote all his words first, leaving blanks for the other to fill up. These blanks were not always sufficient, and you can see that the second man had a squeeze to fit his ‘quarter’ in between the ‘at’ and the ‘to,’

showing that the latter were already written. The man who wrote all his words first is undoubtedly the man who planned this affair.”

“Excellent!” cried Mr. Acton.

“But very superficial,” said Holmes. “We come now, however, to a point which is of importance. You may not be aware that the deduction of a man’s age from his writing is one which has been brought to considerable accuracy by experts. In normal cases one can place a man in his true decade with tolerable confidence. I say normal cases, because ill-health and physical weakness reproduce the signs of old age, even when the invalid is a youth. In this case, looking at the bold, strong hand of the one, and the rather broken-backed appearance of the other, which still retains its legibility, although the t’s have begun to lose their crossing, we can say that the one was a young man, and the other was advanced in years without being positively decrepit.”



“There cannot be the least doubt in the world that it has been written by two persons.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper’s Weekly*, 1893

“Excellent!” cried Mr. Acton again.

“There is a further point, however, which is subtler and of greater interest. There is something in common between these hands. They belong to men who are blood-relatives. It may be most obvious to you in the Greek e’s, but to me there are many small points which indicate the same thing. I have no doubt at all that a family mannerism can be traced in these two specimens of writing. I am only, of course, giving you the leading results now of my examination of the paper. There were twenty-three other deductions which would be of more interest to experts¹³ than to you. They all tend to deepen the impression upon my mind that the Cunninghams, father and son, had written this letter.

“Having got so far, my next step was, of course, to examine into the details of the crime, and to see how far they would help us. I went up to the house with the Inspector, and saw all that was to be seen. The wound upon the dead man was,

as I was able to determine with absolute confidence, fired from a revolver at the distance of something over four yards. There was no powder-blackening on the clothes. Evidently, therefore, Alec Cunningham had lied when he said that the two men were struggling when the shot was fired. Again, both father and son agreed as to the place where the man escaped into the road. At that point, however, as it happens, there is a broadish ditch, moist at the bottom. As there were no indications of boot-marks about this ditch, I was absolutely sure not only that the Cunninghams had again lied but that there had never been any unknown man upon the scene at all.

“And now I have to consider the motive of this singular crime. To get at this, I endeavoured first of all to solve the reason of the original burglary at Mr. Acton’s. I understood, from something which the Colonel told us, that a lawsuit had been going on between you, Mr. Acton, and the Cunninghams. Of course it instantly occurred to me that they had broken into your library with the intention of getting at some document which might be of importance in the case.”

“Precisely so,” said Mr. Acton, “there can be no possible doubt as to their intentions. I have the clearest claim upon half of their present estate, and if they could have found a single paper—which, fortunately, was in the strong box of my solicitors—they would undoubtedly have crippled our case.”



“There was no powder-blackening on the clothes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“There you are!” said Holmes, smiling. “It was a dangerous, reckless attempt in which I seem to trace the influence of young Alec. Having found nothing, they tried to divert suspicion by making it appear to be an ordinary burglary, to which end they carried off whatever they could lay their hands upon. That is all

clear enough, but there was much that was still obscure. What I wanted above all was to get the missing part of that note. I was certain that Alec had torn it out of the dead man's hand, and almost certain that he must have thrust it into the pocket of his dressing-gown. Where else could he have put it? The only question was whether it was still there. It was worth an effort to find out, and for that object we all went up to the house.

"The Cunninghams joined us, as you doubtless remember, outside the kitchen door. It was, of course, of the very first importance that they should not be reminded of the existence of this paper, otherwise they would naturally destroy it without delay. The Inspector was about to tell them the importance which we attached to it when, by the luckiest chance in the world, I tumbled down in a sort of fit and so changed the conversation."

"Good heavens!" cried the Colonel, laughing. "Do you mean to say all our sympathy was wasted and your fit an imposture?"

"Speaking professionally, it was admirably done," cried I, looking in amazement at this man who was for ever confounding me with some new phase of his astuteness.

"It is an art which is often useful,"¹⁴ said he. "When I recovered I managed, by a device which had perhaps some little merit of ingenuity, to get old Cunningham to write the word 'twelve,' so that I might compare it with the 'twelve' upon the paper."

"Oh, what an ass I have been!" I exclaimed.

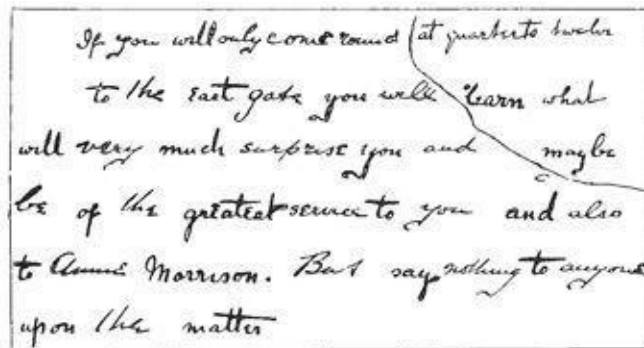
"I could see that you were commiserating with me over my weakness," said Holmes, laughing. "I was sorry to cause you the sympathetic pain which I know that you felt. We then went upstairs together, and having entered the room and seen the dressing-gown hanging up behind the door, I contrived, by upsetting a table to engage their attention for the moment and slipped back to examine the pockets. I had hardly got the paper, however, which was, as I had expected, in one of them, when the two Cunninghams were on me, and would, I verily believe, have murdered me then and there but for your prompt and friendly aid. As it is, I feel that young man's grip on my throat now, and the father has twisted my wrist round in the effort to get the paper out of my hand. They saw that I must know all about it, you see, and the sudden change from absolute security to complete despair made them perfectly desperate."

"I had a little talk with old Cunningham afterwards as to the motive of the crime. He was tractable enough, though his son was a perfect demon, ready to blow out his own or anybody else's brains if he could have got to his revolver. When Cunningham saw that the case against him was so strong he lost all heart, and made a clean breast of everything. It seems that William had secretly

followed his two masters on the night when they made their raid upon Mr. Acton's and, having thus got them into his power, proceeded under threats of exposure to levy blackmail upon them. Mister Alec, however, was a dangerous man to play games of that sort with. It was a stroke of positive genius on his part to see in the burglary scare which was convulsing the country side, an opportunity of plausibly getting rid of the man whom he feared. William was decoyed up and shot; and, had they only got the whole of the note, and paid a little more attention to detail in their accessories, it is very possible that suspicion might never have been aroused."

"And the note?" I asked.

Sherlock Holmes placed the subjoined paper before us.



If you will only come round (at quarter to twelve to the east gate you will learn what will very much surprise you and maybe be of the greatest service to you and also to Annie Morrison. But say nothing to anyone upon the matter

"It is very much the sort of thing that I expected," said he. "Of course, we do not yet know what the relations may have been between Alec Cunningham, William Kirwan, and Annie Morrison.¹⁵ The result shows that the trap was skilfully baited. I am sure that you cannot fail to be delighted with the traces of heredity shown in the p's and in the tails of the g's. The absence of the i-dots in the old man's writing is also most characteristic. Watson, I think our quiet rest in the country has been a distinct success, and I shall certainly return much invigorated, to Baker Street to-morrow."

¹ "The Reigate Squires" appeared in the *Strand Magazine* in June 1893 as *The Reigate Squire* (singular); in *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* it was changed to *The Reigate Squires*. In *Harper's Weekly* (June 17, 1893) it was altered to *The Reigate Puzzle*.

² There was a Hotel *Dubost* at 19 Place Camot, but this is unsatisfactory.

³ Carol P. Woods calculates that to fill the average French hotel room to "ankle-deep" would require 10,741 crumpled telegrams; and he muses that Holmes's illness was caused not entirely by the exertions put forth in the Netherlands-Sumatra case but also by the telegram-crumpling itself, which would have required slightly over 179 hours of opening, reading, crumpling, and tossing.

4 In the American editions, this collection curiously becomes one of “Eastern weapons.” Perhaps a Jezail rifle was included and was accidentally discharged, wounding Watson?

5 A closet or cupboard.

6 Alexander Pope (1688–1744), the British poet and satirist, is critically best known for *An Essay on Criticism*, *The Rape of the Lock*, and *An Essay on Man*. His lauded translation of Homer, which earned him a considerable financial windfall, was written in heroic couplets (rhyming lines of iambic pentameter) and comprised eleven volumes: six for the *Iliad* (1715–1720) and five for the *Odyssey* (1725–1726). Perhaps the thief took with him the volume of the *Odyssey* that contained the line, “These riches are possess’d, but not enjoy’d!”

7 An American prejudice against fancy titles continues to be evident—in the American texts, the word “man” replaces “squire.”

8 Watson, not to be outdone by Holmes’s habit of quoting Shakespeare, here paraphrases Polonius: “Though this be madness, yet there is method in ’t” (*Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2).

9 That would be 1709, the year in which 100,000 British, Austrian, and Dutch soldiers clashed with 90,000 French in the last major battle of the War of Spanish Succession. Fought near the village of Malplaquet, ten miles south of Mons, the engagement forced the French to retreat, but there were heavy casualties on the allies’ side, preventing them from advancing to Paris.

10 A small sea-bird associated with storms. In “The Naval Treaty,” Holmes jovially refers to Watson as “the stormy petrel of crime.”

11 Remarkably, the handwriting in the note (reproduced above) exactly matches that appearing in the manuscript of “The Crooked Man,” reports L. S. Holstein in “The Puzzle of Reigate.” Holstein concludes that Watson must have written both and was an innocent dupe of the Cunningham/Kirwan gang. Holmes, who recognised Watson’s handwriting immediately, concocted much of his explanation to shield his good friend from exposure.

12 By making such a detailed study of the Cunninghams’ handwriting, Holmes—here investigating in 1887—was both of and ahead of his time, since handwriting analysis was then developing elsewhere in Europe but was as yet largely unknown in Britain. Interest in handwriting as a window to one’s character goes back at least as far as ancient Greece: Aristotle once noted, “Just as all men do not have the same speech sounds, neither do they all have the same writing.” Numerous scholars dabbled in studying handwriting in the early part of the nineteenth century, but public interest blossomed after Jean Hippolyte Michon, a French abbot, coined the phrase “graphology” in the 1870s and published two popular books on the subject. Michon’s methodology was rigid by today’s standards, assigning specific personality traits to distinct elements of writing (and assuming the absence of such traits in the absence of such elements). It was his student, Jules Crepieux-Jamin, who adapted a more holistic, interpretive approach to Michon’s findings and who is credited with fathering the French school of graphology.

Crepieux-Jamin’s great work, *L’Ecriture et le Caractere*, was not published until 1888, the year after the events of “The Reigate Squires.” His theories were tested in the 1890s by the German philosopher Ludwig Klages and psychologist Alfred Binet (father of the modern intelligence test), who sought to link handwriting more closely to the field of psychology. However, with the apparent exception of Holmes, British knowledge of the subject was almost nonexistent. Only after World War II, when German graphologists sought asylum in England, was interest there sparked by the publication of several new books. Holmes had a definite interest in the criminological use of graphology, as is borne out by his observations on handwriting in “The Man with the Twisted Lip,” “The Cardboard Box,” “The Second Stain,” “The Abbey Grange,” “The ‘Gloria Scott,’” and “The Norwood Builder.” Winifred Christie, in “Sherlock Holmes

and Graphology,” speculates that Holmes may well have consulted with Michon and Crepieux-Jamin on a visit to France in the 1880s.

13 That Holmes was not exaggerating is demonstrated by acclaimed mystery writer John Ball, Jr., who, in his essay “The Twenty-Three Deductions,” provides a full list of the twenty-three damning inferences Holmes might have drawn from the Cunninghams’ note. Ball’s points range from the somewhat obvious (paper quality, ink quality, paper source, whether the writers of the note were left-or right-handed) to the more obscure (whether both writers had used the same ink; the presence or absence of scent, fingernail marks, or blotting; any indication that the note had been subject to “pocket-rubbing”). “The Reigate Squires” is the only case, however, in which Holmes demonstrates his expertise, and, notes David James Trapp, he might have spared Violet Hunter from much anxiety if he had applied a graphological analysis to Jephro Rucastle’s letter to her in “The Copper Beeches.”

14 Indeed, “malingering” or the fraudulent portrayal of an injury or accident proved highly useful to Holmes in “The Dying Detective,” and he stated there, “Malingering is a subject upon which I have sometimes thought of writing a monograph.”

15 The connection of Annie Morrison, if any, to Miss Morrison of “The Crooked Man” or to Morrison, Morrison & Dodd of “The Sussex Vampire” is unknown.

THE CROOKED MAN¹

Knowledge of the Bible helps Holmes solve the locked-room puzzle Watson calls “The Crooked Man.” The case is rooted in the evils of the Indian Mutiny, the uprising of native troops against the British rule of India. Although Watson’s own military service and his circle of friends are the usual reasons for the frequent military connections in the Canon, this case is brought to Watson by Holmes himself. The tale commences late one evening, while Watson’s wife lies upstairs sleeping. This tranquil domestic scene is quickly contrasted with Watson’s picture of another household, the home of Colonel James Barclay and his wife, Nancy. The colonel lies dead on his hearth, with the door locked from the inside, with his wife insensible beside him. Holmes’s careful observations reveal two other mysterious visitors to the room, and he uses The Baker Street Irregulars to track them down. Although the tale ends with a confession, some suggest that Holmes may be

misled by the near-Biblical tale he hears.

ONE SUMMER NIGHT, a few months after my marriage,² I was seated by my own hearth smoking a last pipe and nodding over a novel, for my day's work had been an exhausting one. My wife had already gone upstairs, and the sound of the locking of the hall door some time before told me that the servants had also retired. I had risen from my seat and was knocking out the ashes of my pipe, when I suddenly heard the clang of the bell.

I looked at the clock. It was a quarter to twelve. This could not be a visitor at so late an hour. A patient evidently, and possibly an all-night sitting. With a wry face I went out into the hall and opened the door. To my astonishment, it was Sherlock Holmes who stood upon my step.

"Ah, Watson," said he, "I hoped that I might not be too late to catch you."

"My dear fellow, pray come in."

"You look surprised, and no wonder! Relieved, too, I fancy! Hum! You still smoke the Arcadia mixture of your bachelor days, then! There's no mistaking that fluffy ash upon your coat. It's easy to tell that you've been accustomed to wear a uniform, Watson; you'll never pass as a pure-bred civilian as long as you keep that habit of carrying your handkerchief in your sleeve. Could you put me up to-night?"

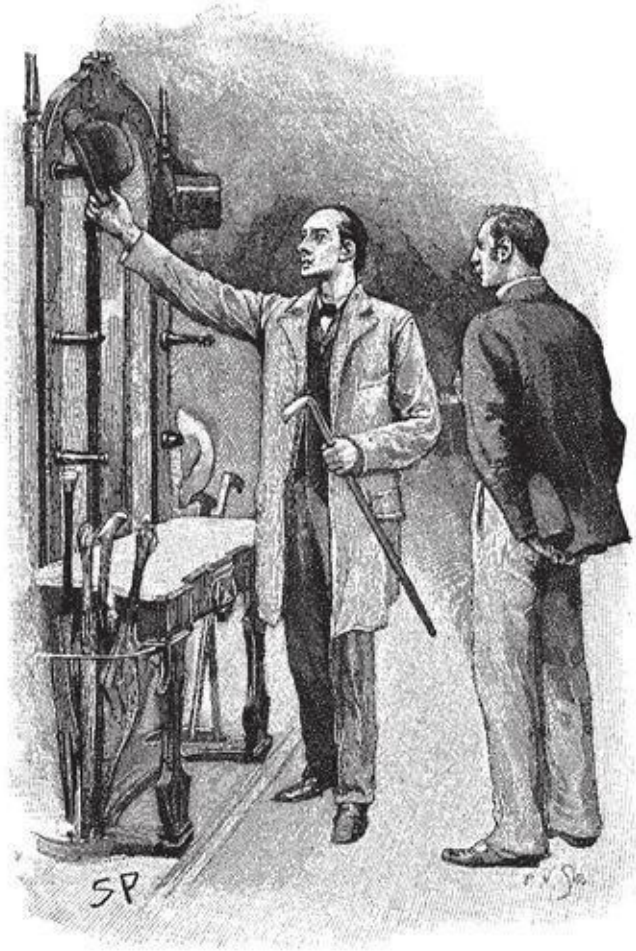
"With pleasure."

"You told me that you had bachelor quarters for one, and I see that you have no gentleman visitor at present. Your hat-stand proclaims as much."

"I shall be delighted if you will stay."

"Thank you. I'll fill a vacant peg then. Sorry to see that you've had the British workman in the house. He's a token of evil. Not the drains, I hope?"

"No, the gas."



“I’ll fill a vacant peg, then.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Ah! He has left two nail-marks from his boot upon your linoleum just where the light strikes it. No, thank you, I had some supper at Waterloo, but I’ll smoke a pipe with you with pleasure.”

I handed him my pouch, and he seated himself opposite to me, and smoked for some time in silence. I was well aware that nothing but business of importance would have brought him to me at such an hour, so I waited patiently until he should come round to it.

“I see that you are professionally rather busy just now,” said he, glancing very keenly across at me.

“Yes, I’ve had a busy day,” I answered. “It may seem very foolish in your eyes,” I added, “but really I don’t know how you deduced it.”

Holmes chuckled to himself.

“I have the advantage of knowing your habits, my dear Watson,” said he. “When your round is a short one you walk, and when it is a long one you use a

hansom. As I perceive that your boots, although used, are by no means dirty, I cannot doubt that you are at present busy enough to justify the hansom.”

“Excellent!” I cried.

“Elementary,” said he. “It is one of those instances where the reasoner can produce an effect which seems remarkable to his neighbour, because the latter has missed the one little point which is the basis of the deduction. The same may be said, my dear fellow, for the effect of some of these little sketches of yours, which is entirely meretricious, depending as it does upon your retaining in your own hands some factors in the problem which are never imparted to the reader. Now, at present I am in the position of these same readers,³ for I hold in this hand several threads of one of the strangest cases which ever perplexed a man’s brain, and yet I lack the one or two which are needful to complete my theory. But I’ll have them, Watson, I’ll have them!” His eyes kindled and a slight flush sprang into his thin cheeks. For an instant the veil had lifted upon his keen, intense nature, but for an instant only. When I glanced again his face had resumed that red-Indian composure which had made so many regard him as a machine rather than a man.

“The problem presents features of interest” said he; “I may even say exceptional features of interest. I have already looked into the matter, and have come, as I think, within sight of my solution. If you could accompany me in that last step, you might be of considerable service to me.”

“I should be delighted.”

“Could you go as far as Aldershot to-morrow?”

“I have no doubt Jackson⁴ would take my practice.”

“Very good. I want to start by the 11:10 from Waterloo.”

“That would give me time.”

“Then, if you are not too sleepy, I will give you a sketch of what has happened, and of what remains to be done.”

“I was sleepy before you came. I am quite wakeful now.”

“I will compress the story as far as may be done without omitting anything vital to the case. It is conceivable that you may even have read some account of the matter. It is the supposed murder of Colonel Barclay, of the Royal Mallows,⁵ at Aldershot, which I am investigating.”

“I have heard nothing of it.”

“It has not excited much attention yet except locally. The facts are only two days old. Briefly they are these:—

“The Royal Mallows is, as you know, one of the most famous Irish regiments in the British Army. It did wonders both in the Crimea and the Mutiny,⁶ and has

since that time distinguished itself upon every possible occasion. It was commanded up to Monday night by James Barclay, a gallant veteran, who started as a full private, was raised to commissioned rank for his bravery at the time of the Mutiny, and so lived to command the regiment in which he had once carried a musket.

“Colonel Barclay had married at the time when he was a sergeant, and his wife, whose maiden name was Miss Nancy Devoy, was the daughter of a former colour-sergeant in the same corps. There was, therefore, as can be imagined, some little social friction when the young couple (for they were still young) found themselves in their new surroundings. They appear, however, to have quickly adapted themselves, and Mrs. Barclay has always, I understand, been as popular with the ladies of the regiment as her husband was with his brother officers. I may add that she was a woman of great beauty, and that even now, when she has been married for upwards of thirty years, she is still of a striking⁷ appearance.

“Colonel Barclay’s family life appears to have been a uniformly happy one. Major Murphy, to whom I owe most of my facts, assures me that he has never heard of any misunderstanding between the pair. On the whole, he thinks that Barclay’s devotion to his wife was greater than his wife’s to Barclay. He was acutely uneasy if he were absent from her for a day. She, on the other hand, though devoted and faithful, was less obtrusively affectionate. But they were regarded in the regiment as the very model of a middle-aged couple. There was absolutely nothing in their mutual relations to prepare people for the tragedy which was to follow.

“Colonel Barclay himself seems to have had some singular traits in his character. He was a dashing, jovial old soldier in his usual mood, but there were occasions on which he seemed to show himself capable of considerable violence and vindictiveness. This side of his nature, however, appears never to have been turned towards his wife. Another fact which had struck Major Murphy and three out of five of the other officers with whom I conversed, was the singular sort of depression which came upon him at times. As the Major expressed it, the smile has often been struck from his mouth, as if by some invisible hand, when he has been joining in the gaieties and chaff of the mess table. For days on end when the mood was on him he has been sunk in the deepest gloom. This and a certain tinge of superstition were the only unusual traits in his character which his brother officers had observed. The latter peculiarity took the form of a dislike to being left alone, especially after dark. This puerile feature in a nature which was conspicuously manly had often given rise to comment and conjecture.

“The first battalion of the Royal Mallowes (which is the old 117th) has been

stationed at Aldershot for some years. The married officers live out of barracks, and the Colonel has during all this time occupied a villa called 'Lachine,' about half a mile from the North Camp. The house stands in its own grounds, but the west side of it is not more than thirty yards from the high road. A coachman and two maids form the staff of servants. These, with their master and mistress were the sole occupants of Lachine, for the Barclays had no children, nor was it usual for them to have resident visitors.

"Now for the events at Lachine between nine and ten on the evening of last Monday.

"Mrs. Barclay was, it appears, a member of the Roman Catholic Church and had interested herself very much in the establishment of the Guild of St. George, which was formed in connection with the Watt Street chapel for the purpose of supplying the poor with cast-off clothing. A meeting of the Guild had been held that evening at eight, and Mrs. Barclay had hurried over her dinner in order to be present at it. When leaving the house she was heard by the coachman to make some commonplace remark to her husband, and to assure him that she would be back before very long. She then called for Miss Morrison, a young lady who lives in the next villa, and the two went off together to their meeting. It lasted forty minutes, and at a quarter-past nine Mrs. Barclay returned home, having left Miss Morrison at her door as she passed.

"There is a room which is used as a morning-room at Lachine. This faces the road and opens by a large glass folding door on to the lawn. The lawn is thirty yards across, and is only divided from the highway by a low wall with an iron rail above it. It was into this room that Mrs. Barclay went upon her return. The blinds were not down, for the room was seldom used in the evening, but Mrs. Barclay herself lit the lamp and then rang the bell, asking Jane Stewart, the housemaid, to bring her a cup of tea, which was quite contrary to her usual habits. The Colonel had been sitting in the dining-room, but, hearing that his wife had returned, he joined her in the morning-room. The coachman saw him cross the hall and enter it. He was never seen again alive.

"The tea which had been ordered was brought up at the end of ten minutes; but the maid, as she approached the door, was surprised to hear the voices of her master and mistress in furious altercation. She knocked without receiving any answer, and even turned the handle, but only to find that the door was locked upon the inside. Naturally enough she ran down to tell the cook, and the two women with the coachman came up into the hall and listened to the dispute which was still raging. They all agreed that only two voices were to be heard, those of Barclay and of his wife. Barclay's remarks were subdued and abrupt, so that none of them were audible to the listeners. The lady's, on the other hand,

were most bitter, and when she raised her voice, could be plainly heard. ‘You coward!’ she repeated over and over again. ‘What can be done now? What can be done now? Give me back my life. I will never so much as breathe the same air as you again! You coward! You coward!’ Those were scraps of her conversation, ending in a sudden dreadful cry in the man’s voice, with a crash, and a piercing scream from the woman. Convinced that some tragedy had occurred, the coachman rushed to the door and strove to force it, while scream after scream issued from within. He was unable, however, to make his way in, and the maids were too distracted with fear to be of any assistance to him. A sudden thought struck him, however, and he ran through the hall door and round to the lawn upon which the long French windows open. One side of the window was open, which I understand was quite usual in the summertime, and he passed without difficulty into the room. His mistress had ceased to scream, and was stretched insensible upon a couch, while with his feet tilted over the side of an arm-chair, and his head upon the ground near the corner of the fender,⁸ was lying the unfortunate soldier, stone dead, in a pool of his own blood.⁹



“The two women with the coachman listened to the dispute, which was still raging.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper’s Weekly*, 1893

“Naturally, the coachman’s first thought, on finding that he could do nothing for his master, was to open the door. But here an unexpected and singular difficulty presented itself. The key was not in the inner side of the door, nor could he find it anywhere in the room. He went out again, therefore, through the

window, and, having obtained the help of a policeman and of a medical man, he returned. The lady, against whom naturally the strongest suspicion rested, was removed to her room, still in a state of insensibility. The Colonel's body was then placed upon the sofa and a careful examination made of the scene of the tragedy.



“The coachman rushed to the door.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“The injury from which the unfortunate veteran was suffering was found to be a jagged cut some two inches long at the back part of his head, which had evidently been caused by a violent blow from a blunt weapon. Nor was it difficult to guess what that weapon may have been. Upon the floor, close to the body, was lying a singular club of hard carved wood with a bone handle. The Colonel possessed a varied collection of weapons brought from the different countries in which he had fought, and it is conjectured by the police that this

club was among his trophies. The servants deny having seen it before, but among the numerous curiosities in the house it is possible that it may have been overlooked. Nothing else of importance was discovered in the room by the police, save the inexplicable fact that neither upon Mrs. Barclay's person, nor upon that of the victim, nor in any part of the room was the missing key to be found. The door had eventually to be opened by a locksmith from Aldershot.



His feet tilted over the side of an arm chair and his head upon the ground.

Anonymous, Sunday *Portland Oregonian*, September 10, 1911

“That was the state of things, Watson, when upon the Tuesday morning I, at the request of Major Murphy, went down to Aldershot to supplement the efforts of the police. I think that you will acknowledge that the problem was already one of interest, but my observations soon made me realise that it was in truth much more extraordinary than would at first sight appear.

“Before examining the room I cross-questioned the servants, but only succeeded in eliciting the facts which I have already stated. One other detail of interest was remembered by Jane Stewart, the housemaid. You will remember

that on hearing the sound of the quarrel she descended and returned with the other servants. On that first occasion, when she was alone, she says that the voices of her master and mistress were sunk so low that she could hardly hear anything, and judged by their tones, rather than their words, that they had fallen out. On my pressing her, however, she remembered that she heard the word 'David' uttered twice by the lady. The point is of the utmost importance as guiding us towards the reason of the sudden quarrel. The Colonel's name, you remember, was James.

"There was one thing in the case which had made the deepest impression both upon the servants and the police. This was the contortion of the Colonel's face. It had set, according to their account, into the most dreadful expression of fear and horror which a human countenance is capable of assuming. More than one person fainted at the mere sight of him, so terrible was the effect. It was quite certain that he had foreseen his fate, and that it had caused him the utmost horror. This, of course, fitted in well enough with the police theory, if the Colonel could have seen his wife making a murderous attack upon him. Nor was the fact of the wound being on the back of his head a fatal objection to this, as he might have turned to avoid the blow. No information could be got from the lady herself, who was temporarily insane from an acute attack of brain-fever.

"From the police I learned that Miss Morrison, who, you remember, went out that evening with Mrs. Barclay, denied having any knowledge of what it was which had caused the ill-humour in which her companion had returned.

"Having gathered these facts, Watson, I smoked several pipes over them, trying to separate those which were crucial from others which were merely incidental. There could be no question that the most distinctive and suggestive point in the case was the singular disappearance of the door key. A most careful search had failed to discover it in the room. Therefore, it must have been taken from it. But neither the Colonel nor the Colonel's wife could have taken it. That was perfectly clear. Therefore a third person must have entered the room. And that third person could only have come in through the window. It seemed to me that a careful examination of the room and the lawn might possibly reveal some traces of this mysterious individual. You know my methods, Watson. There was not one of them which I did not apply to the inquiry. And it ended by my discovering traces, but very different ones from those which I had expected. There had been a man in the room, and he had crossed the lawn coming from the road. I was able to obtain five very clear impressions of his footmarks: one in the roadway itself, at the point where he had climbed the low wall, two on the lawn, and two very faint ones upon the stained boards near the window where he had entered. He had apparently rushed across the lawn, for his toe marks were much

deeper than his heels. But it was not the man who surprised me. It was his companion.”

“His companion!”

Holmes pulled a large sheet of tissue paper out of his pocket and carefully unfolded it upon his knee.

“What do you make of that?” he asked.

The paper was covered with the tracings of the foot marks of some small animal. It had five well-marked footpads, an indication of long nails, and the whole print might be nearly as large as a dessert-spoon.

“It’s a dog,” said I.

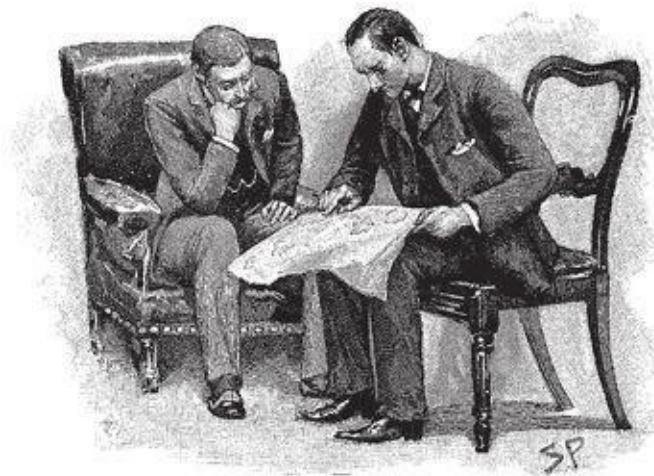
“Did you ever hear of a dog running up a curtain? I found distinct traces that this creature had done so.”

“A monkey, then?”

“But it is not the print of a monkey.”

“What can it be, then?”

“Neither dog nor cat nor monkey nor any creature that we are familiar with. I have tried to reconstruct it from the measurements. Here are four prints where the beast has been standing motionless. You see that it is no less than fifteen inches from fore foot to hind. Add to that the length of neck and head, and you get a creature not much less than two feet long—probably more if there is any tail. But now observe this other measurement. The animal has been moving, and we have the length of its stride. In each case it is only about three inches. You have an indication, you see, of a long body with very short legs attached to it. It has not been considerate enough to leave any of its hair behind it. But its general shape must be what I have indicated, and it can run up a curtain and it is carnivorous.”



“What do you make of that?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“How do you deduce that?”

“Because it ran up the curtain. A canary’s cage was hanging in the window, and its aim seems to have been to get at the bird.”

“Then what was the beast?”

“Ah, if I could give it a name it might go a long way towards solving the case. On the whole, it was probably some creature of the weasel and stoat tribe—and yet it is larger than any of these that I have seen.”

“But what had it to do with the crime?”

“That also, is still obscure. But we have learned a good deal, you perceive. We know that a man stood in the road looking at the quarrel between the Barclays—the blinds were up and the room lighted. We know also that he ran across the lawn, entered the room, accompanied by a strange animal, and that he either struck the Colonel, or, as is equally possible, that the Colonel fell down from sheer fright at the sight of him, and cut his head on the corner of the fender. Finally we have the curious fact that the intruder carried away the key with him when he left.”

“Your discoveries seem to have left the business more obscure than it was before,” said I.

“Quite so. They undoubtedly showed that the affair was much deeper than was at first conjectured. I thought the matter over, and I came to the conclusion that I must approach the case from another aspect. But really, Watson, I am keeping you up, and I might just as well tell you all this on our way to Aldershot to-morrow.”

“Thank you, you have gone rather too far to stop.”

“It is quite certain that when Mrs. Barclay left the house at half-past seven she was on good terms with her husband. She was never, as I think I have said, ostentatiously affectionate, but she was heard by the coachman chatting with the Colonel in a friendly fashion. Now, it was equally certain that immediately on her return, she had gone to the room in which she was least likely to see her husband, had flown to tea as an agitated woman will, and, finally, on his coming in to her, had broken into violent recriminations. Therefore, something had occurred between seven-thirty and nine o’clock which had completely altered her feelings towards him. But Miss Morrison had been with her during the whole of that hour and a half. It was absolutely certain, therefore, in spite of her denial, that she must know something of the matter.

“My first conjecture was that possibly there had been some passages between

this young lady and the old soldier, which the former had now confessed to the wife. That would account for the angry return and also for the girl's denial that anything had occurred. Nor would it be entirely incompatible with most of the words overheard. But there was the reference to David, and there was the known affection of the Colonel for his wife to weigh against it, to say nothing of the tragic intrusion of this other man, which might, of course, be entirely disconnected with what had gone before. It was not easy to pick one's steps, but, on the whole, I was inclined to dismiss the idea that there had been anything between the Colonel and Miss Morrison, but more than ever convinced that the young lady held the clue as to what it was which had turned Mrs. Barclay to hatred of her husband. I took the obvious course, therefore, of calling upon Miss M., of explaining to her that I was perfectly certain that she held the facts in her possession, and of assuring her that her friend, Mrs. Barclay, might find herself in the dock upon a capital charge unless the matter were cleared up.

"Miss Morrison is a little ethereal slip of a girl, with timid eyes and blond hair, but I found her by no means wanting in shrewdness and common sense. She sat thinking for some time after I had spoken, and then turning to me with a brisk air of resolution, she broke into a remarkable statement, which I will condense for your benefit.

" 'I promised my friend that I would say nothing of the matter, and a promise is a promise,' said she; 'but if I can really help her when so serious a charge is laid against her, and when her own mouth, poor darling, is closed by illness, then I think I am absolved from my promise. I will tell you exactly what happened upon Monday evening.

" 'We were returning from the Watt Street Mission, about a quarter to nine o'clock. On our way we had to pass through Hudson Street, which is a very quiet thoroughfare. There is only one lamp in it upon the left-hand side, and as we approached this lamp I saw a man coming towards us with his back very bent, and something like a box slung over one of his shoulders. He appeared to be deformed, for he carried his head low and walked with his knees bent. We were passing him when he raised his face to look at us in the circle of light thrown by the lamp, and as he did so he stopped and screamed out in a dreadful voice, "My God, it's Nancy!" Mrs. Barclay turned as white as death, and would have fallen down had the dreadful-looking creature not caught hold of her. I was going to call for the police, but she, to my surprise, spoke quite civilly to the fellow.

" ' "I thought you had been dead this thirty years, Henry," said she in a shaking voice.

" ' "So I have," said he, and it was awful to hear the tones that he said it in. He had a very dark, fearsome face, and a gleam in his eyes that comes back to me in

my dreams. His hair and whiskers were shot with grey, and his face was all crinkled and puckered like a withered apple.

“ ‘ “Just walk on a little way, dear,” said Mrs. Barclay. “I want to have a word with this man. There is nothing to be afraid of.” She tried to speak boldly, but she was still deadly pale, and could hardly get her words out for the trembling of her lips.



“It’s Nancy!”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘I did as she asked me, and they talked together for a few minutes. Then she came down the street with her eyes blazing, and I saw the crippled wretch standing by the lamp-post and shaking his clenched fists in the air, as if he were mad with rage. She never said a word until we were at the door here, when she took me by the hand and begged me to tell no one what had happened. “It’s an old acquaintance of mine who has come down in the world,” said she. When I promised her I would say nothing she kissed me, and I have never seen her since. I have told you now the whole truth, and if I withheld it from the police it is because I did not realise then the danger in which my dear friend stood. I know that it can only be to her advantage that everything should be known.’

“There was her statement, Watson, and to me, as you can imagine, it was like a light on a dark night. Everything which had been disconnected before began at once to assume its true place, and I had a shadowy presentiment of the whole sequence of events. My next step obviously was to find the man who had produced such a remarkable impression upon Mrs. Barclay. If he were still in Aldershot it should not be a very difficult matter. There are not such a very great number of civilians, and a deformed man was sure to have attracted attention. I spent a day in the search, and by evening—this very evening, Watson—I had run him down. The man’s name is Henry Wood, and he lives in lodgings in this same street in which the ladies met him. He has only been five days in the place. In the character of a registration agent¹⁰ I had a most interesting gossip with his landlady. The man is by trade a conjurer and performer, going round the canteens¹¹ after nightfall, and giving a little entertainment at each. He carries some creature about with him in that box, about which the landlady seemed to be in considerable trepidation, for she had never seen an animal like it. He uses it in some of his tricks according to her account. So much the woman was able to tell me, and also that it was a wonder the man lived, seeing how twisted he was, and that he spoke in a strange tongue sometimes, and that for the last two nights she had heard him groaning and weeping in his bedroom. He was all right, as far as money went but, in his deposit he had given her what looked like a bad florin. She showed it to me, Watson, and it was an Indian rupee.

“So now, my dear fellow, you see exactly how we stand and why it is I want you. It is perfectly plain that after the ladies parted from this man he followed them at a distance, that he saw the quarrel between husband and wife through the window, that he rushed in, and that the creature which he carried in his box got loose. That is all very certain. But he is the only person in this world who can tell us exactly what happened in that room.”

“And you intend to ask him?”

“Most certainly—but in the presence of a witness.”

“And I am the witness?”

“If you will be so good. If he can clear the matter up, well and good. If he refuses, we have no alternative but to apply for a warrant.”

“But how do you know he’ll be there when we return?”

“You may be sure that I took some precautions. I have one of my Baker Street boys¹² mounting guard over him who would stick to him like a burr, go where he might. We shall find him in Hudson Street to-morrow, Watson; and meanwhile I should be the criminal myself if I kept you out of bed any longer.”

It was midday when we found ourselves at the scene of the tragedy, and,

under my companion's guidance, we made our way at once to Hudson Street. In spite of his capacity for concealing his emotions, I could easily see that Holmes was in a state of suppressed excitement, while I was myself tingling with that half-sporting, half-intellectual pleasure which I invariably experienced when I associated myself with him in his investigations.

"This is the street," said he, as we turned into a short thoroughfare lined with plain, two-storied brick houses—"Ah, here is Simpson to report."

"He's in all right, Mr. Holmes," cried a small street Arab,¹³ running up to us.

"Good, Simpson!" said Holmes, patting him on the head. "Come along, Watson. This is the house." He sent in his card with a message that he had come on important business, and a moment later we were face to face with the man whom we had come to see. In spite of the warm weather he was crouching over a fire, and the room was like an oven. The man sat all twisted and huddled in his chair in a way which gave an indescribable impression of deformity; but the face which he turned towards us, though worn and swarthy, must at some time have been remarkable for its beauty. He looked suspiciously at us now out of yellow-shot bilious eyes, and, without speaking or rising, he waved us towards two chairs.

"Mr. Henry Wood, late of India, I believe?" said Holmes affably. "I've come over this little matter of Colonel Barclay's death."

"What should I know about that?"

"That's what I want to ascertain. You know, I suppose, that unless the matter is cleared up, Mrs. Barclay, who is an old friend of yours, will in all probability be tried for murder."

The man gave a violent start.

"I don't know who you are," he cried, "nor how you come to know what you do know; but will you swear that this is true that you tell me?"



“He was crouching over a fire, and the room was like an oven.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“Why, they are only waiting for her to come to her senses to arrest her.”

“My God! Are you in the police yourself?”

“No.”

“What business is it of yours, then?”

“It's every man's business to see justice done.”

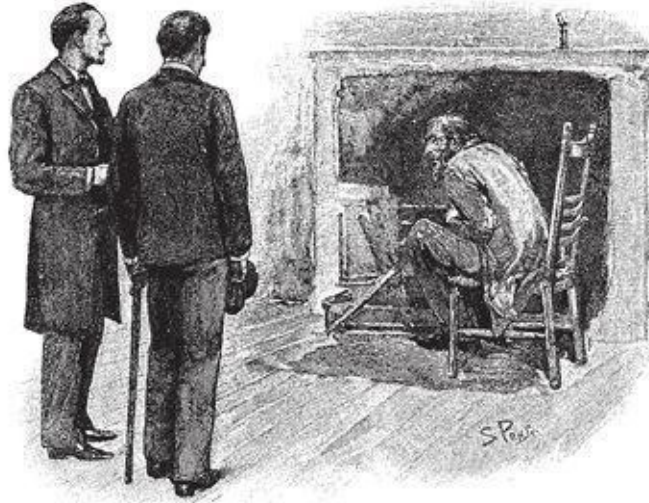
“You can take my word that she is innocent.”

“Then you are guilty.”

“No, I am not.”

“Who killed Colonel James Barclay, then?”

“It was a just Providence that killed him. But mind you this, that if I had knocked his brains out, as it was in my heart to do, he would have had no more than his due from my hands. If his own guilty conscience had not struck him down, it is likely enough that I might have had his blood upon my soul. You want me to tell the story? Well, I don't know why I shouldn't, for there's no cause for me to be ashamed of it.



“Mr. Henry Wood, I believe?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“It was in this way, sir. You see me now with my back like a camel and my ribs all awry, but there was a time when Corporal Henry Wood was the smartest man in the 117th Foot. We were in India, then, in cantonments,¹⁴ at a place we’ll call Bhurtee.¹⁵ Barclay, who died the other day, was sergeant in the same company as myself, and the belle of the regiment—ay, and the finest girl that ever had the breath of life between her lips—was Nancy Devoy, the daughter of the colour-sergeant.¹⁶ There were two men that loved her, and one that she loved; and you’ll smile when you look at this poor thing huddled before the fire, and hear me say that it was for my good looks that she loved me.

“Well, though I had her heart, her father was set upon her marrying Barclay. I was a harum-scarum, reckless lad, and he had had an education, and was already marked for the sword belt.¹⁷ But the girl held true to me, and it seemed that I would have had her, when the Mutiny broke out, and all Hell was loose in the country.

“We were shut up in Bhurtee, the regiment of us, with half a battery¹⁸ of artillery, a company of Sikhs,¹⁹ and a lot of civilians and women-folk. There were ten thousand rebels round us, and they were as keen as a set of terriers round a rat-cage. About the second week of it our water gave out, and it was a question whether we could communicate with General Neill’s column,²⁰ which was moving up country. It was our only chance, for we could not hope to fight our way out with all the women and children, so I volunteered to go out and warn General Neill of our danger. My offer was accepted, and I talked it over with Sergeant Barclay, who was supposed to know the ground better than any

other man, and who drew up a route by which I might get through the rebel lines. At ten o'clock the same night I started off upon my journey. There were a thousand lives to save, but it was of only one that I was thinking when I dropped over the wall that night.



“My God! Are you in the police yourself?”

Anonymous, Sunday *Portland Oregonian*, September 10, 1911

“My way ran down a dried-up watercourse which we hoped would screen me from the enemy’s sentries, but as I crept round the corner of it I walked right into six of them, who were crouching down in the dark waiting for me. In an instant I was stunned with a blow, and bound hand and foot. But the real blow was to my heart and not to my head, for as I came to and listened to as much as I could understand of their talk, I heard enough to tell me that my comrade, the very man who had arranged the way I was to take, had betrayed me by means of a native servant into the hands of the enemy.²¹



“I walked right into six of them.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Well, there’s no need for me to dwell on that part of it. You know now what James Barclay was capable of. Bhurtee was relieved by Neill next day, but the rebels took me away with them in their retreat, and it was many a long year before ever I saw a white face again. I was tortured and tried to get away, and was captured and tortured again. You can see for yourselves the state in which I was left. Some of them that fled into Nepal²² took me with them and then afterwards I was up past Darjeeling.²³ The hill-folk up there murdered the rebels who had me, and I became their slave for a time until I escaped, but instead of going south I had to go north, until I found myself among the Afghans. There I wandered about for many a year, and at last came back to the Punjaub, where I lived mostly among the natives, and picked up a living by the conjuring tricks that I had learned. What use was it for me, a wretched cripple, to go back to England or to make myself known to my old comrades? Even my wish for revenge would not make me do that. I had rather that Nancy and my old pals should think of Harry Wood as having died with a straight back, than see him living and crawling with a stick like a chimpanzee. They never doubted that I was dead, and I meant that they never should. I heard that Barclay had married Nancy, and that he was rising rapidly in the regiment, but even that did not make me speak.

“But when one gets old, one has a longing for home. For years I’ve been dreaming of the bright green fields and the hedges of England. At last I determined to see them before I died. I saved enough to bring me across, and

then I came here where the soldiers are, for I know their ways, and how to amuse them, and so earn enough to keep me.”

“Your narrative is most interesting,” said Sherlock Holmes. “I have already heard of your meeting with Mrs. Barclay, and your mutual recognition. You then, as I understand, followed her home and saw through the window an altercation between her husband and her, in which she doubtless cast his conduct to you in his teeth. Your own feelings overcame you, and you ran across the lawn and broke in upon them.”

“I did, sir, and at the sight of me he looked as I have never seen a man look before, and over he went with his head on the fender. But he was dead before he fell. I read death on his face as plain as I can read that text over the fire. The bare sight of me was like a bullet through his guilty heart.”

“And then?”

“Then Nancy fainted, and I caught up the key of the door from her hand, intending to unlock it and get help. But as I was doing it it seemed to me better to leave it alone and get away, for the thing might look black against me, and any way my secret would be out if I were taken. In my haste I thrust the key into my pocket, and dropped my stick while I was chasing Teddy, who had run up the curtain. When I got him into his box, from which he had slipped, I was off as fast as I could run.”²⁴

“Who’s Teddy?” asked Holmes.

The man leaned over and pulled up the front of a kind of hutch in the corner. In an instant out there slipped a beautiful reddish-brown creature, thin and lithe, with the legs of a stoat, a long, thin nose, and a pair of the finest red eyes that ever I saw in an animal’s head.

“It’s a mongoose!” I cried.

“Well, some call them that, and some call them ichneumon,” said the man. “Snake-catcher is what I call them, and Teddy is amazing quick on cobras. I have one here without the fangs, and Teddy catches it every night to please the folk in the canteen.

“Any other point, sir?”

“Well, we may have to apply to you again if Mrs. Barclay should prove to be in serious trouble.”

“In that case, of course, I’d come forward.”

“But if not, there is no object in raking up this scandal against a dead man, foully as he has acted. You have at least the satisfaction of knowing that for thirty years of his life his conscience bitterly reproached him for his wicked deed. Ah, there goes Major Murphy on the other side of the street. Good-bye, Wood; I want to learn if anything has happened since yesterday.”

We were in time to overtake the Major before he reached the corner.

“Ah, Holmes,” he said, “I suppose you have heard that all this fuss has come to nothing?”

“What then?”

“The inquest is just over. The medical evidence showed conclusively that death was due to apoplexy. You see, it was quite a simple case, after all.”²⁵

“Oh, remarkably superficial,” said Holmes, smiling. “Come, Watson, I don’t think we shall be wanted in Aldershot any more.”

“There’s one thing,” said I, as we walked down to the station; “if the husband’s name was James, and the other was Henry, what was this talk about David?”

“That one word, my dear Watson, should have told me the whole story had I been the ideal reasoner which you are so fond of depicting. It was evidently a term of reproach.”

“Of reproach?”

“Yes, David strayed a little occasionally, you know, and on one occasion in the same direction as Sergeant James Barclay. You remember the small affair of Uriah and Bathsheba? My Biblical knowledge is a trifle rusty, I fear, but you will find the story in the first or second of Samuel.”²⁶ ■



“It was quite a simple case after all.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

THE INDIAN MUTINY

THE Indian mutiny of 1857–1858, also known as the Sepoy Rebellion (“sepoy” being the term for native soldiers), was the ultimately unsuccessful uprising that grew out of increasing Indian resentment toward British westernization. Violence was sparked in early 1857 when sepoys in the Bengal army were issued the new Enfield rifles, whose cartridges, which could only be loaded by biting off one end, were rumoured to be greased with beef tallow and pork fat. Such a situation would have posed a grave religious insult to the army’s Hindus and Muslims, and many began to suspect the government of trying to convert them to Christianity.

It was only the latest in a list of grievances against a British government that,

under the leadership of Governor General Lord Dalhousie, had reduced troop salaries, taken over property from Indian landowners, and spoken of upending the caste system by recruiting “cheaper,” lower-caste soldiers to replace the Brahmins and Rajputs then in service. By the time the governing East India Company ordered the cartridges greased with a more benign substance, it was too late for appeasement. On May 9, 1857, eighty-five sepoy soldiers at Meerut refused to use the rifles and were subsequently stripped of their uniforms, shackled, and marched off to prison to serve ten-year sentences. The next day, sepoy soldiers from three different units stormed the jail to release the imprisoned soldiers. In the ensuing melee, some fifty British men, women, and children were killed.

From there, the mutineers rode to Delhi. Simon Schama, in the third volume of his magisterial *History of Britain*, describes how in the moments before the violence, Harriet Tytler, the wife of the captain of the 38th Native Infantry, “could see there was something very wrong. Servants running about in a wild way, guns tearing down the main street. . . . What could it all mean?” Her French maid, Marie, responded, “Madame, this is a revolution.” Many European women and children who escaped Delhi were able to do so with the help of sympathetic sepoy soldiers, but others were less fortunate. More officers and their families were massacred, seemingly indiscriminately.

Terrible atrocities were committed on both sides. At Kanpur, a local ruler named Nana Sahib—perhaps seeking revenge over rent income that had been taken away from him—promised safe passage down the Ganges to a large group of European women and children. Once on board, the majority were shot, and several of the forty boats were set on fire; two hundred survivors were taken back to a former officer’s residence at Kanpur, where they were killed as well. The British desire for vengeance against those they referred to as “niggers” grew to a frenzy. As A. N. Wilson writes, “From the very first, the British decided to meet cruelty with redoubled cruelty, terror with terror, blood with blood.” There were reports, recounts Wilson, of Muslims smeared with pork fat before they were killed; Indians lashed to mouths of cannons and blown to pieces by grapeshot; women and children raped and then burnt alive; a bayoneted sepoy being roasted over a fire. Hundreds of Indians were executed by being shot from cannons.

In the end, after a lengthy siege of Lucknow, British troops were able to retake the city and finally bring the hostilities to an end. Peace was declared on July 8, 1858. One immediate result of the mutiny was the elimination of the East India Company, as well as an understanding that governing India effectively would require some consultation with Indians. For the next ninety years, India served under direct British rule, a period of time known as “the Raj.”

Less than three decades after the violence, the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1875–1889) contemplated the motives for rebellion by musing, “The truth seems to be that native opinion throughout India was in a ferment, predisposing men to believe the wildest stories, and to act precipitately upon their fears. . . . Repeated annexations, the spread of education, the appearance of the steam engine and the telegraph wire, all alike revealed a consistent determination to substitute an English for an Indian civilisation. The Bengal sepoys, especially, thought that they could see into the future farther than the rest of their countrymen. . . . They had everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by a revolution.”

1 “The Crooked Man” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in July 1893, in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on July 8, 1893, and in the *Strand Magazine* (New York) in August 1893.

2 The case is generally dated in 1888 or 1889 by chronologists (see *Chronological Table*), based on Watson’s few phrases here about his marriage to Mary Morstan, which occurred shortly after *The Sign of Four*, generally dated in 1888.

3 Holmes implies that Watson by this time had readers, indicating that the case took place after the publication of *A Study in Scarlet* in December, 1887.

4 The accommodating neighbour-doctor is named Anstruther in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” and is nameless in “The Stock-Broker’s Clerk” and “The Final Problem.”

5 In American editions the Royal *Munsters*.

6 See “The Indian Mutiny,” page 605, for a brief history.

7 The American editors, who resisted the word “squire” in “The Reigate Squires,” here add “and queenly” to the description of Nancy Barclay.

8 A metal guard placed before an open fire.

9 “The Crooked Man” presents all of the classical elements of a “locked room” or “impossible crime” mystery, a locked room containing a murder victim with no apparent means of entry for the murderer. Edgar Allan Poe was the first modern writer to use this mystery form, in “Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841). In 1852, Wilkie Collins utilised the device with great success in “A Terribly Strange Bed.” The first novel-length use was in Israel Zangwill’s *The Big Bow Mystery* (1892).

The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing credits “The Speckled Band” (1891) as the only encounter of Holmes with a death occurring in a locked room, but in fact Holmes several times dealt with such cases. In *The Sign of Four* (1889), the body of Bartholomew Sholto is found in a locked room, but the mystery of entry of the murderer is quickly solved when, upon forcing the door, a gaping hole in the ceiling is discovered. In “The Empty House,” Holmes must solve the murder of Ronald Adair, found behind a locked door.

The “locked room” genre retained its popularity through many changes in detective fiction. Gaston Leroux, G. K. Chesterton, Melville Davisson Post, and S. S. Van Dine all employed the plot device in one or more stories. In the 1930s, John Dickson Carr (later a biographer of Arthur Conan Doyle) made the form

his own, and in his 1935 novel *The Hollow Man* (U. S. title *The Three Coffins*), the detective Dr. Gideon Fell stops the action of the book to give a chapter-length lecture on the varieties of “locked room” mysteries.

10 An official who assists in making up lists of eligible voters.

11 A bar at a military post or camp.

12 Notwithstanding their near-mythic status, the “Baker Street boys” or “Baker Street Irregulars” are mentioned only in *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, and “The Crooked Man.” (Cartwright, who assisted Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, had actual, gainful employment as a district messenger.) Those who are named are Wiggins (*A Study in Scarlet*) and Simpson (“The Crooked Man”). It is tempting to identify the latter with *Baldy Simpson*, who is mentioned in “The Blanched Soldier” as having died in battle in South Africa sometime around 1900, alongside Godfrey Emsworth.

13 Brewer’s *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* defines them: “The houseless poor; street children. So called because, like the Arabs, they are nomads or wanderers with no settled home.”

14 Usually, temporary quarters for troops; however, in India, the term refers to a permanent military station.

15 Ian McQueen identifies Bhurtee as Allahabad, which was relieved by then-Colonel Neill in June 1857, on his advance to Kanpur (see note 20, below). However, Evan M. Wilson, in “Sherlock Holmes and the Indian Mutiny: Or, Where and What Was Bhurtee?—An Identification,” argues that “Bhurtee” is evidently Agra (the focus of *The Sign of Four*), based on the similar points of a fort under siege and a dried-up water obstacle. Agra was indeed a haven for Europeans during the Mutiny, but Neill did not “relieve” Agra except by his presence in the neighbourhood, and it would have been a long distance from Agra to the route of Neill’s column, either on its way to Benares (his first mission) or to Allahabad.

16 A sergeant responsible for the duty (and honour) of attending regimental colours in the field.

17 That is, destined to become a commissioned officer.

18 Typically eight guns and their personnel.

19 The Indian religion of Sikhism, combining elements of Islamic Sufism and Bhakti Hinduism, was founded in the late fifteenth century by the guru Nanak, who, after experiencing a vision of God, emerged from seclusion to pronounce, “There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim.” To his followers he preached monotheism and meditation while rejecting idolatry, organized priesthood, and the caste system. Many of the stricter Sikh traditions—turbans, uncut hair and beards, the carrying of daggers—date back to the dominant order of Khalsa, originally a military fraternity founded in 1699 by Sikhism’s tenth (and last) guru.

A Sikh kingdom in the Punjab (in northwestern India) was established by Maharaja Rajit Singh in the early 1800s, but the violent military unrest that followed his death precipitated the Sikh Wars against the British, who succeeded in annexing the Punjab in 1849. Civility returned to the region under British administration, and Sikh soldiers subsequently made up a substantial portion of the British army in the Indian Mutiny (as they would in World War I). They were rewarded for their participation with lucrative land grants.

20 General James George Neill (1810–1857) commanded the British army’s right wing in the advance from Kanpur to Lucknow. A. N. Wilson singles him out as an example of the British officer whose religious conviction manifested itself in vicious behaviour toward his Indian adversaries, largely in retribution for the gruesome massacre of British women and children at Kanpur. Not only did Neill carry out mass executions

of Indians suspected of conspiring with rebels, but he also, according to Wilson, forced his captives at Kanpur to lick blood from the floor while they were whipped by soldiers. One of Neill's majors wrote of stuffing pork and beef down a prisoner's throat to "break his caste" before he was hung. Neill went on to lead a furious assault on Lucknow, where he was shot and killed as his men entered the city. He was honoured after his death with a knighthood and various memorials.

21 Barclay's betrayal seems exceedingly poorly thought-out, considering that Wood was endeavouring to bring desperately needed aid to a group that included Barclay himself and, presumably, Nancy Devoy. Perhaps jealousy clouded Barclay's better judgement, as D. Martin Dakin observes: "Much good it would have done him to have got rid of his rival, if he and Nancy had both been killed by the mutineers."

22 Many of the mutineers and rebels, including the infamous Nana Sahib (who directed the massacre at Kanpur—see page 606), fled north after the fighting to take refuge in forests and swamps of the Nepalese Terai. An independent kingdom, Nepal nonetheless was only able to maintain civil relations with Britain through certain concessions, which included accepting a British envoy at Kathmandu and sending Gurkha troops to aid British forces in the mutiny. It was not until the end of 1859 that the refugees were finally swept out of the country and over the frontier into Tibet by a joint force of British troops led by Sir Colin Campbell (later Lord Clyde) and a numerous army of Gurkhas headed by Sir Jang Bahádur of Nepal.

23 The town of Darjeeling had been purchased in 1835 from the kingdom of Sikkim, after an officer in the British East India Company happened upon the deserted town nestled at 7,000 feet up in the Sikkim Himalayas. Strategically well-located (close to the borders of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan) and far more temperate than the sweltering plains below, it was developed as a hill station or sanitarium for British troops. Five years after the acquisition, Darjeeling's first superintendent began experimenting with Chinese and Assam tea seeds in his backyard, leading eventually to the cultivation of the tea for which the region would become famous. If Wood had been hauled from India to Nepal to Tibet, it is not unlikely that he would find himself in the area just north of Darjeeling.

24 "How is it possible," asks Bruce Harris, "that Colonel Barclay's coachman did not see Henry Wood?"

25 Bruce Harris contends that Nancy killed her husband with his own club, passing out after striking him. Henry Wood, still in love with Nancy, would have gladly covered up her crime. But Holmes was not deceived, Harris believes. "Holmes's stated interest was in seeing that justice was done. Colonel Barclay received his comeuppance."

26 In 2 Samuel, 11–13, David, the king of Israel, catches a glimpse of Uriah's beautiful wife Bathsheba and sends for her while her husband is away fighting a war. Bathsheba becomes pregnant with David's child, and the king calls Uriah home, plies him with food and wine, and encourages him to spend the night with his wife, hoping to shift responsibility for the child onto him. Yet when the loyal Uriah refuses to leave his king's side, David sends him off to war again with secret instructions reading, "Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." Uriah does, indeed, die in battle, and Bathsheba becomes David's wife. Barclay, however, was not as willing as David to leave the matter to chance and so arranged for Woods's capture.

In the Bible, unlike Mrs. Barclay, Bathsheba is never shown reacting to her new husband's rôle in her first husband's demise—indeed, nowhere is it stated that she ever learns the truth at all. One is tempted to wonder whether Holmes or Watson embroidered the tale of Barclay and Wood by inserting the references to "David," thereby not only adding dimension to the character of the woman caught between two competing men, but also painting their story of jealousy and betrayal on a grander, more mythic scale. While King David was an immensely popular subject in Victorian times (indeed, the "Star of David" was not an official symbol relating to Judaism until adopted by the Zionist movement in 1897), it does not seem likely that the tale of Uriah would come so quickly to the lips of Nancy Barclay in the heat of learning of her husband's perfidy.

THE RESIDENT PATIENT¹

The text of “The Resident Patient” was badly mangled when the editors of the Memoirs deleted “The Cardboard Box” and moved its opening scene to Watson’s account of this case. Here it is restored to its original version from the Strand Magazine. When Holmes is called in by young Dr. Percy Trevelyan to uncover the mystery of his “resident patient” (that is, a patient who shares living quarters with the doctor, a practice in which Conan Doyle himself once engaged), Holmes discovers waters far deeper than those imagined by Trevelyan. Holmes does little “deducing” in the case, relying instead on his immense knowledge of the sensational literature of the era and his docket-like recollection of unsolved crimes. Because the case also reflects the trials of a young doctor building a practice—a subject sure to elicit the sympathies of Drs. John Watson and Arthur Conan Doyle—we may understand why the case was included in the Memoirs.

IN GLANCING OVER the somewhat incoherent series of memoirs with which I have endeavoured to illustrate a few of the mental peculiarities of my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, I have been struck by the difficulty which I have experienced in picking out examples which shall in every way answer my purpose. For in those cases in which Holmes has performed some *tour de force* of analytical reasoning, and has demonstrated the value of his peculiar methods of investigation, the facts themselves have often been so slight or so commonplace that I could not feel justified in laying them before the public. On the other hand, it has frequently happened that he has been concerned in some research where the facts have been of the most remarkable and dramatic character, but where the share which he has himself taken in determining their causes has been less pronounced than I, as his biographer, could wish. The small matter which I have chronicled under the heading of *A Study in Scarlet*,² and that other later one connected with the loss of the *Gloria Scott*, may serve as examples of this Scylla and Charybdis³ which are for ever threatening his historian. It may be that, in the business of which I am now about to write, the part which my friend played is not sufficiently accentuated; and yet the whole train of circumstances is so remarkable that I cannot bring myself to omit it entirely from this series.⁴

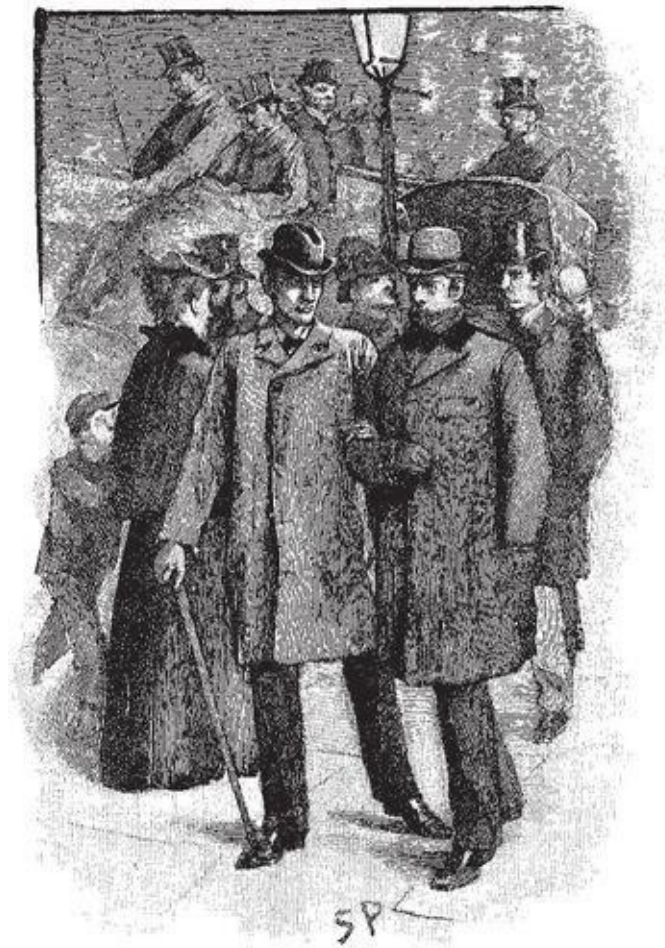
I cannot be sure of the exact date, for some of my memoranda upon the matter have been mislaid, but it must have been towards the end of the first year during which Holmes and I shared chambers in Baker Street. It was boisterous October weather, and we had both remained indoors all day, I because I feared with my shaken health to face the keen autumn wind, while he was deep in some of those abstruse chemical investigations which absorbed him utterly as long as he was engaged upon them. Towards evening, however, the breaking of a test-tube brought his research to a premature ending, and he sprang up from his chair with an exclamation of impatience and a clouded brow.

“A day’s work ruined, Watson,” said he, striding across to the window. “Ha! The stars are out and the wind has fallen. What do you say to a ramble through London?”

I was weary of our little sitting-room, and gladly acquiesced, muffling myself nose-high against the keen night air. For three hours we strolled about together, watching the ever-changing kaleidoscope of life as it ebbs and flows through Fleet Street and the Strand. Holmes had shaken off his temporary ill-humour, and his characteristic talk, with its keen observance of detail and subtle power of inference, held me amused and enthralled. It was ten o’clock before we reached Baker Street again. A brougham was waiting at our door.

“Hum! A doctor’s—general practitioner, I perceive,” said Holmes. “Not been long in practice, but has a good deal to do. Come to consult us, I fancy! Lucky we came back!”

I was sufficiently conversant with Holmes’s methods to be able to follow his reasoning,⁵ and to see that the nature and state of the various medical instruments in the wicker basket which hung in the lamp-light inside the brougham had given him the data for his swift deduction. The light in our window above showed that this late visit was indeed intended for us. With some curiosity as to what could have sent a brother medico to us at such an hour, I followed Holmes into our sanctum.



“We strolled about together.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

A pale, taper-faced man with sandy whiskers rose up from a chair by the fire as we entered. His age may not have been more than three or four and thirty, but his haggard expression and unhealthy hue told of a life which had sapped his

strength and robbed him of his youth. His manner was nervous and shy, like that of a sensitive gentleman, and the thin white hand which he laid on the mantelpiece as he rose was that of an artist rather than of a surgeon. His dress was quiet and sombre, a black frock-coat, dark trousers, and a touch of colour about his necktie.

“Good evening, Doctor,” said Holmes, cheerily; “I am glad to see that you have only been waiting a very few minutes.”

“You spoke to my coachman, then?”

“No, it was the candle on the side-table that told me. Pray resume your seat and let me know how I can serve you.”

“My name is Dr. Percy Trevelyan,” said our visitor, “and I live at 403, Brook Street.”

“Are you not the author of a monograph upon obscure nervous lesions?”⁶ I asked.

His pale cheeks flushed with pleasure at hearing that his work was known to me.

“I so seldom hear of the work that I thought it was quite dead,” said he. “My publishers gave me a most discouraging account of its sale. You are yourself, I presume, a medical man?”

“A retired army surgeon.”

“My own hobby has always been nervous disease. I should wish to make it an absolute specialty, but of course a man must take what he can get at first. This, however, is beside the question, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and I quite appreciate how valuable your time is. The fact is that a very singular train of events has occurred recently at my house in Brook Street, and to-night they came to such a head that I felt it was quite impossible for me to wait another hour before asking for your advice and assistance.”

Sherlock Holmes sat down and lit his pipe. “You are very welcome to both,” said he. “Pray let me have a detailed account of what the circumstances are which have disturbed you.”

“One or two of them are so trivial,” said Dr. Trevelyan, “that really I am almost ashamed to mention them. But the matter is so inexplicable, and the recent turn which it has taken is so elaborate, that I shall lay it all before you, and you shall judge what is essential and what is not.”

“I am compelled, to begin with, to say something of my own college career. I am a London University man,⁷ you know, and I am sure that you will not think that I am unduly singing my own praises if I say that my student career was considered by my professors to be a very promising one. After I had graduated I

continued to devote myself to research, occupying a minor position in King's College Hospital, and I was fortunate enough to excite considerable interest by my research into the pathology of catalepsy,⁸ and finally to win the Bruce Pinkerton prize and medal by the monograph on nervous lesions to which your friend has just alluded. I should not go too far if I were to say that there was a general impression at that time that a distinguished career lay before me.



University of London.

The Queen's London (1897)

“But the one great stumbling-block lay in my want of capital. As you will readily understand, a specialist who aims high is compelled to start in one of a dozen streets in the Cavendish Square quarter,⁹ all of which entail enormous rents and furnishing expenses. Besides this preliminary outlay, he must be prepared to keep himself for some years, and to hire a presentable carriage and horse. To do this was quite beyond my power, and I could only hope that by economy I might in ten years' time save enough to enable me to put up my plate. Suddenly, however, an unexpected incident opened up quite a new prospect to me.

“This was a visit from a gentleman of the name of Blessington, who was a complete stranger to me. He came up into my room one morning, and plunged into business in an instant.

“ ‘You are the same Percy Trevelyan who has had so distinguished a career and won a great prize lately?’ said he.

“I bowed.

“ ‘Answer me frankly,’ he continued, ‘for you will find it to your interest to do so. You have all the cleverness which makes a successful man. Have you the tact?’

“I could not help smiling at the abruptness of the question.

“ ‘I trust that I have my share,’ I said.

“ ‘Any bad habits? Not drawn towards drink, eh?’

“ ‘Really, sir!’ I cried.

“ ‘Quite right! That’s all right! But I was bound to ask. With all these qualities why are you not in practice?’

“I shrugged my shoulders.

“ ‘Come, come!’ said he, in his bustling way. ‘It’s the old story. More in your brains than in your pocket, eh? What would you say if I were to start you in Brook Street?’

“I stared at him in astonishment.

“ ‘Oh, it’s for my sake, not for yours,’ he cried. ‘I’ll be perfectly frank with you, and if it suits you it will suit me very well. I have a few thousands to invest, d’ye see, and I think I’ll sink them in you.’

“ ‘But why?’ I gasped.

“ ‘Well, it’s just like any other speculation, and safer than most.’

“ ‘What am I to do, then?’

“ ‘I’ll tell you. I’ll take the house, furnish it, pay the maids, and run the whole place. All you have to do is just to wear out your chair in the consulting-room. I’ll let you have pocket-money and everything. Then you hand over to me three-quarters of what you earn, and you keep the other quarter for yourself.’



“I stared at him in astonishment.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“This was the strange proposal, Mr. Holmes, with which the man Blessington approached me. I won’t weary you with the account of how we bargained and negotiated. It ended in my moving into the house next Lady Day,¹⁰ and starting in practice on very much the same conditions as he had suggested. He came

himself to live with me in the character of a resident patient. His heart was weak, it appears, and he needed constant medical supervision. He turned the two best rooms of the first floor into a sitting-room and bedroom for himself. He was a man of singular habits, shunning company and very seldom going out. His life was irregular, but in one respect he was regularity itself. Every evening at the same hour he walked into the consulting-room, examined the books, put down five and threepence for every guinea¹¹ that I had earned, and carried the rest off to the strong-box in his own room.

“I may say with confidence that he never had occasion to regret his speculation. From the first it was a success. A few good cases and the reputation which I had won in the hospital brought me rapidly to the front, and during the last year or two I have made him a rich man.

“So much, Mr. Holmes, for my past history and my relations with Mr. Blessington. It only remains for me now to tell you what has occurred to bring me here to-night.

“Some weeks ago Mr. Blessington came down to me in, as it seemed to me, a state of considerable agitation. He spoke of some burglary which, he said, had been committed in the West End, and he appeared, I remember, to be quite unnecessarily excited about it, declaring that a day should not pass before we should add stronger bolts to our windows and doors. For a week he continued to be in a peculiar state of restlessness, peering continually out of the windows, and ceasing to take the short walk which had usually been the prelude to his dinner. From his manner it struck me that he was in mortal dread of something or somebody, but when I questioned him upon the point he became so offensive that I was compelled to drop the subject. Gradually as time passed his fears appeared to die away, and he had renewed his former habits, when a fresh event reduced him to the pitiable state of prostration in which he now lies.

“What happened was this. Two days ago I received the letter which I now read to you. Neither address nor date is attached to it.

A Russian nobleman who is now resident in England, would be glad to avail himself of the professional assistance of Dr. Percy Trevelyan. He has been for some years a victim to cataleptic attacks, on which, as is well known, Dr. Trevelyan is an authority. He proposes to call at about a quarter-past six to-morrow evening, if Dr. Trevelyan will make it convenient to be at home.

“This letter interested me deeply, because the chief difficulty in the study of catalepsy is the rareness of the disease. You may believe, then, that I was in my

consulting-room when, at the appointed hour, the page showed in the patient.

“He was an elderly man, thin, demure, and commonplace—by no means the conception one forms of a Russian nobleman. I was much more struck by the appearance of his companion. This was a tall young man, surprisingly handsome, with a dark, fierce face, and the limbs and chest of a Hercules.¹² He had his hand under the other’s arm as they entered, and helped him to a chair with a tenderness which one would hardly have expected from his appearance.

“ ‘You will excuse my coming in, Doctor,’ said he to me, speaking English with a slight lisp. ‘This is my father, and his health is a matter of the most overwhelming importance to me.’

“ ‘I was touched by this filial anxiety. ‘You would, perhaps, care to remain during the consultation?’ said I.

“ ‘Not for the world,’ he cried, with a gesture of horror. ‘It is more painful to me than I can express. If I were to see my father in one of those dreadful seizures I am convinced that I should never survive it. My own nervous system is an exceptionally sensitive one. With your permission I will remain in the waiting-room while you go into my father’s case.’

“To this, of course, I assented, and the young man withdrew. The patient and I then plunged into a discussion of his case, of which I took exhaustive notes. He was not remarkable for intelligence, and his answers were frequently obscure, which I attributed to his limited acquaintance with our language. Suddenly, however, as I sat writing, he ceased to give any answer at all to my inquiries, and on my turning towards him I was shocked to see that he was sitting bolt upright in his chair, staring at me with a perfectly blank and rigid face. He was again in the grip of his mysterious malady.



“Helped him to a chair.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“My first feeling, as I have just said, was one of pity and horror. My second, I fear, was rather one of professional satisfaction. I made notes of my patient’s pulse and temperature, tested the rigidity of his muscles, and examined his reflexes. There was nothing markedly abnormal in any of these conditions, which harmonized with my former experiences. I had obtained good results in such cases by the inhalation of nitrite of amyl,¹³ and the present seemed an admirable opportunity of testing its virtues. The bottle was downstairs in my laboratory, so, leaving my patient seated in his chair, I ran down to get it. There was some little delay in finding it—five minutes, let us say—and then I returned. Imagine my amazement to find the room empty and the patient gone!



He was sitting bolt upright in his chair, staring at me with a perfectly blank and rigid face.

Anonymous, Sunday *Portland Oregonian*, September 3, 1911

“Of course, my first act was to run into the waiting-room. The son had gone also. The hall door had been closed, but not shut. My page who admits patients is a new boy, and by no means quick. He waits downstairs, and runs up to show patients out when I ring the consulting-room bell. He had heard nothing, and the affair remained a complete mystery. Mr. Blessington came in from his walk shortly afterwards, but I did not say anything to him upon the subject, for, to tell the truth, I have got in the way of late of holding as little communication with him as possible.

“Well, I never thought that I should see anything more of the Russian and his son, so you can imagine my amazement when, at the very same hour this evening, they both came marching into my consulting-room, just as they had

done before.



“I was shocked to see he was staring at me with a perfectly blank face.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“ ‘I feel that I owe you a great many apologies for my abrupt departure yesterday, Doctor,’ said my patient.

“ ‘I confess that I was very much surprised at it,’ said I.

“ ‘Well, the fact is,’ he remarked, ‘that when I recover from these attacks my mind is always very clouded as to all that has gone before. I woke up in a strange room, as it seemed to me, and made my way out into the street in a sort of dazed way when you were absent.’

“ ‘And I,’ said the son, ‘seeing my father pass the door of the waiting-room, naturally thought that the consultation had come to an end. It was not until we had reached home that I began to realize the true state of affairs.’

“ ‘Well,’ said I, laughing, ‘there is no harm done, except that you puzzled me terribly; so if you, sir, would kindly step into the waiting-room, I shall be happy to continue our consultation, which was brought to so abrupt an ending.’

“For half an hour or so I discussed the old gentleman’s symptoms with him, and then, having prescribed for him, I saw him go off on the arm of his son.

“I have told you that Mr. Blessington generally chose this hour of the day for his exercise. He came in shortly afterwards and passed upstairs. An instant later I heard him running down, and he burst into my consulting-room like a man who

is mad with panic.

“ ‘Who has been in my room?’ he cried.

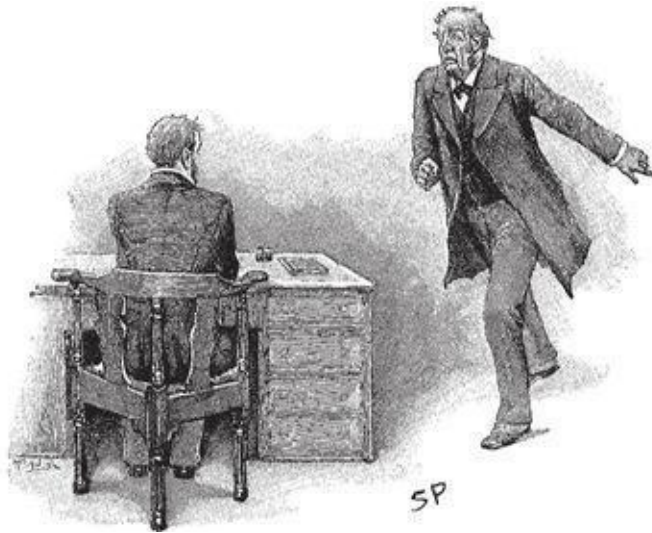
“ ‘No one,’ said I.

“ ‘It’s a lie!’ he yelled. ‘Come up and look!’

“I passed over the grossness of his language, as he seemed half out of his mind with fear. When I went upstairs with him he pointed to several footprints upon the light carpet.

“ ‘Do you mean to say those are mine?’ he cried.

“They were certainly very much larger than any which he could have made, and were evidently quite fresh. It rained hard this afternoon, as you know, and my patients were the only people who called. It must have been the case, then, that the man in the waiting-room had for some unknown reason, while I was busy with the other, ascended to the room of my resident patient. Nothing had been touched or taken, but there were the footprints to prove that the intrusion was an undoubted fact.



“He burst into my consulting-room.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Mr. Blessington seemed more excited over the matter than I should have thought possible, though, of course, it was enough to disturb anybody’s peace of mind. He actually sat crying in an arm chair, and I could hardly get him to speak coherently. It was his suggestion that I should come round to you, and of course I at once saw the propriety of it, for certainly the incident is a very singular one, though he appears to completely overrate its importance. If you would only come back with me in my brougham, you would at least be able to soothe him, though I can hardly hope that you will be able to explain this remarkable

occurrence.”

Sherlock Holmes had listened to this long narrative with an intentness which showed me that his interest was keenly aroused. His face was as impassive as ever, but his lids had drooped more heavily over his eyes, and his smoke had curled up more thickly from his pipe to emphasize each curious episode in the doctor’s tale. As our visitor concluded, Holmes sprang up without a word, handed me my hat, picked his own from the table, and followed Dr. Trevelyan to the door. Within a quarter of an hour we had been dropped at the door of the physician’s residence in Brook Street, one of those sombre, flat-faced houses which one associates with a West End practice. A small page admitted us, and we began at once to ascend the broad, well-carpeted stair.

But a singular interruption brought us to a standstill. The light at the top was suddenly whisked out, and from the darkness came a reedy, quavering voice.

“I have a pistol,” it cried. “I give you my word that I’ll fire if you come any nearer.”

“This really grows outrageous, Mr. Blessington,” cried Dr. Trevelyan.

“Oh, then it is you, Doctor,” said the voice with a great heave of relief. “But those other gentlemen, are they what they pretend to be?”

We were conscious of a long scrutiny out of the darkness.

“Yes, yes, it’s all right,” said the voice at last. “You can come up, and I am sorry if my precautions have annoyed you.”

He re-lit the stair gas as he spoke, and we saw before us a singular-looking man, whose appearance, as well as his voice, testified to his jangled nerves. He was very fat, but had apparently at some time been much fatter, so that the skin hung about his face in loose pouches, like the cheeks of a bloodhound. He was of a sickly colour, and his thin sandy hair seemed to bristle up with the intensity of his emotion. In his hand he held a pistol, but he thrust it into his pocket as we advanced.

“Good evening, Mr. Holmes,” said he; “I am sure I am very much obliged to you for coming round. No one ever needed your advice more than I do. I suppose that Dr. Trevelyan has told you of this most unwarrantable intrusion into my rooms?”

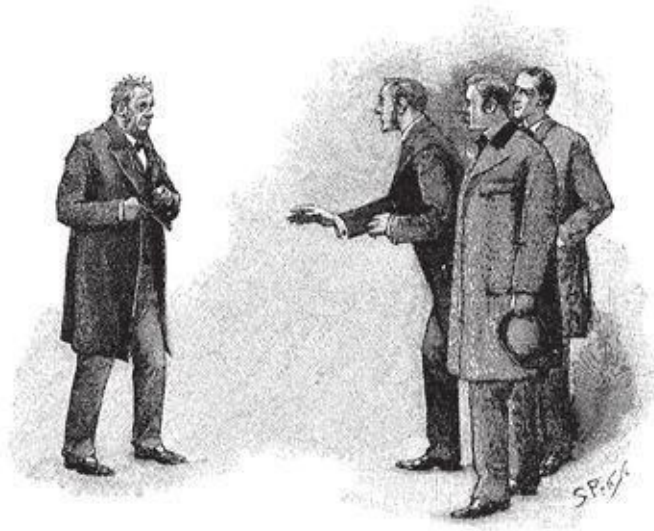
“Quite so,” said Holmes. “Who are these two men, Mr. Blessington, and why do they wish to molest you?”

“Well, well,” said the resident patient, in a nervous fashion, “of course it is hard to say that. You can hardly expect me to answer that, Mr. Holmes.”

“Do you mean that you don’t know?”

“Come in here, if you please. Just have the kindness to step in here.”

He led the way into his bedroom, which was large and comfortably furnished.



“In his hand he held a pistol.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“You see that,” said he, pointing to a big black box at the end of his bed. “I have never been a very rich man, Mr. Holmes—never made but one investment in my life, as Dr. Trevelyan would tell you. But I don’t believe in bankers. I would never trust a banker, Mr. Holmes. Between ourselves, what little I have is in that box, so you can understand what it means to me when unknown people force themselves into my rooms.”

Holmes looked at Blessington in his questioning way and shook his head.

“I cannot possibly advise you if you try to deceive me,” said he.

“But I have told you everything.”

Holmes turned on his heel with a gesture of disgust. “Good-night Dr. Trevelyan,” said he.

“And no advice for me?” cried Blessington, in a breaking voice.

“My advice to you, sir, is to speak the truth.”

A minute later we were in the street and walking for home. We had crossed Oxford Street, and were half-way down Harley Street before I could get a word from my companion.

“Sorry to bring you out on such a fool’s errand, Watson,” he said at last. “It is an interesting case, too, at the bottom of it.”

“I can make little of it,” I confessed.

“Well, it is quite evident that there are two men—more, perhaps, but at least two—who are determined for some reason to get at this fellow Blessington. I have no doubt in my mind that both on the first and on the second occasion that young man penetrated to Blessington’s room, while his confederate, by an

ingenious device, kept the doctor from interfering.”

“And the catalepsy?”

“A fraudulent imitation, Watson, though I should hardly dare to hint as much to our specialist. It is a very easy complaint to imitate. I have done it myself.”¹⁴

“And then?”

“By the purest chance Blessington was out on each occasion. Their reason for choosing so unusual an hour for a consultation was obviously to insure that there should be no other patient in the waiting-room. It just happened, however, that this hour coincided with Blessington’s constitutional, which seems to show that they were not very well acquainted with his daily routine. Of course, if they had been merely after plunder they would at least have made some attempt to search for it. Besides, I can read in a man’s eye when it is his own skin that he is frightened for. It is inconceivable that this fellow could have made two such vindictive enemies as these appear to be without knowing of it. I hold it, therefore, to be certain that he does know who these men are, and that for reasons of his own he suppresses it. It is just possible that to-morrow may find him in a more communicative mood.”

“Is there not one alternative,” I suggested, “grotesquely improbable, no doubt, but still just conceivable? Might the whole story of the cataleptic Russian and his son be a concoction of Dr. Trevelyan’s, who has, for his own purposes, been in Blessington’s rooms?”

I saw in the gaslight that Holmes wore an amused smile at this brilliant departure of mine.

“My dear fellow,” said he, “it was one of the first solutions which occurred to me, but I was soon able to corroborate the doctor’s tale. This young man has left prints upon the stair-carpet which made it quite superfluous for me to ask to see those which he had made in the room. When I tell you that his shoes were square-toed, instead of being pointed like Blessington’s, and were quite an inch and a third longer than the doctor’s, you will acknowledge that there can be no doubt as to his individuality. But we may sleep on it now, for I shall be surprised if we do not hear something further from Brook Street in the morning.”

Sherlock Holmes’s prophecy was soon fulfilled, and in a dramatic fashion. At half-past seven next morning, in the first dim glimmer of daylight, I found him standing by my bedside in his dressing-gown.

“There’s a brougham waiting for us, Watson,” said he.

“What’s the matter, then?”

“The Brook Street business.”

“Any fresh news?”

“Tragic, but ambiguous,” said he, pulling up the blind. “Look at this—a sheet

from a notebook with 'For God's sake come at once.—P. T.,' scrawled upon it in pencil. Our friend the doctor was hard put to it when he wrote this. Come along, my dear fellow, for it's an urgent call."

In a quarter of an hour or so we were back at the physician's house. He came running out to meet us with a face of horror.

"Oh, such a business!" he cried, with his hands to his temples.

"What then?"

"Blessington has committed suicide!"

Holmes whistled.

"Yes, he hanged himself during the night."

We had entered, and the doctor had preceded us into what was evidently his waiting-room.

"I really hardly know what I am doing," he cried. "The police are already upstairs. It has shaken me most dreadfully."

"When did you find it out?"

"He has a cup of tea taken in to him early every morning. When the maid entered about seven, there the unfortunate fellow was hanging in the middle of the room. He had tied his cord to the hook on which the heavy lamp used to hang, and he had jumped off from the top of the very box that he showed us yesterday."

Holmes stood for a moment in deep thought.

"With your permission," said he at last, "I should like to go upstairs and look into the matter." We both ascended, followed by the doctor.

It was a dreadful sight which met us as we entered the bedroom door. I have spoken of the impression of flabbiness which this man Blessington conveyed. As he dangled from the hook it was exaggerated and intensified until he was scarce human in his appearance. The neck was drawn out like a plucked chicken's, making the rest of him seem the more obese and unnatural by the contrast. He was clad only in his long night-dress, and his swollen ankles and ungainly feet protruded starkly from beneath it. Beside him stood a smart-looking police inspector, who was taking notes in a pocketbook.

"Ah, Mr. Holmes," said he, heartily, as my friend entered, "I am delighted to see you."

"Good morning, Lanner,"¹⁵ answered Holmes; "you won't think me an intruder, I am sure. Have you heard of the events which led up to this affair?"

"Yes, I heard something of them."

"Have you formed any opinion?"

"As far as I can see, the man has been driven out of his senses by fright. The bed has been well slept in, you see. There's his impression deep enough. It's

about five in the morning, you know, that suicides are most common. That would be about his time for hanging himself. It seems to have been a very deliberate affair.”



It was a dreadful sight that met us as we entered the
bedroom door.

Anonymous, Sunday *Portland Oregonian*, September 3, 1911

“I should say that he has been dead about three hours, judging by the rigidity of the muscles,” said I.

“Noticed anything peculiar about the room?” asked Holmes.

“Found a screwdriver and some screws on the wash-hand stand. Seems to have smoked heavily during the night, too. Here are four cigar ends that I picked out of the fireplace.”

“Hum!” said Holmes, “have you got his cigar-holder?”

“No, I have seen none.”

“His cigar-case, then?”

“Yes, it was in his coat pocket.”

Holmes opened it and smelled the single cigar which it contained.

“Oh, this is a Havana, and these others are cigars of the peculiar sort which are imported by the Dutch from their East Indian colonies. They are usually wrapped in straw, you know, and are thinner for their length than any other brand.” He picked up the four ends and examined them with his pocket lens.



“Holmes opened it and smelled the single cigar which it contained.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Two of these have been smoked from a holder and two without,” said he. “Two have been cut by a not very sharp knife, and two have had the ends bitten off by a set of excellent teeth. This is no suicide, Mr. Lanner. It is a very deeply-planned and cold-blooded murder.”

“Impossible!” cried the inspector.

“And why?”

“Why should anyone murder a man in so clumsy a fashion as by hanging him?”

“That is what we have to find out.”

“How could they get in?”

“Through the front door.”

“It was barred in the morning.”

“Then it was barred after them.”

“How do you know?”

“I saw their traces. Excuse me a moment, and I may be able to give you some further information about it.”

He went over to the door, and turning the lock he examined it in his methodical fashion. Then he took out the key, which was on the inside, and inspected that also. The bed, the carpet, the chairs, the mantelpiece, the dead body, and the rope were each in turn examined, until at last he professed himself satisfied, and with my aid and that of the inspector cut down the wretched object, and laid it reverently under a sheet.

“How about this rope?” he asked.

“It is cut off this,” said Dr. Trevelyan, drawing a large coil from under the bed. “He was morbidly nervous of fire, and always kept this beside him, so that he might escape by the window in case the stairs were burning.”

“That must have saved them trouble,” said Holmes, thoughtfully. “Yes, the actual facts are very plain, and I shall be surprised if by the afternoon I cannot give you the reasons for them as well. I will take this photograph of Blessington which I see upon the mantelpiece, as it may help me in my inquiries.”

“But you have told us nothing!” cried the doctor.

“Oh, there can be no doubt as to the sequence of events,” said Holmes. “There were three of them in it: the young man, the old man, and a third, to whose identity I have no clue. The first two, I need hardly remark, are the same who masqueraded as the Russian Count and his son, so we can give a very full description of them. They were admitted by a confederate inside the house. If I might offer you a word of advice, Inspector, it would be to arrest the page, who, as I understand, has only recently come into your service, Doctor.”

“The young imp cannot be found,” said Dr. Trevelyan; “the maid and the cook have just been searching for him.”

Holmes shrugged his shoulders.

“He has played a not unimportant part in this drama,” said he. “The three men having ascended the stairs, which they did on tiptoe, the elder man first, the younger man second, and the unknown man in the rear—”

“My dear Holmes!” I ejaculated.

“Oh, there could be no question as to the superimposing of the footmarks. I had the advantage of learning which was which last night. They ascended, then, to Mr. Blessington’s room, the door of which they found to be locked. With the help of a wire, however, they forced round the key. Even without the lens you will perceive, by the scratches on this ward,¹⁶ where the pressure was applied.

“On entering the room, their first proceeding must have been to gag Mr. Blessington. He may have been asleep, or he may have been so paralyzed with terror as to have been unable to cry out. These walls are thick, and it is conceivable that his shriek, if he had time to utter one, was unheard.

“Having secured him, it is evident to me that a consultation of some sort was held. Probably it was something in the nature of a judicial proceeding. It must have lasted for some time, for it was then that these cigars were smoked. The older man sat in that wicker chair: it was he who used the cigar-holder. The younger man sat over yonder: he knocked his ash off against the chest of drawers. The third fellow paced up and down. Blessington, I think, sat upright in the bed, but of that I cannot be absolutely certain.

“Well, it ended by their taking Blessington and hanging him. The matter was so pre-arranged that it is my belief that they brought with them some sort of block or pulley which might serve as a gallows. That screwdriver and those screws were, as I conceive, for fixing it up. Seeing the hook, however, they naturally saved themselves the trouble. Having finished their work they made off, and the door was barred behind them by their confederate.”

We had all listened with the deepest interest to this sketch of the night’s doings, which Holmes had deduced from signs so subtle and minute, that even when he had pointed them out to us, we could scarcely follow him in his reasonings. The inspector hurried away on the instant to make inquiries about the page, while Holmes and I returned to Baker Street for breakfast.

“I’ll be back by three,” said he when we had finished our meal. “Both the inspector and the doctor will meet me here at that hour, and I hope by that time to have cleared up any little obscurity which the case may still present.”



“Blessington, I think, sat upright in bed.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

Our visitors arrived at the appointed time, but it was a quarter to four before my friend put in an appearance. From his expression as he entered, however, I could see that all had gone well with him.

“Any news, Inspector?”

“We have got the boy, sir.”

“Excellent, and I have got the men.”

“You have got them!” we cried, all three.

“Well, at least I have got their identity. This so-called Blessington is, as I expected, well known at headquarters, and so are his assailants. Their names are Biddle, Hayward, and Moffat.”

“The Worthingdon bank gang,” cried the inspector.

“Precisely,” said Holmes.

“Then Blessington must have been Sutton.”

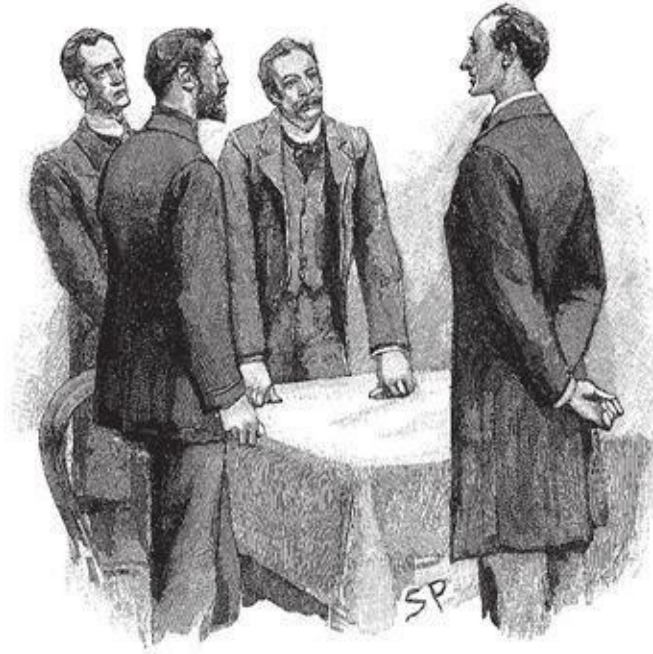
“Exactly,” said Holmes.

“Why, that makes it as clear as crystal,” said the inspector.

But Trevelyan and I looked at each other in bewilderment.

“You must surely remember the great Worthingdon bank business,” said Holmes; “five men were in it—these four and a fifth called Cartwright. Tobin, the caretaker, was murdered, and the thieves got away with seven thousand pounds. This was in 1875. They were all five arrested, but the evidence against them was by no means conclusive. This Blessington or Sutton, who was the worst of the gang, turned informer. On his evidence Cartwright was hanged and the other three got fifteen years apiece. When they got out the other day, which was some years before their full term,¹⁷ they set themselves, as you perceive, to hunt down the traitor and to avenge the death of their comrade upon him. Twice they tried to get at him and failed; a third time, you see, it came off. Is there

anything further which I can explain, Dr. Trevelyan?"



“‘You have got them!’ we cried.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“I think you have made it all remarkably clear,” said the doctor. “No doubt the day on which he was so perturbed was the day when he had seen of their release in the newspapers.”

“Quite so. His talk about a burglary was the merest blind.”

“But why could he not tell you this?”

“Well, my dear sir, knowing the vindictive character of his old associates, he was trying to hide his own identity from everybody as long as he could. His secret was a shameful one, and he could not bring himself to divulge it. However, wretch as he was, he was still living under the shield of British law, and I have no doubt Inspector, that you will see that though that shield may fail to guard, the sword of justice is still there to avenge.”

Such were the singular circumstances in connection with the Resident Patient and the Brook Street Doctor. From that night nothing has been seen of the three murderers by the police, and it is surmised at Scotland Yard that they were among the passengers of the ill-fated steamer *Norah Creina*, which was lost some years ago with all hands upon the Portuguese coast, some leagues to the north of Oporto. The proceedings against the page broke down for want of evidence, and the Brook Street Mystery, as it was called, has never until now been fully dealt with in any public print. ■

THE TEXT OF “THE RESIDENT PATIENT”

THE SECOND and third paragraphs of “The Resident Patient,” as they appear above, are the original text as it appeared in the *Strand Magazine* publication in 1893. When the story was collected into book form, in the *Memoirs* published by George Newnes, Limited, in 1894, the following replaced those paragraphs:

“It had been a close, rainy day in October. Our blinds were half-drawn, and Holmes lay curled upon the sofa, reading and re-reading a letter which he had received by the morning post. For myself, my term of service in India had trained me to stand heat better than cold, and a thermometer of ninety was no hardship. But the paper was uninteresting. Parliament had risen. Everybody was out of town, and I yearned for the glades of the New Forest or the shingle of Southsea. A depleted bank account had caused me to postpone my holiday, and as to my companion, neither the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to him. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country.

“Finding that Holmes was too absorbed for conversation, I had tossed aside the barren paper, and, leaning back in my chair I fell into a brown study. Suddenly my companion’s voice broke in upon my thoughts.

“ ‘You are right, Watson,’ said he. ‘It does seem a very preposterous way of settling a dispute.’

“ ‘Most preposterous!’ I exclaimed, and then, suddenly realizing how he had echoed the inmost thought of my soul, I sat up in my chair and stared at him in blank amazement.

“ ‘What is this, Holmes? This is beyond anything which I could have imagined.’

“He laughed heartily at my perplexity.

“ ‘You remember,’ said he, ‘that some little time ago, when I read you the passage in one of Poe’s sketches, in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thoughts of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere tour de force of the author. On my remarking that I was constantly in the habit of doing the same thing you expressed incredulity.’

“ ‘Oh, no!’

“ ‘Perhaps not with your tongue, my dear Watson, but certainly with your eyebrows. So when I saw you throw down your paper and enter upon a train of thought, I was very happy to have the opportunity of reading it off, and eventually of breaking into it, as a proof that I had been in rapport with you.’

“ ‘But I was still far from satisfied. ‘In the example which you read to me,’ said I, ‘the reasoner drew his conclusions from the actions of the man whom he observed. If I remember right, he stumbled over a heap of stones, looked up at the stars, and so on. But I have been seated quietly in my chair, and what clues can I have given you?’

“ ‘You do yourself an injustice. The features are given to man as the means by which he shall express his emotions, and yours are faithful servants.’

“ ‘Do you mean to say that you read my train of thoughts from my features?’

“ ‘Your features, and especially your eyes. Perhaps you cannot yourself recall how your reverie commenced?’

“ ‘No, I cannot.’

“ ‘Then I will tell you. After throwing down your paper, which was the action which drew my attention to you, you sat for half a minute with a vacant expression. Then your eyes fixed themselves upon your newly framed picture of General Gordon, and I saw by the alteration in your face that a train of thought had been started. But it did not lead very far. Your eyes turned across to the unframed portrait of Henry Ward Beecher, which stands upon the top of your books. You then glanced up at the wall, and of course your meaning was obvious. You were thinking that if the portrait were framed it would just cover that bare space and correspond with Gordon’s picture over there.’

“ ‘You have followed me wonderfully!’ I exclaimed.

“ ‘So far I could hardly have gone astray. But now your thoughts went back to Beecher, and you looked hard across as if you were studying the character in his features. Then your eyes ceased to pucker, but you continued to look across, and your face was thoughtful. You were recalling the incidents of Beecher’s career. I was well aware that you could not do this without thinking of the mission which he undertook on behalf of the North at the time of the Civil War, for I remember you expressing your passionate indignation at the way in which he was received by the more turbulent of our people. You felt so strongly about it that I knew you could not think of Beecher without thinking of that also. When a moment later I saw your eyes wander away from the picture, I suspected that your mind had now turned to the Civil War, and when I observed that your lips set, your eyes sparkled, and your hands clinched, I was positive that you were indeed thinking of the gallantry which was shown by both sides in that desperate struggle. But then, again, your face grew sadder; you shook your head. You were dwelling

upon the sadness and horror and useless waste of life. Your hand stole towards your own old wound, and a smile quivered on your lips, which showed me that the ridiculous side of this method of settling international questions had forced itself upon your mind. At this point I agreed with you that it was preposterous, and was glad to find that all my deductions had been correct.’

“ ‘Absolutely!’ said I. ‘And now that you have explained it I confess that I am as amazed as before.’

“ ‘It was very superficial, my dear Watson, I assure you. I should not have intruded it upon your attention had you not shown some incredulity the other day. But the evening has brought a breeze with it. What do you say to a ramble through London?’ ”

The astute reader will recognise the passages as lifted bodily from “The Cardboard Box.” Note the incongruities: It is a “close, rainy day in October.” “Parliament had risen.” “Everybody was out of town.” There was “a thermometer of 90.” It appears that the editor of the Newnes edition could not be bothered with a proper “paste job” when “The Cardboard Box” was suppressed. When “The Resident Patient” was reprinted in the 1928 John Murray edition of *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Short Stories*, the passages from “The Cardboard Box” were omitted, and the two paragraphs were combined into the following:

“It had been a close, rainy day in October. ‘Unhealthy weather, Watson,’ said my friend. ‘But the evening has brought a breeze with it. What do you say to a ramble through London?’ ”

1 “The Resident Patient” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in August 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on August 12, 1893.

2 Watson may here intend to point to *A Study in Scarlet* as a case in which, while “the facts have been of the most remarkable and dramatic character,” Holmes took little share. While it is true that Holmes made an immediate and brilliant identification of the murderer, the case was truly “solved” only by reason of Hope’s suicidal response to Holmes’s advertisement and subsequent full confession. Watson may have felt that he perhaps overstated Holmes’s credit in concluding that investigation.

3 According to Greek mythology, Scylla and Charybdis (or Charibdis) were sea monsters who guarded the Strait of Messina. Once a beautiful maiden, Scylla was transformed (by either a jealous Circe or a jealous Amphitrite) into a sea monster with six heads, twelve feet, and loins made of baying dogs; she lived in a cave, snatching seamen from passing ships and devouring them. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, she ate six of Odysseus’s companions. Opposite Scylla dwelt Charybdis, a daughter of Poseidon who was turned into a whirlpool-like monster by Zeus for stealing Hercules’s cattle. To be caught between Scylla and Charybdis

generally means to avoid one problem only to confront another, or, in more modern terms, to be caught “between a rock and a hard place.” Watson’s meaning here is a bit more benign, torn as he is between his impulses as a writer and his loyalties toward his friend.

4 The second and third paragraphs of “The Resident Patient,” as they appear following, are the original text as it appeared in the *Strand Magazine* publication in 1893. See page 631 for a discussion of textual variations.

5 Popular perception, encouraged in no small part by the acting of Nigel Bruce in numerous film depictions of Watson, is that the doctor himself has little or no powers of deductive reasoning and that he acts merely as a blank sounding board for Holmes. Here, Watson engages in a typical bit of self-deprecation, implying that he can do no more than attempt to mimic Holmes’s own superior skills. But this downplaying of Watson’s abilities is belied by many instances of acuity that occur throughout the Canon. Compare, for example, Watson’s fine deductions here with those in “A Scandal in Bohemia,” where Watson makes several deductions from the notepaper sent by “Count von Kramm” before Holmes voices his own; “The Five Orange Pips,” in which Watson quickly deduces the involvement of a seafaring man on the basis of the postmarks on the threats; *The Sign of Four*, where he is able to deduce, with only a little help from Holmes, that the killer entered through the roof; *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, where his conclusions about Dr. James Mortimer from his walking stick are close to Holmes’s own; “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” where he correctly assesses McCarthy’s fatal injuries; “Wisteria Lodge,” where Watson makes a series of accurate inferences about Scott Eccles. See especially *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, where Watson’s letters to Holmes are filled with keen observations and deductions, and where Holmes compliments Watson, saying “Our researches have evidently been running on parallel lines.”

6 A “lesion” is an abnormal change in structure of an organ or body part due to injury or disease. The subject of “nervous lesions”—that is, the relationship of nerves to disease—was little understood by Victorian medicine, and “obscure” in this context (and in Dr. Trevelyan’s article) presumably means “not readily understood.”

7 Watson, too, attended the University of London, where he obtained his medical degree in 1878 (*A Study in Scarlet*).

8 A person suffering from catalepsy would experience a sudden rigidity of muscles, such that his or her limbs would remain fixed in whatever position they were placed. Catalepsy tends to be a symptom of various clinical disorders such as epilepsy and schizophrenia.

Many authors writing in the nineteenth century used the striking effects of catalepsy in their fiction (perhaps, as suggested in a 2000 *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences* article, as a standin for epilepsy) to dramatic effect. In Alfred Tennyson’s 1847 poem “The Princess,” the narrator, diagnosed with catalepsy, confesses to having “weird seizures” in which “I seem’d to move among a world of ghosts, / And feel myself the shadow of a dream.” The cataleptic narrator in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Premature Burial” (1850) enters frequently into a state “without pain, without ability to stir, or, strictly speaking, to think, but with a dull lethargic consciousness of life.” Terrified that he will be buried alive during one of his attacks, Poe’s narrator alerts his friends not to bury him until he has begun to decompose; arranges for the family tomb to contain ample food, water, and a door that can be opened from the inside; and designs for himself a “warmly and softly padded” coffin with a spring-loaded lid. For all that, the narrator, while away from home on a trip, is buried alive anyway, as is Poe’s similarly cataleptic Madeline in *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839). And the friendless, bitter title character of George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861), standing at his doorway, loses an unspecified amount of time when he is struck “by the invisible wand of catalepsy, and stood like a graven image, with wide but sightless eyes, holding open his door, powerless to resist either the good or the evil that might enter there.”

9 The area in and around Cavendish Square, notably Harley and Wimpole Streets, was known for housing

the offices of some of London's most exclusive medical practitioners. In Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Dr. Lanyon, a friend and colleague of Dr. Jekyll's, lived and received patients on "Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine." Florence Nightingale served as superintendent of the Institute of Sick Governesses after its move to Harley Street in 1853; the Royal Society of Medicine has been headquartered at 1 Wimpole Street since 1912. Arthur Conan Doyle had offices at 2 Upper Wimpole Street from March to May 1891, while he attempted to establish a practice as an eye specialist.

10 That would have been March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation; or the celebration of the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would give birth to the son of God.

11 Because a guinea is worth twenty-one shillings and there are twelve pence to a shilling, "five and threepence" is exactly one-quarter of a guinea.

12 A comparison shared by the King of Bohemia in "A Scandal in Bohemia."

13 Dr. Trevelyan's treatment of his cataleptic patient was certainly not the accepted approach, but neither was it completely unfounded. Amyl nitrite, a liquid generally inhaled in vapor form, actually has no reported effect on catalepsy but has been used mostly for the treatment of heart conditions.

In 1867, the Scottish physician Sir Thomas Lauder Brunton (1844–1916), who played a major rôle in establishing pharmacology as a science, discovered that amyl nitrite—by enlarging the blood vessels and increasing the heart rate—could relieve the pain of angina pectoris, or chest pain caused by lack of oxygen to the heart. It is this for which the drug has been traditionally prescribed. Yet an article entitled "On Catalepsy, with Cases. Treatment with High Temperature and Galvanism to Head," published in July 1887 by Alex. Robertson, M.D., in the *Journal of Mental Science*, observed that constriction of the blood vessels was also a feature of catalepsy. Howard Brody argues that Dr. Trevelyan applied the amyl nitrite either as a result of reading that article or by reason of his own independent investigations. (Dr. Trevelyan's contemporaries, reports the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, attempted to treat catalepsy not with medicine but by "obtain[ing] command of the patient's will," somehow preventing him or her through sheer force of mental persuasion not to enter the catalytic state.)

Today, amyl nitrite—better known by its "street name" of poppers—tends to be used not for medical purposes but as a recreational drug favored by clubgoers who inhale it to induce a brief rush of energy. The drug is also thought to enhance sexual arousal. Amyl nitrite is currently banned in the United States, and it is allowable in the United Kingdom only when used by prescription.

14 In "The Reigate Squires," Holmes deceives the villains as well as Colonel Hayter with a simple "fit." In "The Dying Detective," Holmes displays his acting genius as he fakes "tapanuli fever" and near-death with elaborate symptoms.

15 Inspector Lanner is never heard from again in the Canon.

16 A part of a lock.

17 The English Penal Act of 1877 allowed the term of sentence to be set by the judge. The sentence was subject to a remission of up to one-fourth of the sentence (exclusive of time spent in solitary confinement, usually the first nine months). This remission was earned by earnest labour, gauged by marks earned for each day's work. For a five-year sentence, the maximum remission was one year and 23 days; in seven years, one year and 273 days; in fourteen years, three years and 181 days; in twenty years, four years and 86 days. "Lifers" could not claim any remission but their cases were reviewed at the end of twenty years.

"The Resident Patient" is generally thought to have occurred in 1887, although there is little agreement among the chronologists (see *Chronological Table*). If the gang members got fifteen-year sentences, it is not possible that the robbery occurred in 1875, as Holmes says, for the maximum remission permitted by

law would be three years 271 days. This would place the sentencing of the gang in 1872 and the robbery in 1871. It is more likely that he was mistaken about the term of imprisonment rather than the date of the robbery, because the inspector does not contradict the date given. In 1875 Holmes was barely twenty-one, had not yet commenced his professional detective career, and may have been greatly impressed by the headlines given to the robbery.

THE GREEK INTERPRETER¹

“The Greek Interpreter” is not one of Holmes’s most admirable performances, for he nearly loses his client and fails to prevent the murder of an innocent. However, as one of only two cases in which Holmes’s older brother Mycroft plays an active rôle (the other is “The Bruce-Partington Plans”), it is indispensable reading for a Sherlockian. Seven years Sherlock’s senior, Mycroft is the smarter, less active brother, who cannot be bothered to leave his armchair to deal with a problem. Described as “larger and stouter” than Sherlock, “corpulent,” with fat, flipper-like hands, Mycroft Holmes is said to be an auditor of some departments of the British government. In “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” however, when Sherlock Holmes has become more certain of Watson’s discretion, he reveals that Mycroft “occasionally . . . is the British government.” Some like to see Mycroft as a Victorian secret agent, the head of a British “Central Intelligence Agency.”

Mycroft's actions in this case, however, are not all logical, and some scholars speculate that he may have had his own nefarious "agenda" in the matter.

DURING MY LONG and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Sherlock Holmes I had never heard him refer to his relations, and hardly ever to his own early life. This reticence upon his part had increased the somewhat inhuman effect which he produced upon me, until sometimes I found myself regarding him as an isolated phenomenon, a brain without a heart, as deficient in human sympathy as he was preeminent in intelligence. His aversion to women and his disinclination to form new friendships were both typical of his unemotional character, but not more so than his complete suppression of every reference to his own people. I had come to believe that he was an orphan with no relatives living; but one day, to my very great surprise, he began to talk to me about his brother.

It was after tea on a summer evening, and the conversation, which had roamed in a desultory, spasmodic fashion from golf clubs² to the causes of the change in the obliquity of the ecliptic,³ came round at last to the question of atavism⁴ and hereditary aptitudes. The point under discussion was, how far any singular gift in an individual was due to his ancestry and how far to his own early training.

"In your own case," said I, "from all that you have told me, it seems obvious that your faculty of observation and your peculiar facility for deduction are due to your own systematic training."

"To some extent," he answered thoughtfully. "My ancestors were country squires, who appear to have led much the same life as is natural to their class.⁵ But, none the less, my turn that way is in my veins, and may have come with my grandmother, who was the sister of Vernet,⁶ the French artist. Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms."



Mycroft Holmes.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“But how do you know that it is hereditary?”

“Because my brother Mycroft possesses it in a larger degree than I do.”

This was news to me indeed.⁷ If there were another man with such singular powers in England, how was it that neither police nor public had heard of him? I put the question, with a hint that it was my companion’s modesty which made him acknowledge his brother as his superior. Holmes laughed at my suggestion.

“My dear Watson,” said he, “I cannot agree with those who rank modesty among the virtues. To the logician all things should be seen exactly as they are, and to underestimate one’s self is as much a departure from truth as to exaggerate one’s own powers. When I say, therefore, that Mycroft has better

powers of observation than I, you may take it that I am speaking the exact and literal truth.”

“Is he your junior?”

“Seven years my senior.”

“How comes it that he is unknown?”

“Oh, he is very well known in his own circle.”

“Where, then?”

“Well, in the Diogenes Club, for example.”

I had never heard of the institution, and my face must have proclaimed as much, for Sherlock Holmes pulled out his watch.

“The Diogenes Club is the queerest club in London, and Mycroft one of the queerest men.⁸ He’s always there from quarter to five to twenty to eight. It’s six now, so if you care for a stroll this beautiful evening I shall be very happy to introduce you to two curiosities.”

Five minutes later we were in the street, walking towards Regent’s Circus.⁹

“You wonder,” said my companion, “why it is that Mycroft does not use his powers for detective work. He is incapable of it.”

“But I thought you said—”

“I said that he was my superior in observation and deduction. If the art of the detective began and ended in reasoning from an armchair, my brother would be the greatest criminal agent that ever lived. But he has no ambition and no energy. He will not even go out of his way to verify his own solutions, and would rather be considered wrong than take the trouble to prove himself right. Again and again I have taken a problem to him, and have received an explanation which has afterwards proved to be the correct one. And yet he was absolutely incapable of working out the practical points which must be gone into before a case could be laid before a judge or jury.”



“Holmes pulled out his watch.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“It is not his profession, then?”

“By no means. What is to me a means of livelihood is to him the merest hobby of a dilettante. He has an extraordinary faculty for figures, and audits the books in some of the government departments.¹⁰ Mycroft lodges in Pall Mall, and he walks round the corner into Whitehall¹¹ every morning and back every evening. From year’s end to year’s end he takes no other exercise, and is seen nowhere else, except only in the Diogenes Club, which is just opposite his rooms.”¹²



Pall Mall.

The Queen’s London (1897)

“I cannot recall the name.”

“Very likely not. There are many men in London, you know, who, some from shyness, some from misanthropy, have no wish for the company of their fellows.

Yet they are not averse to comfortable chairs and the latest periodicals. It is for the convenience of these that the Diogenes Club was started, and it now contains the most unsociable and unclubable men in town. No member is permitted to take the least notice of any other one. Save in the Stranger's Room,¹³ no talking is, under any circumstances, allowed, and three offences, if brought to the notice of the committee, render the talker liable to expulsion. My brother was one of the founders, and I have myself found it a very soothing atmosphere."

We had reached Pall Mall as we talked, and were walking down it from the St. James's end. Sherlock Holmes stopped at a door some little distance from the Carlton,¹⁴ and, cautioning me not to speak, he led the way into the hall. Through the glass panelling I caught a glimpse of a large and luxurious room, in which a considerable number of men were sitting about and reading papers, each in his own little nook. Holmes showed me into a small chamber which looked out into Pall Mall, and then, leaving me for a minute, he came back with a companion whom I knew could only be his brother.



Whitehall.

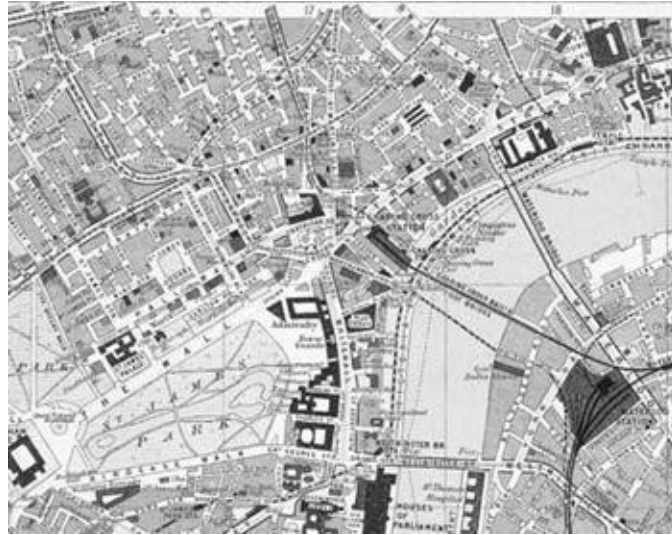
The Queen's London (1897)



Somerset House.

The Queen's London (1897)

Mycroft Holmes was a much larger and stouter man than Sherlock. His body was absolutely corpulent, but his face, though massive, had preserved something of the sharpness of expression which was so remarkable in that of his brother.¹⁵ His eyes, which were of a peculiarly light watery grey, seemed to always retain that far-away, introspective look which I had only observed in Sherlock's when he was exerting his full powers.



Map of Mycroft's walking route.



The Athenaeum Club.

The Queen's London (1897)

“I am glad to meet you, sir,” said he, putting out a broad, fat hand like the flipper of a seal. “I hear of Sherlock everywhere since you became his chronicler. By the way, Sherlock, I expected to see you round last week to consult me over that Manor House case. I thought you might be a little out of

your depth.”

“No, I solved it,” said my friend, smiling.

“It was Adams, of course.”

“Yes, it was Adams.”

“I was sure of it from the first.” The two sat down together in the bow-window of the club. “To anyone who wishes to study mankind this is the spot,” said Mycroft. “Look at the magnificent types! Look at these two men who are coming towards us, for example.”

“The billiard-marker¹⁶ and the other?”

“Precisely. What do you make of the other?”

The two men had stopped opposite the window. Some chalk marks over the waistcoat pocket were the only signs of billiards which I could see in one of them. The other was a very small, dark fellow, with his hat pushed back and several packages under his arm.

“An old soldier, I perceive,” said Sherlock.

“And very recently discharged,” remarked the brother.

“Served in India, I see.”

“And a noncommissioned officer.”

“Royal Artillery, I fancy,” said Sherlock.

“And a widower.”

“But with a child.”

“Children, my dear boy, children.”

“Come,” said I, laughing, “this is a little too much.”

“Surely,” answered Holmes, “it is not hard to say that a man with that bearing, expression of authority, and sun-baked skin, is a soldier, is more than a private, and is not long from India.”

“That he has not left the service long is shown by his still wearing his ammunition boots,¹⁷ as they are called,” observed Mycroft.

“He had not the cavalry stride, yet he wore his hat on one side, as is shown by the lighter skin on that side of his brow. His weight is against his being a sapper.¹⁸ He is in the artillery.”

“Then, of course, his complete mourning shows that he has lost someone very dear. The fact that he is doing his own shopping looks as though it were his wife. He has been buying things for children, you perceive. There is a rattle, which shows that one of them is very young. The wife probably died in childbed. The fact that he has a picture-book under his arm shows that there is another child to be thought of.”¹⁹

I began to understand what my friend meant when he said that his brother

possessed even keener faculties than he did himself. He glanced across at me and smiled. Mycroft took snuff from a tortoise-shell box and brushed away the wandering grains from his coat front with a large, red silk handkerchief.

“By the way, Sherlock,” said he, “I have had something quite after your own heart—a most singular problem—submitted to my judgment. I really had not the energy to follow it up save in a very incomplete fashion, but it gave me a basis for some pleasing speculations. If you would care to hear the facts—”

“My dear Mycroft, I should be delighted.”

The brother scribbled a note upon a leaf of his pocket-book, and, ringing the bell, he handed it to the waiter.

“I have asked Mr. Melas to step across,” said he. “He lodges on the floor above me, and I have some slight acquaintance with him, which led him to come to me in his perplexity. Mr. Melas is a Greek by extraction, as I understand, and he is a remarkable linguist. He earns his living partly as interpreter in the law courts and partly by acting as guide to any wealthy Orientals who may visit the Northumberland Avenue hotels. I think I will leave him to tell his very remarkable experience in his own fashion.”

A few minutes later we were joined by a short, stout man whose olive face and coal black hair proclaimed his Southern origin, though his speech was that of an educated Englishman. He shook hands eagerly with Sherlock Holmes, and his dark eyes sparkled with pleasure when he understood that the specialist was anxious to hear his story.

“I do not believe that the police credit me—on my word, I do not,” said he in a wailing voice. “Just because they have never heard of it before, they think that such a thing cannot be. But I know that I shall never be easy in my mind until know what has become of my poor man with the sticking-plaster upon his face.”



Northumberland Ave. hotels.

The Queen's London (1897)

“I am all attention,” said Sherlock Holmes.

“This is Wednesday evening,” said Mr. Melas. “Well, then, it was Monday night—only two days ago, you understand—that all this happened. I am an interpreter, as perhaps my neighbour there has told you. I interpret all languages—or nearly all—but as I am a Greek by birth and with a Grecian name, it is with that particular tongue that I am principally associated. For many years I have been the chief Greek interpreter in London, and my name is very well known in the hotels.

“It happens not unfrequently that I am sent for at strange hours by foreigners who get into difficulties, or by travellers who arrive late and wish my services. I was not surprised, therefore, on Monday night when a Mr. Latimer, a very fashionably dressed young man, came up to my rooms and asked me to accompany him in a cab which was waiting at the door. A Greek friend had come to see him upon business, he said, and as he could speak nothing but his own tongue, the services of an interpreter were indispensable. He gave me to understand that his house was some little distance off, in Kensington, and he seemed to be in a great hurry, bustling me rapidly into the cab when we had descended to the street.

“I say into the cab, but I soon became doubtful as to whether it was not a carriage in which I found myself. It was certainly more roomy than the ordinary four-wheeled disgrace to London, and the fittings, though frayed, were of rich quality. Mr. Latimer seated himself opposite to me and we started off through Charing Cross and up the Shaftesbury Avenue. We had come out upon Oxford Street and I had ventured some remark as to this being a roundabout way to Kensington, when my words were arrested by the extraordinary conduct of my companion.

“He began by drawing a most formidable-looking bludgeon loaded with lead from his pocket, and switching it backward and forward several times, as if to test its weight and strength. Then he placed it without a word upon the seat beside him. Having done this, he drew up the windows on each side, and I found to my astonishment that they were covered with paper so as to prevent my seeing through them.



“He drew up the windows.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘I am sorry to cut off your view, Mr. Melas,’ said he. ‘The fact is that I have no intention that you should see what the place is to which we are driving. It might possibly be inconvenient to me if you could find your way there again.’”

“As you can imagine, I was utterly taken aback by such an address. My companion was a powerful, broad-shouldered young fellow, and, apart from the weapon, I should not have had the slightest chance in a struggle with him.

“ ‘This is very extraordinary conduct, Mr. Latimer,’ I stammered. ‘You must be aware that what you are doing is quite illegal.’”

“ ‘It is somewhat of a liberty, no doubt,’ said he, ‘but we’ll make it up to you. I must warn you, however, Mr. Melas, that if at any time to-night you attempt to raise an alarm or do anything which is against my interest, you will find it a very serious thing. I beg you to remember that no one knows where you are, and that, whether you are in this carriage or in my house, you are equally in my power.’”

“His words were quiet, but he had a rasping way of saying them, which was very menacing. I sat in silence wondering what on earth could be his reason for kidnapping me in this extraordinary fashion. Whatever it might be, it was perfectly clear that there was no possible use in my resisting, and that I could only wait to see what might befall.

“For nearly two hours we drove without my having the least clue as to where we were going. Sometimes the rattle of the stones told of a paved causeway, and at others our smooth, silent course suggested asphalt; but, save by this variation in sound, there was nothing at all which could in the remotest way help me to form a guess as to where we were. The paper over each window was impenetrable to light, and a curtain was drawn across the glasswork in front. It was a quarter-past seven when we left Pall Mall, and my watch showed me that

it was ten minutes to nine when we at last came to a standstill. My companion let down the window, and I caught a glimpse of a low, arched doorway with a lamp burning above it. As I was hurried from the carriage it swung open, and I found myself inside the house, with a vague impression of a lawn and trees on each side of me as I entered. Whether these were private grounds, however, or bona-fide country was more than I could possibly venture to say.

“There was a coloured gas-lamp inside which was turned so low that I could see little save that the hall was of some size and hung with pictures. In the dim light I could make out that the person who had opened the door was a small, mean-looking, middle-aged man with rounded shoulders. As he turned towards us the glint of the light showed me that he was wearing glasses.

“ ‘Is this Mr. Melas, Harold?’ said he.

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Well done, well done! No ill-will, Mr. Melas, I hope, but we could not get on without you. If you deal fair with us you’ll not regret it, but if you try any tricks, God help you!’ He spoke in a nervous, jerky fashion, and with little giggling laughs in between, but somehow he impressed me with fear more than the other.

“ ‘What do you want with me?’ I asked.

“ ‘Only to ask a few questions of a Greek gentleman who is visiting us, and to let us have the answers. But say no more than you are told to say, or—’ here came the nervous giggle again—’you had better never have been born.’



Japanese armour.

“As he spoke he opened a door and showed the way into a room which appeared to be very richly furnished, but again the only light was afforded by a single lamp half-turned down. The chamber was certainly large, and the way in which my feet sank into the carpet as I stepped across it told me of its richness. I caught glimpses of velvet chairs, a high white marble mantelpiece, and what seemed to be a suit of Japanese armour at one side of it. There was a chair just under the lamp, and the elderly man motioned that I should sit in it. The younger had left us, but he suddenly returned through another door, leading with him a gentleman clad in some sort of loose dressing-gown who moved slowly towards us. As he came into the circle of dim light which enabled me to see him more clearly I was thrilled with horror at his appearance. He was deadly pale and terribly emaciated, with the protruding, brilliant eyes of a man whose spirit was greater than his strength. But what shocked me more than any signs of physical weakness was that his face was grotesquely criss-crossed with sticking-plaster, and that one large pad of it was fastened over his mouth.

“ ‘Have you the slate, Harold?’ cried the older man, as this strange being fell rather than sat down into a chair. ‘Are his hands loose? Now, then, give him the pencil. You are to ask the questions, Mr. Melas, and he will write the answers. Ask him first of all whether he is prepared to sign the papers?’”

“The man’s eyes flashed fire.

“ ‘Never!’ he wrote in Greek upon the slate.

“ ‘On no conditions?’ I asked at the bidding of our tyrant.

“ ‘Only if I see her married in my presence by a Greek priest whom I know.’

“The man giggled in his venomous way.

“ ‘You know what awaits you, then?’

“ ‘I care nothing for myself.’

“These are samples of the questions and answers which made up our strange half-spoken, half-written conversation. Again and again I had to ask him whether he would give in and sign the documents. Again and again I had the same indignant reply. But soon a happy thought came to me. I took to adding on little sentences of my own to each question, innocent ones at first, to test whether either of our companions knew anything of the matter, and then, as I found that they showed no sign I played a more dangerous game. Our conversation ran something like this:



“I was thrilled with horror.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘You can do no good by this obstinacy. Who are you?’

“ ‘I care not. I am a stranger in London.’

“ ‘Your fate will be on your own head. How long have you been here?’

“ ‘Let it be so. Three weeks.’

“ ‘The property can never be yours. What ails you?’

“ ‘It shall not go to villains. They are starving me.’

“ ‘You shall go free if you sign. Whose house is this?’

“ ‘I will never sign. I do not know.’

“ ‘You are not doing her any service. What is your name?’

“ ‘Let me hear her say so. Kratides.’

“ ‘You shall see her if you sign. Where are you from?’

“ ‘Then I shall never see her. Athens.’

“Another five minutes, Mr. Holmes, and I should have wormed out the whole story under their very noses. My very next question might have cleared the matter up, but at that instant the door opened and a woman stepped into the room. I could not see her clearly enough to know more than that she was tall and graceful, with black hair, and clad in some sort of loose white gown.

“ ‘Harold,’ said she, speaking English with a broken accent. ‘I could not stay

away longer. It is so lonely up there with only—Oh, my God, it is Paul!

“These last words were in Greek, and at the same instant the man with a convulsive effort tore the plaster from his lips, and screaming out ‘Sophy! Sophy!’ rushed into the woman’s arms. Their embrace was but for an instant, however, for the younger man seized the woman and pushed her out of the room, while the elder easily overpowered his emaciated victim and dragged him away through the other door. For a moment I was left alone in the room, and I sprang to my feet with some vague idea that I might in some way get a clue to what this house was in which I found myself. Fortunately, however, I took no steps, for looking up I saw that the older man was standing in the doorway, with his eyes fixed upon me.



“The man, with a convulsive effort, tore the plaster from his lips.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893



“Sophy! Sophy!”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘That will do, Mr. Melas,’ said he. ‘You perceive that we have taken you into our confidence over some very private business. We should not have troubled you, only that our friend who speaks Greek and who began these negotiations has been forced to return to the East. It was quite necessary for us to find someone to take his place, and we were fortunate in hearing of your powers.’

“I bowed.

“ ‘There are five sovereigns here,’ said he, walking up to me, ‘which will, I hope, be a sufficient fee. But remember,’ he added, tapping me lightly on the chest and giggling, ‘if you speak to a human soul about this—one human soul, mind—well, may God have mercy upon your soul!’

“I cannot tell you the loathing and horror with which this insignificant-looking man inspired me. I could see him better now as the lamp-light shone upon him. His features were peaky and sallow, and his little pointed beard was thready and ill-nourished. He pushed his face forward as he spoke and his lips and eyelids were continually twitching like a man with St. Vitus’s dance. I could not help thinking that his strange, catchy little laugh was also a symptom of some nervous malady. The terror of his face lay in his eyes, however, steel grey, and glistening

coldly with a malignant, inexorable cruelty in their depths.

“ ‘We shall know if you speak of this,’ said he. ‘We have our own means of information. Now you will find the carriage waiting, and my friend will see you on your way.’

“I was hurried through the hall and into the vehicle, again obtaining that momentary glimpse of trees and a garden. Mr. Latimer followed closely at my heels and took his place opposite to me without a word. In silence we again drove for an interminable distance with the windows raised, until at last, just after midnight, the carriage pulled up.

“ ‘You will get down here, Mr. Melas,’ said my companion. ‘I am sorry to leave you so far from your house, but there is no alternative. Any attempt upon your part to follow the carriage can only end in injury to yourself.’

“He opened the door as he spoke, and I had hardly time to spring out when the coachman lashed the horse and the carriage rattled away. I looked around me in astonishment. I was on some sort of a heathy common mottled over with dark clumps of furze-bushes. Far away stretched a line of houses, with a light here and there in the upper windows. On the other side I saw the red signal-lamps of a railway.

“The carriage which had brought me was already out of sight. I stood gazing round and wondering where on earth I might be, when I saw someone coming towards me in the darkness. As he came up to me I made out that he was a railway porter.

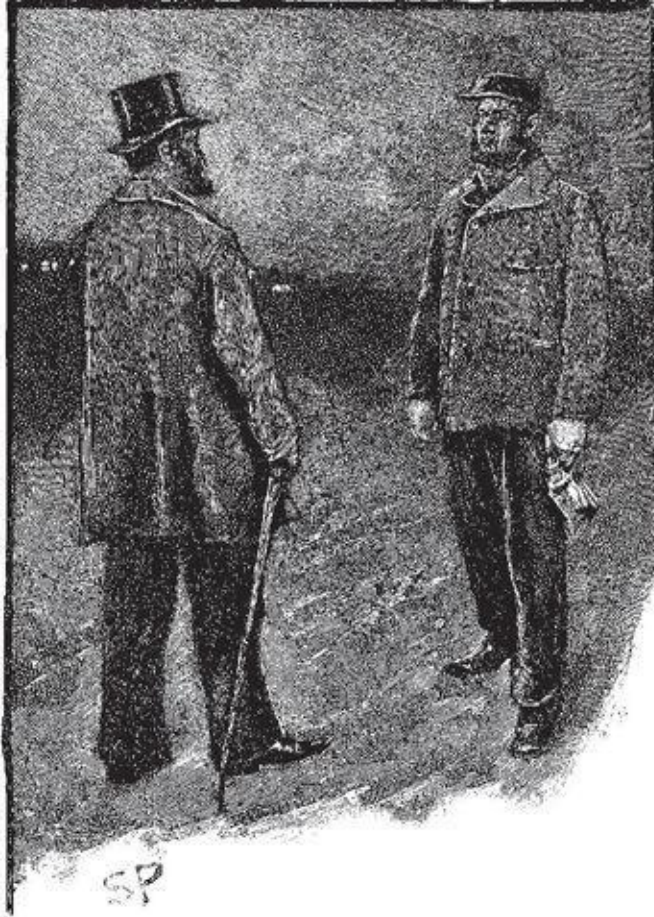
“ ‘Can you tell me what place this is?’ I asked.

“ ‘Wandsworth Common,’²⁰ said he.

“ ‘Can I get a train into town?’

“ ‘If you walk on a mile or so to Clapham Junction,’ said he, ‘you’ll just be in time for the last to Victoria.’

“So that was the end of my adventure, Mr. Holmes. I do not know where I was, nor whom I spoke with, nor anything save what I have told you. But I know that there is foul play going on, and I want to help that unhappy man if I can. I told the whole story to Mr. Mycroft Holmes next morning,²¹ and subsequently to the police.”



“I saw someone coming towards me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

We all sat in silence for some little time after listening to this extraordinary narrative. Then Sherlock looked across at his brother.

“Any steps?” he asked.

Mycroft picked up the *Daily News*, which was lying on the side-table.

“Anybody supplying any information as to the whereabouts of a Greek gentleman named Paul Kratides, from Athens, who is unable to speak English, will be rewarded. A similar reward paid to anyone giving information about a Greek lady whose first name is Sophy. X 2473”

“That was in all the dailies.²² No answer.”

“How about the Greek legation?”

“I have inquired. They know nothing.”

“A wire to the head of the Athens police, then?”

“Sherlock has all the energy of the family,” said Mycroft, turning to me.

“Well, you take the case up by all means and let me know if you do any good.”

“Certainly,” answered my friend, rising from his chair. “I’ll let you know, and Mr. Melas also. In the meantime, Mr. Melas, I should certainly be on my guard if I were you, for of course they must know through these advertisements that you have betrayed them.”

As we walked home together, Holmes stopped at a telegraph office and sent off several wires.

“You see, Watson,” he remarked, “our evening has been by no means wasted. Some of my most interesting cases have come to me in this way through Mycroft. The problem which we have just listened to, although it can admit of but one explanation, has still some distinguishing features.”

“You have hopes of solving it?”

“Well, knowing as much as we do, it will be singular indeed if we fail to discover the rest. You must yourself have formed some theory which will explain the facts to which we have listened.”

“In a vague way, yes.”

“What was your idea, then?”

“It seemed to me to be obvious that this Greek girl had been carried off by the young Englishman named Harold Latimer.”

“Carried off from where?”

“Athens, perhaps.”

Sherlock Holmes shook his head. “This young man could not talk a word of Greek. The lady could talk English fairly well. Inference—that she had been in England some little time, but he had not been in Greece.”

“Well, then, we will presume that she had once come on a visit to England, and that this Harold had persuaded her to fly with him.”

“That is more probable.”

“Then the brother—for that, I fancy, must be the relationship—comes over from Greece to interfere. He imprudently puts himself into the power of the young man and his older associate. They seize him and use violence towards him in order to make him sign some papers to make over the girl’s fortune—of which he may be trustee—to them. This he refuses to do. In order to negotiate with him they have to get an interpreter, and they pitch upon this Mr. Melas, having used some other one before. The girl is not told of the arrival of her brother and finds it out by the merest accident.”

“Excellent, Watson!” cried Holmes. “I really fancy that you are not far from the truth. You see that we hold all the cards, and we have only to fear some sudden act of violence on their part. If they give us time we must have them.”

“But how can we find where this house lies?”

“Well, if our conjecture is correct and the girl’s name is or was Sophy Kratides, we should have no difficulty in tracing her. That must be our main hope, for the brother is, of course, a complete stranger. It is clear that some time has elapsed since this Harold established these relations with the girl—some weeks, at any rate—since the brother in Greece has had time to hear of it and come across. If they have been living in the same place during this time, it is probable that we shall have some answer to Mycroft’s advertisement.”

We had reached our house in Baker Street while we had been talking. Holmes ascended the stair first, and as he opened the door of our room he gave a start of surprise. Looking over his shoulder, I was equally astonished. His brother Mycroft was sitting smoking in the armchair.

“Come in, Sherlock! Come in, sir,” said he blandly, smiling at our surprised faces. “You don’t expect such energy from me, do you, Sherlock? But somehow this case attracts me.”

“How did you get here?”

“I passed you in a hansom.”

“There has been some new development?”

“I had an answer to my advertisement.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, it came within a few minutes of your leaving.”

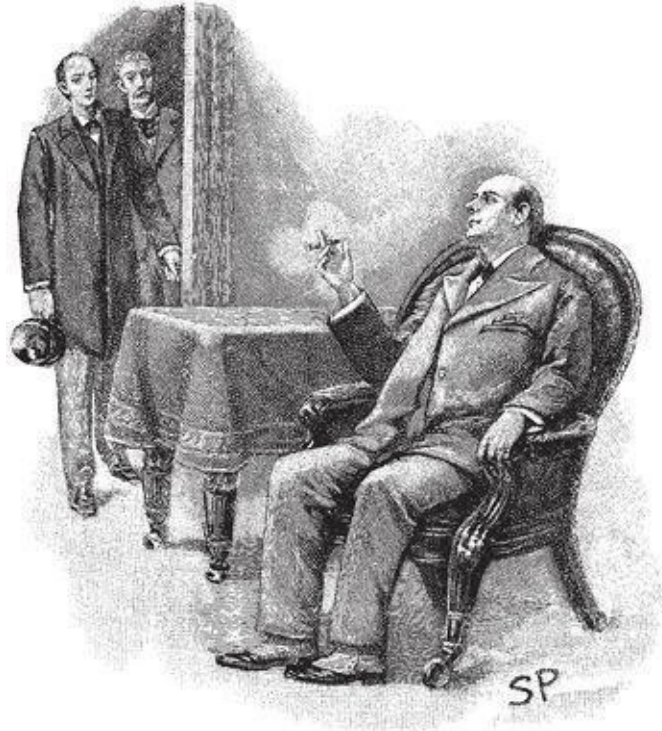
“And to what effect?”

Mycroft Holmes took out a sheet of paper.

“Here it is,” said he, “written with a J pen²³ on royal cream paper by a middle-aged man with a weak constitution.

“SIR:

In answer to your advertisement of to-day’s date, I beg to inform you that I know the young lady in question very well. If you should care to call upon me I could give you some particulars as to her painful history. She is living at present at The Myrtles, Beckenham.



“ ‘Come in,’ said he, blandly.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

Yours faithfully,
J. DAVENPORT.

“He writes from Lower Brixton,” said Mycroft Holmes. “Do you not think that we might drive to him now, Sherlock, and learn these particulars?”

“My dear Mycroft, the brother’s life is more valuable than the sister’s story. I think we should call at Scotland Yard for Inspector Gregson and go straight out to Beckenham. We know that a man is being done to death, and every hour may be vital.”

“Better pick up Mr. Melas on our way,” I suggested. “We may need an interpreter.”

“Excellent,” said Sherlock Holmes. “Send the boy for a four-wheeler, and we shall be off at once.” He opened the table-drawer as he spoke, and I noticed that he slipped his revolver into his pocket. “Yes,” said he in answer to my glance, “I should say, from what we have heard, that we are dealing with a particularly dangerous gang.”

It was almost dark before we found ourselves in Pall Mall, at the rooms of Mr. Melas. A gentleman had just called for him, and he was gone.

“Can you tell me where?” asked Mycroft Holmes.

“I don’t know, sir,” answered the woman who had opened the door; “I only know that he drove away with the gentleman in a carriage.”

“Did the gentleman give a name?”

“No, sir.”

“He wasn’t a tall, handsome, dark young man?”

“Oh, no, sir. He was a little gentleman, with glasses, thin in the face, but very pleasant in his ways, for he was laughing all the time that he was talking.”

“Come along!” cried Sherlock Holmes abruptly. “This grows serious,” he observed as we drove to Scotland Yard. “These men have got hold of Melas again.²⁴ He is a man of no physical courage, as they are well aware from their experience the other night. This villain was able to terrorize him the instant that he got into his presence. No doubt they want his professional services, but, having used him, they may be inclined to punish him for what they will regard as his treachery.”

Our hope was that, by taking train, we might get to Beckenham as soon as or sooner than the carriage. On reaching Scotland Yard, however, it was more than an hour before we could get Inspector Gregson and comply with the legal formalities which would enable us to enter the house. It was a quarter to ten before we reached London Bridge, and half past before the four of us alighted on the Beckenham platform. A drive of half a mile brought us to The Myrtles—a large, dark house standing back from the road in its own grounds. Here we dismissed our cab and made our way up the drive together.

“The windows are all dark,” remarked the inspector. “The house seems deserted.”

“Our birds are flown and the nest empty,” said Holmes.

“Why do you say so?”

“A carriage heavily loaded with luggage has passed out during the last hour.”

The inspector laughed. “I saw the wheel-tracks in the light of the gate-lamp, but where does the luggage come in?”

“You may have observed the same wheel-tracks going the other way. But the outward-bound ones were very much deeper—so much so that we can say for a certainty that there was a very considerable weight on the carriage.”

“You get a trifle beyond me there,” said the inspector, shrugging his shoulders. “It will not be an easy door to force, but we will try if we cannot make someone hear us.”

He hammered loudly at the knocker and pulled at the bell, but without any success. Holmes had slipped away, but he came back in a few minutes.

“I have a window open,” said he.

“It is a mercy that you are on the side of the force, and not against it, Mr. Holmes,” remarked the inspector as he noted the clever way in which my friend had forced back the catch. “Well, I think that under the circumstances we may enter without an invitation.”

One after the other we made our way into a large apartment, which was evidently that in which Mr. Melas had found himself. The inspector had lit his lantern, and by its light we could see the two doors, the curtain, the lamp, and the suit of Japanese mail as he had described them. On the table lay two glasses, an empty brandy-bottle, and the remains of a meal.

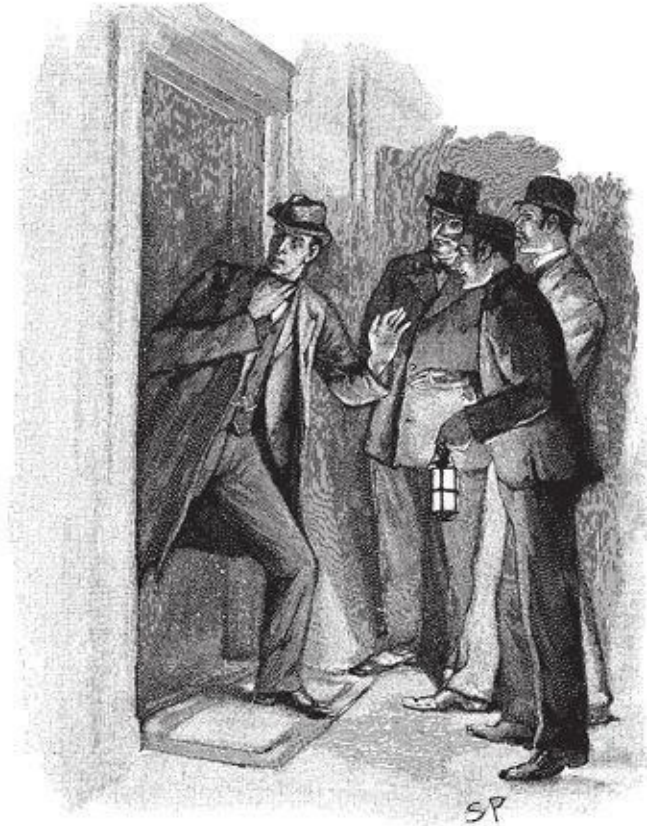
“What is that?” asked Holmes suddenly.

We all stood still and listened. A low moaning sound was coming from somewhere over our heads. Holmes rushed to the door and out into the hall. The dismal noise came from upstairs. He dashed up, the inspector and I at his heels, while his brother Mycroft followed as quickly as his great bulk would permit.

Three doors faced us upon the second floor, and it was from the central of these that the sinister sounds were issuing, sinking sometimes into a dull mumble and rising again into a shrill whine. It was locked, but the key had been left on the outside. Holmes flung open the door and rushed in, but he was out again in an instant, with his hand to his throat.

“It’s charcoal,” he cried. “Give it time. It will clear.”²⁵

Peering in, we could see that the only light in the room came from a dull flame which flickered from a small brass tripod in the centre. It threw a livid, unnatural circle upon the floor, while in the shadows beyond we saw the vague loom of two figures which crouched against the wall. From the open door there reeked a horrible poisonous exhalation which set us gasping and coughing. Holmes rushed to the top of the stairs to draw in the fresh air, and then, dashing into the room, he threw up the window and hurled the brazen tripod out into the garden.



“ ‘It’s charcoal,’ he cried.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“We can enter in a minute,” he gasped, darting out again. “Where is a candle? I doubt if we could strike a match in that atmosphere. Hold the light at the door and we shall get them out, Mycroft, now!”

With a rush we got to the poisoned men and dragged them out into the well-lit hall. Both of them were blue-lipped and insensible, with swollen, congested faces and protruding eyes. Indeed, so distorted were their features that, save for his black beard and stout figure, we might have failed to recognise in one of them the Greek interpreter who had parted from us only a few hours before at the Diogenes Club. His hands and feet were securely strapped together, and he bore over one eye the marks of a violent blow. The other, who was secured in a similar fashion, was a tall man in the last stage of emaciation, with several strips of sticking-plaster arranged in a grotesque pattern over his face. He had ceased to moan as we laid him down, and a glance showed me that for him at least our aid, had come too late. Mr. Melas, however, still lived, and in less than an hour, with the aid of ammonia and brandy, I had the satisfaction of seeing him open his eyes, and of knowing that my hand had drawn him back from that dark valley

in which all paths meet.²⁶



“It threw a livid, unnatural circle upon the floor.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

It was a simple story which he had to tell, and one which did but confirm our own deductions. His visitor, on entering his rooms, had drawn a life-preserver from his sleeve, and had so impressed him with the fear of instant and inevitable death that he had kidnapped him for the second time. Indeed, it was almost mesmeric, the effect which this giggling ruffian had produced upon the unfortunate linguist for he could not speak of him save with trembling hands and a blanched cheek. He had been taken swiftly to Beckenham, and had acted as interpreter in a second interview, even more dramatic than the first, in which the two Englishmen had menaced their prisoner with instant death if he did not comply with their demands. Finally, finding him proof against every threat, they had hurled him back into his prison, and after reproaching Melas with his treachery, which appeared from the newspaper advertisement, they had stunned him with a blow from a stick, and he remembered nothing more until he found us bending over him.

And this was the singular case of the Grecian Interpreter, the explanation of which is still involved in some mystery. We were able to find out, by communicating with the gentleman who had answered the advertisement, that the unfortunate young lady came of a wealthy Grecian family, and that she had been on a visit to some friends in England. While there she had met a young man named Harold Latimer, who had acquired an ascendancy over her and had eventually persuaded her to fly with him. Her friends, shocked at the event, had

contented themselves with informing her brother at Athens, and had then washed their hands of the matter. The brother, on his arrival in England, had imprudently placed himself in the power of Latimer and of his associate, whose name was Wilson Kemp—a man of the foulest antecedents. These two, finding that through his ignorance of the language he was helpless in their hands, had kept him a prisoner, and had endeavoured by cruelty and starvation to make him sign away his own and his sister's property. They had kept him in the house without the girl's knowledge, and the plaster over the face had been for the purpose of making recognition difficult in case she should ever catch a glimpse of him. Her feminine perceptions, however, had instantly seen through the disguise when, on the occasion of the interpreter's visit, she had seen him for the first time. The poor girl, however, was herself a prisoner, for there was no one about the house except the man who acted as coachman, and his wife, both of whom were tools of the conspirators. Finding that their secret was out, and that their prisoner was not to be coerced, the two villains with the girl had fled away at a few hours' notice from the furnished house which they had hired, having first, as they thought, taken vengeance both upon the man who had defied and the one who had betrayed them.

Months afterwards a curious newspaper cutting reached us from Budapesth.²⁷ It told how two Englishmen who had been travelling with a woman had met with a tragic end. They had each been stabbed, it seems, and the Hungarian police were of opinion that they had quarrelled and had inflicted mortal injuries upon each other. Holmes, however, is, I fancy, of a different way of thinking, and he holds to this day that, if one could find the Grecian girl, one might learn how the wrongs of herself and her brother came to be avenged. ■

MYCROFT HOLMES

MYCROFT HOLMES is mentioned in only three stories in the Canon, "The Greek Interpreter," "The Empty House," and "The Bruce-Partington Plans," and little is known of his life. Yet the tantalising glimpses provided in these tales leads to wild speculation on Mycroft. "He has the tidiest and most orderly brain, with the greatest capacity for storing facts, of any man living," says Sherlock of his older brother in the latter story. "All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience."

Several scholars take this description to an extreme, concluding that Mycroft was either an anthropomorphic computer himself, the first operator of a

government computer, or an acronym for a “Babbage engine” developed for the government. In Robert A. Heinlein’s great science fiction novel *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*, the government computer that oversees the lunar base is named Mycroft.

More reasonably, J. S. Callaway suggests that Mycroft Holmes was the head of the Secret Intelligence Service of the British government, whose identity was carefully concealed by the government. Billy Wilder’s film *Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970) makes the same identification (with Christopher Lee, who played Sherlock in the German film *The Deadly Necklace* (1962), in the part of Mycroft), and Ian Fleming’s reference to James Bond’s superior as “M” may reflect a hereditary title applied to Mycroft’s successors. In Alan Moore’s masterly graphic novel *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, now a film featuring Richard Roxburgh (who recently played Sherlock in the BBC’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (2003) in the rôle, Mycroft (“M”) is the head of the British intelligence agency; and the Diogenes Club itself is characterised as the top security council in Kim Newman’s fine novel *Anno Dracula* (1992).

A few writers suggest that Mycroft was not in fact Sherlock’s brother at all but in reality, another historic figure. One plumps for Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, another for Oscar Wilde. Two others propose that Mycroft was indeed Sherlock’s brother but that Sherlock’s assessment of him in “The Greek Interpreter,” as “absolutely incapable” of conducting the activities which Sherlock regularly undertakes in the course of a case, is completely wrong—in fact, they assert, Mycroft actually conducted a practice as a consulting detective under the alias of “Martin Hewitt,” whose adventures were reported in the *Strand Magazine* by Arthur Morrison. Although Hewitt is described as stout, the Hewitt adventures were illustrated in the *Strand Magazine* by Sidney Paget, and it seems unlikely that Paget would mistakenly have drawn two different people if “Martin Hewitt” and “Mycroft Holmes” were one and the same person.

[1](#) “The Greek Interpreter” was first published in the September 1893 edition of the *Strand Magazine* and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on September 16, 1893. Therefore Watson’s “long and intimate acquaintance,” mentioned in the first sentence, probably lasted less than twelve years.

[2](#) Was Holmes a golfer? Webster Evans notes that in “Wisteria Lodge,” Watson records the fact that Holmes “spent his days in long and often solitary walks” in the country. “Holmes murmured some excuse about it being very pleasant to see ‘the first green shoots upon the hedges and the catkins on the hazels.’ But that word green—I wonder if he was really only walking.” Evans, as well as Bob Jones in *Sherlock Holmes, The Golfer* and *Sherlock Holmes Saved Golf*, concludes that Holmes was an avid golfer. If so, his game was surely influenced by Sir Walter Simpson’s classic instructional manual *The Art of Golf*, published in 1887

and the first book to include photographs of golfers in mid-swing. Holmes, whose passion for the science of detection led him to stick a harpoon into a pig carcass to gauge the effect (“Black Peter”), would have sympathised with Simpson’s rhapsodic view that “Golf refuses to be preserved like dead meat in tins. It is living, human, and free, ready to fly away at the least sign of an attempt to catch and cage it.”

3 The ecliptic consists of the immense circle at which the plane of the Earth’s orbit around the sun meets the celestial sphere (the infinite, imaginary sphere that has Earth at its centre). Because of the Earth’s orbital motion, the sun is said to “follow” the path of the ecliptic through the stars of the firmament every year. The inclusion of this topic in the “conversation”—assuming Holmes participated—makes nonsense of Watson’s claim (in *A Study in Scarlet*) that Holmes’s knowledge of astronomy was “nil.”

4 Atavism refers to the recurrence of an ancestral characteristic, particularly after a long period of its absence. It was also a criminological term encouraged by Italian criminologist and physician Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), who held that individuals engaging in criminal acts did so not by choice but because they were “atavistic” and had never evolved past the uncivilized nature of our primitive forebears.

The ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* refers to such individuals as men “who live in the midst of our civilization as mere savages. . . . [T]he existing system of law can scarcely be brought to distinguish them from criminals. Moralists attribute to atavism a large number of offences which lawyers attribute to guilty dispositions.” But the *Britannica* editor appears skeptical of this view: “It is not, however, owing to atavism, but to the mere continuance of an old order of things, that so many of our ill-educated classes, shepherds, agricultural labourers, and even factory hands, are as little developed, and live a life as little intellectual as savages. Latent in our small hamlets and large cities there is more savagery than many reformers are aware of, and it needs but little experience to discover something of the old barbarity lurking still in minds and hearts under a thin veil of civilisation.”

In his *L’uomo delinquente* (1876, partially translated in 1911 as *The Criminal Man*), Lombroso pointed to certain physical and mental abnormalities of these “born criminals,” such as skull size and asymmetries of the face and other parts of the body. His views have since been discredited, but Lombroso’s role in bringing science to the study of criminal behaviour is regarded as pivotal.

Presumably, Holmes (whose knowledge of Italian is evident from “The Red Circle” and his reading of the Italian poet Petrarch mentioned in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery”) had some familiarity with Lombroso’s work, for he expresses similar views about genetic “throwbacks” in “The Final Problem,” when he expresses that Professor Moriarty had “hereditary tendencies of a most diabolical kind” and that a criminal strain “ran in his blood.” Here, however, Holmes’s conversation with Watson may have begun on the topic of atavism but quickly segued to the more general topic of inherited traits.

5 Tellingly, Holmes does not mention his parents, notes Michael Harrison in his *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*; and he goes on to wonder whether Holmes and his brother may have been orphans brought up in separate households, “possibly by dutiful but somewhat unaffectionate relatives—possibly not.” June Thomson similarly believes that Holmes had an unhappy childhood. She concludes that Mycroft must have experienced this situation as well, observing that both brothers were bachelors without friends and decidedly unsociable.

6 Three generations of eminent French painters bore this name. Claude Joseph Vernet (1714–1789) was a painter of landscapes and the renowned “Ports of France” series commissioned by Louis XV; his son, Antoine Charles Horace Vernet (1758–1835), known as Carle, was famed for his paintings of horses and battle scenes, including *The Battle of Marengo* and *Morning of Austerlitz*, as well as hunting scenes and lithographs. Carle’s son Émile Jean Horace Vernet (1789–1863), one of the most able military painters of France—whose paintings decorate the Battle Gallery at Versailles—is most likely to have been the relative in question.

7 Ronald A. Knox, regarded as the father of Sherlockian criticism, ponders, in “The Mystery of Mycroft,”

why Holmes has not previously mentioned his brother, when Holmes admits here that he communicated with Mycroft regularly. “[I]t is incredible that Holmes should have made no mention of a surviving member of his family, and one who lived so close, if there had been no reason behind his silence.” Knox contends that Mycroft was in league with Professor Moriarty, whom Holmes combats in “The Final Problem,” and his arguments are considered in detail in the notes below.

8 Although Watson uses the word “queer” in many nonsexual contexts throughout the Canon, according to Graham Robb in his *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century*, the word “queer” had taken on its implications of homosexuality by 1894, when the Marquess of Queensberry—father of Oscar Wilde’s erstwhile lover—referred to Foreign Minister (later Prime Minister) Lord Rosebery, widely suspected of being involved with Queensberry’s older son, as a “Snob Queer.” Robb, in fact, slyly compares Holmes to Wilde as “the other leading wit and aesthete of the Decadent Nineties,” noting the detective’s love of “introspective” German music, his penchant for cleanliness, and his proud declaration that having “art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms.” Remember also that Watson refers earlier to Holmes’s “aversion to women.” The sexuality of Sherlock Holmes is oft debated by scholars, whose views range from traditional (Holmes loved Irene Adler) to outlandish (Holmes was a woman). The voyeur-reader is referred to Larry Townsend’s *The Sexual Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1971) for a novel-length treatment of the possibility of Sherlock’s (and Mycroft’s and Watson’s!) sexual preference for other men.

9 Possibly Oxford Circus, possibly Piccadilly Circus. *Baedeker* refers to “Regent Circus, Piccadilly, . . . known as Piccadilly Circus, . . . and Regent Circus, Oxford Street, or simply Oxford Circus.”

10 In “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” Watson similarly describes Mycroft’s employer as “some small office under the British Government.” But this is far from the whole truth; only in “The Bruce-Partington Plans” does Holmes reveal to Watson that Mycroft’s position is so important that: “occasionally he is the British Government.” Why does Sherlock Holmes, in this first mention of his brother, not tell Watson the reality of his situation? Ronald Knox dismisses Holmes’s lame explanation, given in “The Bruce-Partington Plans” (“I did not know you quite so well in those days,” he rationalises), and charges, “Can we really believe that Holmes felt, so late in their acquaintance, any difficulty in reading his friend’s character?” Guessing that only the utmost discretion could have caused Holmes to keep his friend in the dark, Knox concludes, “he told Watson as little as possible about Mycroft . . . because there was a secret in Mycroft’s life which must at all costs be hushed up.”

11 Whitehall is a street in Westminster, “round the corner” and just to the south of Pall Mall. By extension, the name refers also to Whitehall’s surrounding streets and squares, dominated as they are by government buildings. (Indeed, “Whitehall” can also be taken to mean the British government itself.) Holmes’s casual description of Mycroft’s commute is a bit problematic, however, for the Exchequer and Audit Office, where one would assume Mycroft worked, was located at Somerset House on the Strand—which Mycroft would reach not by turning the corner southward to Whitehall but rather by continuing eastward several blocks on Pall Mall, bypassing Whitehall altogether. Holmes’s “Whitehall” and “round the corner” may be figurative, then, for it is but a short distance from Pall Mall to Somerset House. Furthermore, an auditor of “several government departments” would likely spend his time “in the field” in Whitehall, rather than at a “home” office on the Strand.

12 *Baedeker* lists twelve clubs with Pall Mall addresses in 1896; Whitaker’s *Almanack* of 1889 lists fourteen. Whittling them down to surmise which the Diogenes Club might have been requires a simple process of elimination. It seems unlikely that a civil servant would join a political club, such as the Conservative clubs the Carlton, Junior Carlton, or National Conservative; the Liberal-minded Reform Club, or the Unionist-minded Unionist; and it does not appear that Mycroft had any military service qualifying him for any of the five military clubs on the street. The Travellers’ Club limited its members to those who travelled at least 500 miles from London. This leaves only the Athenaeum, the New Athenaeum, the

Marlborough, the Oxford and Cambridge University, and the Royal Water Colour Club.

The Royal Water Colour Club was devoted to “art conversazioni, & c.,” according to Whitaker, and may be discarded. As for the Oxford and Cambridge University club, there is no reason to believe that Mycroft attended either Oxford or Cambridge, and it is unthinkable that their graduates could be regarded as “the most unsociable and unclubable men.” The distinguished reputation of Athenaeum, remarks the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (9th Ed.), meant that being admitted to the club was an arduous process, “both tedious as regards the length of time a candidate has to wait before being put up for ballot, and difficult when he is subjected to that crucial test.” The Athenaeum Club therefore seems an unlikely venue for Mycroft Holmes, a mere government employee, who was at this time only forty-one (see *Chronological Table*) and who apparently had been a member of his club for some time.

This leaves only the Marlborough and the New Athenaeum as likely candidates. The New Athenaeum is listed at Pall Mall W. (no number) and the Marlborough at No. 52, Pall Mall (the Carlton being at No. 94, to the east). Watson soon recounts that he and Holmes turned onto Pall Mall “from the St. James’s end” and ended up “some little distance from the Carlton.” Such a path would have actually put Holmes and Watson to the west of the Carlton; the New Athenaeum and the Travellers’, on the other hand, were east of the Carlton and unlikely to be described as “some little distance from the Carlton,” but rather “past the Carlton.” Indeed, the Travellers’ was two doors east of the Carlton, and the New Athenaeum three. The Diogenes Club cannot be identified, then, on the basis of Watson’s description of their walk (which, it may be said, he had no reason to recall with any special accuracy).

Of course, Holmes’s remark that the club is “just opposite [Mycroft’s] rooms” may not be a literal description of its location, and its address may be on a neighbouring street, where numerous other clubs were located.

In a tour de force entitled “Sherlock Holmes—Was He a ‘Playboy’?,” John C. Hogan demonstrates (perhaps not surprisingly, in the Playboy Club’s member magazine *V.I.P.*) that Mycroft was a co-founder of the Playboy Club of London, then operating under the disguised name of the “Diogenes” Club.

13 As bizarre as the Diogenes’s practises might seem, such an attitude was de rigueur at most London clubs, where bachelors and married men alike could both relax and cultivate an air of exclusivity and high social rank. Roy Porter describes the Victorian clubs as “solid, sober, even stuffy. . . . [They] spanned the private and public spheres, while upholding rank and gender exclusivity.” (Women, of course, were not allowed.) They were also traditionally hostile toward strangers. In *London Clubs: Their History and Treasures*, Ralph Nevill notes that visitors to these sacred enclaves tended to be treated “like the members’ dogs—they might be left in the hall under proper restraint, but access to any other part of the house, except, perhaps, some cheerless apartment kept as a strangers’ dining-room, was forbidden.” That the Diogenes had a designated Stranger’s Room seems similar to the Athenaeum’s policy of relegating its members’ friends to a small room near the club entrance.

14 The Carlton Club was founded in 1832 to fight the supporters of the Reform Bill and to serve as a rallying point for the Tories after their wholesale defeat in the elections. Sir James Damery, of “The Illustrious Client,” was a member of the Carlton.

15 The film *A Study in Terror* (1965) cast the splendid Robert Morley as Mycroft, opposite John Neville’s laudatory Sherlock, and Morley bears an uncanny resemblance to Sidney Paget’s illustration of Mycroft, reproduced on page 636.

16 An employee of a billiard parlour, who assists players and keeps the game’s score. Billiards was immensely fashionable at this time, especially as a pastime of the elite: Queen Victoria had a billiards table installed at Windsor Castle, and Pope Pius IX had one at the Vatican. Watson apparently was devoted to the game (see “The Dancing Men,” in which Holmes remarks upon the chalk on Watson’s hand). The dominant form of the game was English billiards, played with three balls and six pockets. Unfortunately, the popularity of this particular leisure activity meant that, according to billiards historian Robert Byrne, twelve

thousand elephants were killed every year to produce the ivory needed to make billiards balls—until 1868, when chemist John Hyatt began fashioning them out of celluloid (which later led to the invention of plastic).

17 Official army boots issued to noncommissioned personnel.

18 A private of the Royal Engineers.

19 Arthur Conan Doyle, in his autobiography *Memories and Adventures*, relates a similar diagnosis by his mentor Dr. Joseph Bell, who once glanced at a patient and declared, “ ‘Well, my man, you’ve served in the army.’ ‘Aye, sir.’ ‘Not long discharged?’ ‘No, sir.’ ‘A Highland regiment?’ ‘Aye, sir.’ ‘A non-com. officer?’ ‘Aye, sir.’ ‘Stationed at Barbados?’ ‘Aye, sir.’ ” Bell then explained to his befuddled students how he had come to those conclusions, observing that “the man was a respectful man but did not remove his hat. They do not in the army, but he would have learned civilian ways had he been long discharged. He has an air of authority and he is obviously Scottish. As to Barbados, his complaint is elephantiasis, which is West Indian and not British, and the Scottish residents are at present in that particular island.”

20 The borough of Wandsworth, on the south bank of the Thames, contains a large number of factories and breweries. When Mr. Melas was dropped off at Wandsworth Common, the wide, green expanse would have been ringed by comfortable two- and three-storey villas of yellow and red brick. Among Wandsworth’s notable former residents are Voltaire, Edward Gibbon, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Oscar Wilde, who in 1895 served part of his sentence at Wandsworth Prison after being convicted of homosexuality.

21 Why did Mycroft not tell Sherlock immediately? Ronald Knox intimates some ulterior, perhaps sinister, motive, explaining, “The case was clearly urgent; here you had a man starving; Mycroft, for all his indolence, would surely have called in his brother if he had not been squared in the interests of the villains.”

22 Knox points out that even before Mycroft consulted Sherlock, he advertised in the papers for information—a step that seems foolish and even dangerous, as it would have immediately alerted the culprits to Mr. Melas’s lack of discretion about what he had witnessed. Yet Knox sees this as further evidence that Mycroft, too clever to make such a naive error, was in league with the villains: “He was in effect sending a signal to his accomplices in Beckenham, to say, ‘Your secret is out, and the police are already on your track. Charcoal for two.’ ”

23 A broad-pointed pen. The letter “J” probably referred to the size of the nib. Harrod’s 1895 catalogue, for example, offered “J,” “G,” and “R” pens by various manufacturers. However, some theorise that it refers to the shape of the nib, and, adding further mystery, most J pens have the letter “J” embossed or engraved on the stem.

24 In hot pursuit of his theory that Mycroft was behind this entire affair, Ronald Knox ponders the elder Holmes’s actions preceding the discovery of Melas’s second kidnapping. Why, he wonders, had Mycroft chosen this particular day to visit Sherlock for the first time in his life? And why had he not picked up Melas on his way? He must have had prior knowledge that another kidnapping attempt was imminent and realised that his presence at the nearby Diogenes Club might look suspicious. “An alibi was indicated,” charges Knox, and “what better alibi than to take a cab, and rejoin his brother in Baker Street?”

25 Knox concludes his argument by suggesting that Mycroft initially advocated visiting J. Davenport in Lower Brixton (“Do you not think that we might drive to him now, Sherlock . . .”) in order to waste time, so that the charcoal fumes might have eliminated Melas before help arrived. Was Sherlock taken in by Mycroft’s conduct? Knox believes not. While Sherlock says nothing, “it is probable,” Knox asserts, “that Sherlock knew a good deal about his brother’s nefarious associations, and was at pains to conceal his knowledge.” Knox’s assertions of Mycroft’s villainy are considered further in the notes to “The Final Problem.”

[26](#) The villains' choice of charcoal fumes—with its strange, almost cinematic (not to mention inefficient) effect—seems a puzzling one, especially in light of the fact that they had clearly already dealt Melas a “vicious blow.” Yet they are hardly alone in their folly, as D. Martin Dakin marvels: “It is an odd thing how many of the scoundrels with whom Holmes had to deal seemed unable to resist the temptation to dispose of their victims by some complicated and lingering process which left them a chance of escape. . . .” Well after Holmes's adventures ceased to appear in the *Strand Magazine*, of course, countless criminals depicted in print and film continued to make the same mistake.

[27](#) Regarding the question of who sent the newspaper cutting, D. Martin Dakin considers the possibilities: Sophy herself knew nothing of Holmes or his involvement, and there is no known connection between “J. Davenport,” who replied to Mycroft's advertisement, and Hungary. Yet perhaps the cutting arrived not from the city of Budapest but merely from a Budapest newspaper, mailed to Holmes by a source closer to home. Dakin is yet another who sees the crafty elder Holmes's hand everywhere: “Mycroft, who in the course of his duties (at that time unknown to Watson) had to keep an eye on the foreign press, [must have seen] the item, cut it out, and sent it to Sherlock.”

THE NAVAL TREATY1

The longest of all of the “short stories” penned by Dr. Watson, “The Naval Treaty” is a case brought to Watson by a classmate from prep school days. Percy “Tadpole” Phelps has risen high in the Foreign Office, and a treaty has been stolen from his office. Although suffering from the euphemistic “brain fever,” Phelps begs Watson to bring in Holmes. When Holmes recovers the treaty, based primarily on his careful observations of the two key locations involved, Holmes cannot stop himself from revealing his success in a cruel but dramatic manner. But while the treaty is unquestionably recovered, scholars speculate that Holmes may have missed the real “brains” behind the crime. If Watson’s physical descriptions of the characters are accurate, there is reason to suspect that Holmes was deceived and that the real villain went unpunished.

THE JULY WHICH immediately succeeded my marriage was made memorable by three cases of interest, in which I had the privilege of being associated with Sherlock Holmes and of studying his methods. I find them recorded in my notes under the headings of "The Adventure of the Second Stain," "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty," and "The Adventure of the Tired Captain." The first of these, however, deals with interests of such importance and implicates so many of the first families in the kingdom that for many years it will be impossible to make it public. No case, however, in which Holmes was engaged has ever illustrated the value of his analytical methods so clearly or has impressed those who were associated with him so deeply. I still retain an almost verbatim report of the interview in which he demonstrated the true facts of the case to Monsieur Dubuque of the Paris police, and Fritz von Waldbaum, the well-known specialist² of Dantzig, both of whom had wasted their energies upon what proved to be side-issues. The new century will have come, however, before the story can be safely told.³ Meanwhile I pass on to the second on my list, which promised also at one time to be of national importance and was marked by several incidents which give it a quite unique character.



“The Naval Treaty.”

E. S. Morris, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 3, 1912

During my school-days⁴ I had been intimately associated with a lad named Percy Phelps, who was of much the same age as myself, though he was two classes ahead of me. He was a very brilliant boy and carried away every prize which the school had to offer, finishing his exploits by winning a scholarship which sent him on to continue his triumphant career at Cambridge. He was, I remember, extremely well connected, and even when we were all little boys together we knew that his mother's brother was Lord Holdhurst, the great Conservative⁵ politician.⁶ This gaudy relationship did him little good at school.⁷ On the contrary, it seemed rather a piquant thing to us to chevy⁸ him about the playground and hit him over the shins with a wicket.⁹ But it was another thing

when he came out into the world. I heard vaguely that his abilities and the influences which he commanded had won him a good position at the Foreign Office, and then he passed completely out of my mind until the following letter recalled his existence:

Briarbrae, Woking.

MY DEAR WATSON:

I have no doubt that you can remember “Tadpole” Phelps, who was in the fifth form when you were in the third. It is possible even that you may have heard that through my uncle’s influence I obtained a good appointment at the Foreign Office, and that I was in a situation of trust and honour until a horrible misfortune came suddenly to blast my career.

There is no use writing the details of that dreadful event. In the event of your acceding to my request it is probable that I shall have to narrate them to you. I have only just recovered from nine weeks of brain-fever and am still exceedingly weak. Do you think that you could bring your friend Mr. Holmes down to see me? I should like to have his opinion of the case, though the authorities assure me that nothing more can be done. Do try to bring him down, and as soon as possible. Every minute seems an hour while I live in this state of horrible suspense. Assure him that if I have not asked his advice sooner it was not

because I did not appreciate his talents, but because I have been off my head ever since the blow fell. Now I am clear again, though I dare not think of it too much for fear of a relapse. I am still so weak that I have to write, as you see, by dictating. Do try to bring him.

Your old school-fellow,
PERCY PHELPS.

There was something that touched me as I read this letter, something pitiable in the reiterated appeals to bring Holmes. So moved was I that even had it been a difficult matter I should have tried it, but of course I knew well that Holmes loved his art, so that he was ever as ready to bring his aid as his client could be to receive it. My wife agreed with me that not a moment should be lost in laying the matter before him, and so within an hour of breakfast-time I found myself back once more in the old rooms in Baker Street.

Holmes was seated at his side-table clad in his dressing-gown and working hard over a chemical investigation. A large curved retort¹⁰ was boiling furiously in the bluish flame of a Bunsen burner,¹¹ and the distilled drops were condensing into a two-litre measure. My friend hardly glanced up as I entered, and I, seeing that his investigation must be of importance, seated myself in an arm-chair and waited. He dipped into this bottle or that, drawing out a few drops of each with his glass pipette, and finally brought a test-tube containing a solution over to the table. In his right hand he held a slip of litmus-paper.

“You come at a crisis, Watson,” said he. “If this paper remains blue, all is well. If it turns red, it means a man’s life.” He dipped it into the test-tube and it flushed at once into a dull, dirty crimson. “Hum! I thought as much!” he cried. “I will be at your service in an instant, Watson. You will find tobacco in the Persian slipper.”¹² He turned to his desk and scribbled off several telegrams, which were handed over to the page-boy. Then he threw himself down into the chair opposite and drew up his knees until his fingers clasped round his long, thin shins.



“Holmes was working hard over a chemical investigation.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“A very commonplace little murder,¹³ said he. “You’ve got something better, I fancy. You are the stormy petrel¹⁴ of crime, Watson. What is it?”

I handed him the letter, which he read with the most concentrated attention.

“It does not tell us very much, does it?” he remarked as he handed it back to me.

“Hardly anything.”

“And yet the writing is of interest.”

“But the writing is not his own.”

“Precisely. It is a woman’s.”

“A man’s, surely,” I cried.

“No, a woman’s, and a woman of rare character. You see, at the commencement of an investigation it is something to know that your client is in close contact with someone who, for good or evil, has an exceptional nature. My interest is already awakened in the case. If you are ready we will start at once for Woking¹⁵ and see this diplomatist who is in such evil case and the lady to whom

he dictates his letters.”

We were fortunate enough to catch an early train at Waterloo, and in a little under an hour we found ourselves among the fir-woods and the heather of Woking. Briarbrae proved to be a large detached house standing in extensive grounds within a few minutes’ walk of the station. On sending in our cards we were shown into an elegantly appointed drawingroom, where we were joined in a few minutes by a rather stout man who received us with much hospitality. His age may have been nearer forty than thirty, but his cheeks were so ruddy and his eyes so merry that he still conveyed the impression of a plump and mischievous boy.

“I am so glad that you have come,” said he, shaking our hands with effusion. “Percy has been inquiring for you all morning. Ah, poor old chap, he clings to any straw! His father and his mother asked me to see you, for the mere mention of the subject is very painful to them.”

“We have had no details yet,” observed Holmes. “I perceive that you are not yourself a member of the family.”

Our acquaintance looked surprised, and then, glancing down, he began to laugh.

“Of course you saw the J H monogram on my locket,” said he. “For a moment I thought you had done something clever. Joseph Harrison is my name, and as Percy is to marry my sister Annie I shall at least be a relation by marriage. You will find my sister in his room, for she has nursed him hand and foot this two months back. Perhaps we’d better go in at once, for I know how impatient he is.”

The chamber into which we were shown was on the same floor as the drawingroom. It was furnished partly as a sitting and partly as a bedroom, with flowers arranged daintily in every nook and corner. A young man, very pale and worn, was lying upon a sofa near the open window, through which came the rich scent of the garden and the balmy summer air. A woman was sitting beside him, who rose as we entered.

“Shall I leave, Percy?” she asked.

He clutched her hand to detain her. “How are you, Watson?” said he cordially. “I should never have known you under that moustache,¹⁶ and I daresay you would not be prepared to swear to me. This I presume is your celebrated friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?”



“A young man very pale and worn.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893



“ ‘I won't waste your time,’ said he.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

I introduced him in a few words, and we both sat down. The stout young man had left us, but his sister still remained with her hand in that of the invalid. She was a striking-looking woman, a little short and thick for symmetry, but with a beautiful olive complexion, large, dark, Italian eyes, and a wealth of deep black hair. Her rich tints made the white face of her companion the more worn and haggard by the contrast.

“I won't waste your time,” said he, raising himself upon the sofa. “I'll plunge

into the matter without further preamble. I was a happy and successful man, Mr. Holmes, and on the eve of being married, when a sudden and dreadful misfortune wrecked all my prospects in life.

“I was, as Watson may have told you, in the Foreign Office, and through the influence of my uncle, Lord Holdhurst, I rose rapidly to a responsible position. When my uncle became foreign minister in this administration he gave me several missions of trust, and as I always brought them to a successful conclusion, he came at last to have the utmost confidence in my ability and tact.

“Nearly ten weeks ago—to be more accurate, on the twenty-third of May—he called me into his private room, and, after complimenting me on the good work which I had done, he informed me that he had a new commission of trust for me to execute.

“ ‘This,’ said he, taking a grey roll of paper from his bureau, ‘is the original of that secret treaty between England and Italy¹⁷ of which, I regret to say, some rumours have already got into the public press. It is of enormous importance that nothing further should leak out. The French or the Russian embassy would pay an immense sum to learn the contents of these papers. They should not leave my bureau were it not that it is absolutely necessary to have them copied. You have a desk in your office?’

“ ‘Yes, sir.’

“ ‘Then take the treaty and lock it up there. I shall give directions that you may remain behind when the others go, so that you may copy it at your leisure¹⁸ without fear of being overlooked. When you have finished, relock both the original and the draft in the desk, and hand them over to me personally tomorrow morning.’

“I took the papers and—”

“Excuse me an instant,” said Holmes. “Were you alone during this conversation?”

“Absolutely.”

“In a large room?”

“Thirty feet each way.”

“In the centre?”

“Yes, about it.”

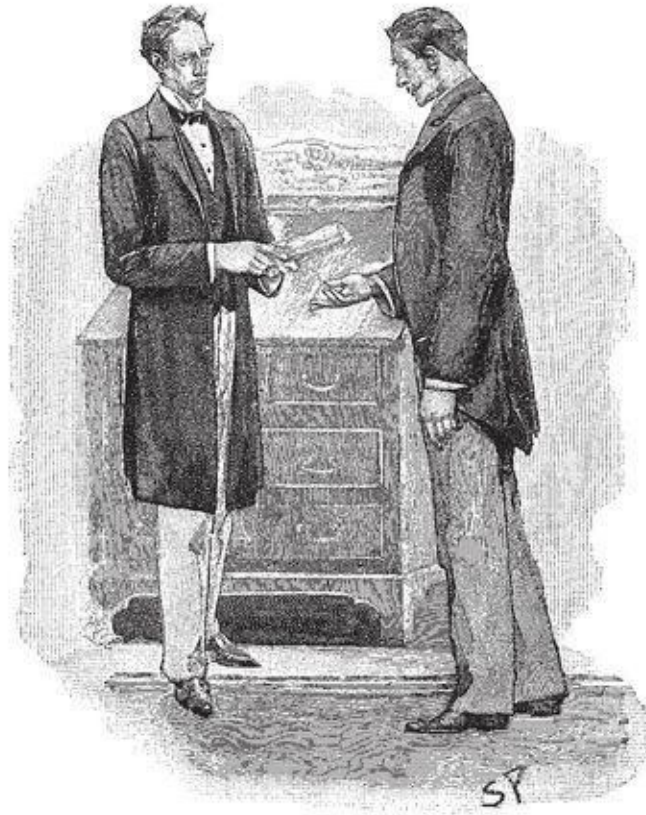
“And speaking low?”

“My uncle’s voice is always remarkably low. I hardly spoke at all.”

“Thank you,” said Holmes, shutting his eyes; “pray go on.”

“I did exactly what he indicated and waited until the other clerks had departed. One of them in my room, Charles Gorot, had some arrears of work to make up,

so I left him there and went out to dine. When I returned he was gone. I was anxious to hurry my work, for I knew that Joseph—the Mr. Harrison whom you saw just now—was in town, and that he would travel down to Woking by the eleven-o’clock train, and I wanted if possible to catch it.

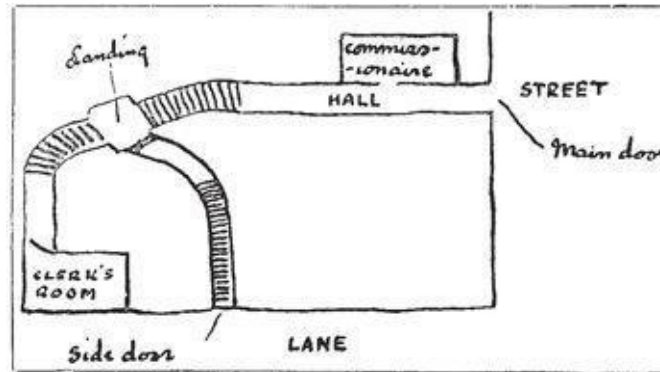


“Then take the treaty.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

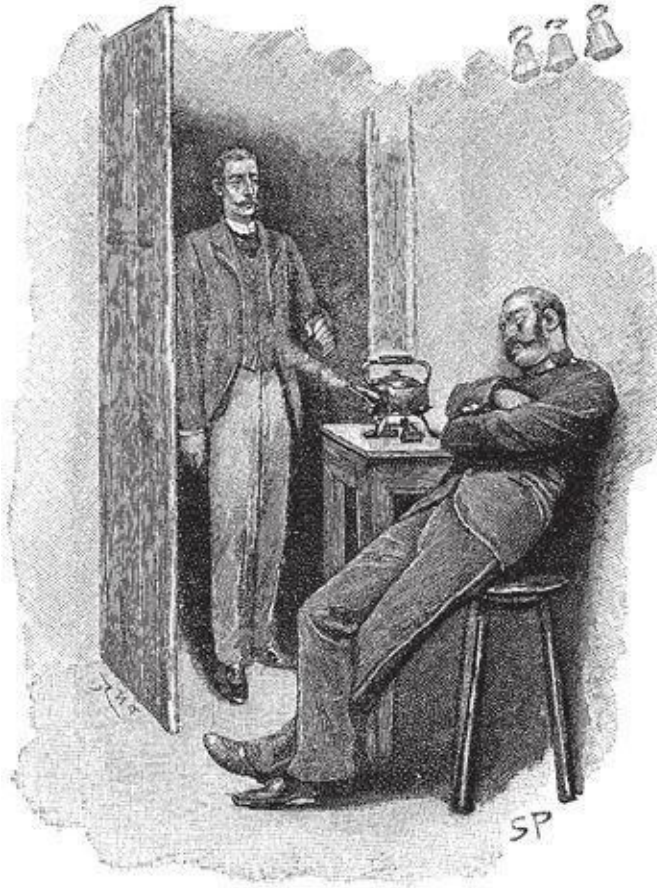
“When I came to examine the treaty I saw at once that it was of such importance that my uncle had been guilty of no exaggeration in what he said. Without going into details, I may say that it defined the position of Great Britain towards the Triple Alliance,¹⁹ and foreshadowed the policy which this country would pursue in the event of the French fleet gaining a complete ascendancy over that of Italy in the Mediterranean. The questions treated in it were purely naval. At the end were the signatures of the high dignitaries who had signed it. I glanced my eyes over it and then settled down to my task of copying.

another passage running into it at right angles. This second one leads by means of a second small stair to a side door, used by servants, and also as a short cut by clerks when coming from Charles Street. Here is a rough chart of the place."



"Thank you. I think that I quite follow you," said Sherlock Holmes.

"It is of the utmost importance that you should notice this point. I went down the stairs and into the hall, where I found the commissioner fast asleep in his box, with the kettle boiling furiously upon the spirit-lamp. I took off the kettle and blew out the lamp, for the water was spurting over the floor. Then I put out my hand and was about to shake the man, who was still sleeping soundly, when a bell over his head rang loudly, and he woke with a start.



“Fast asleep in his box.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“ ‘Mr. Phelps, sir!’ said he, looking at me in bewilderment.

“ ‘I came down to see if my coffee was ready.’

“ ‘I was boiling the kettle when I fell asleep, sir.’ He looked at me and then up at the still quivering bell with an ever-growing astonishment upon his face.

“ ‘If you was here, sir, then who rang the bell?’ he asked.

“ ‘The bell!’ I cried. ‘What bell is it?’

“ ‘It’s the bell of the room you were working in.’

“A cold hand seemed to close round my heart. Someone, then, was in that room where my precious treaty lay upon the table. I ran frantically up the stair and along the passage. There was no one in the corridors, Mr. Holmes. There was no one in the room. All was exactly as I left it, save only that the papers which had been committed to my care had been taken from the desk on which they lay. The copy was there, and the original was gone.”

Holmes sat up in his chair and rubbed his hands. I could see that the problem was entirely to his heart. “Pray, what did you do then?” he murmured.

“I recognised in an instant that the thief must have come up the stairs from the side door. Of course I must have met him if he had come the other way.”

“You were satisfied that he could not have been concealed in the room all the time, or in the corridor which you have just described as dimly lighted?”

“It is absolutely impossible. A rat could not conceal himself either in the room or the corridor. There is no cover at all.”



“The papers had been taken from the desk.”

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893

“Thank you. Pray proceed.”

“The commissioner, seeing by my pale face that something was to be feared, had followed me upstairs. Now we both rushed along the corridor and down the steep steps which led to Charles Street. The door at the bottom was closed but unlocked. We flung it open and rushed out. I can distinctly remember that as we did so there came three chimes from a neighbouring church.²² It was a quarter to ten.”

“That is of enormous importance,²³ said Holmes, making a note upon his

shirtcuff.²⁴

“The night was very dark, and a thin, warm rain was falling. There was no one in Charles Street, but a great traffic was going on, as usual, in Whitehall, at the extremity. We rushed along the pavement, bare-headed as we were, and at the far corner we found a policeman standing.

“ ‘A robbery has been committed,’ I gasped. ‘A document of immense value has been stolen from the Foreign Office. Has anyone passed this way?’

“ ‘I have been standing here for a quarter of an hour, sir,’ said he, ‘only one person has passed during that time—a woman, tall and elderly, with a Paisley shawl.’

“ ‘Ah, that is only my wife,’ cried the commissioner; ‘has no one else passed?’



Traffic on Hyde Park Corner.

Past Positive

“ ‘No one.’”

“ ‘Then it must be the other way that the thief took,’ cried the fellow, tugging at my sleeve.

“ ‘But I was not satisfied, and the attempts which he made to draw me away increased my suspicions.

“ ‘Which way did the woman go?’ I cried.

“ ‘I don’t know, sir. I noticed her pass, but I had no special reason for watching her. She seemed to be in a hurry.’

“ ‘How long ago was it?’

“ ‘Oh, not very many minutes.’

“ ‘Within the last five?’

“ ‘Well, it could not be more than five.’

“ ‘You’re only wasting your time, sir, and every minute now is of

importance,' cried the commissioner; 'take my word for it that my old woman has nothing to do with it²⁵ and come down to the other end of the street. Well, if you won't, I will.' And with that he rushed off in the other direction.

"But I was after him in an instant and caught him by the sleeve.

" 'Where do you live?' said I.

" 'No. 16 Ivy Lane, Brixton,' he answered. 'But don't let yourself be drawn away upon a false scent, Mr. Phelps. Come to the other end of the street and let us see if we can hear of anything.'

"Nothing was to be lost by following his advice. With the policeman we both hurried down, but only to find the street full of traffic, many people coming and going, but all only too eager to get to a place of safety upon so wet a night. There was no lounge who could tell us who had passed.

"Then we returned to the office and searched the stairs and the passage without result. The corridor which led to the room was laid down with a kind of creamy linoleum which shows an impression very easily. We examined it very carefully, but found no outline of any footmark."

"Had it been raining all evening?"

"Since about seven."

"How is it, then, that the woman who came into the room about nine left no traces with her muddy boots?"

"I am glad you raised the point. It occurred to me at the time. The charwomen are in the habit of taking off their boots at the commissioner's office, and putting on list slippers."²⁶

"That is very clear. There were no marks, then, though the night was a wet one? The chain of events is certainly one of extraordinary interest. What did you do next?"

"We examined the room also. There is no possibility of a secret door, and the windows are quite thirty feet from the ground. Both of them were fastened on the inside. The carpet prevents any possibility of a trapdoor, and the ceiling is of the ordinary whitewashed kind. I will pledge my life that whoever stole my papers could only have come through the door."

"How about the fireplace?"

"They use none. There is a stove. The bell-rope hangs from the wire just to the right of my desk. Whoever rang it must have come right up to the desk to do it. But why should any criminal wish to ring the bell? It is a most insoluble mystery."

"Certainly the incident was unusual. What were your next steps? You examined the room, I presume, to see if the intruder had left any traces—any

cigar-end or dropped glove or hairpin or other trifle?”

“There was nothing of the sort.”

“No smell?”

“Well, we never thought of that.”

“Ah, a scent of tobacco would have been worth a great deal to us in such an investigation.”

“I never smoke myself, so I think I should have observed it if there had been any smell of tobacco. There was absolutely no clue of any kind. The only tangible fact was that the commissionaire’s wife—Mrs. Tangey was the name—had hurried out of the place. He could give no explanation save that it was about the time when the woman always went home. The policeman and I agreed that our best plan would be to seize the woman before she could get rid of the papers, presuming that she had them.

“The alarm had reached Scotland Yard by this time, and Mr. Forbes, the detective, came round at once and took up the case with a great deal of energy. We hired a hansom, and in half an hour we were at the address which had been given to us. A young woman opened the door, who proved to be Mrs. Tangey’s eldest daughter. Her mother had not come back yet, and we were shown into the front room to wait.

“About ten minutes later a knock came at the door, and here we made the one serious mistake for which I blame myself. Instead of opening the door ourselves, we allowed the girl to do so. We heard her say, ‘Mother, there are two men in the house waiting to see you,’ and an instant afterwards we heard the patter of feet rushing down the passage. Forbes flung open the door, and we both ran into the back room or kitchen, but the woman had got there before us. She stared at us with defiant eyes, and then, suddenly recognizing me, an expression of absolute astonishment came over her face.

“ ‘Why, if it isn’t Mr. Phelps, of the office!’ she cried.

“ ‘Come, come, who did you think we were when you ran away from us?’ asked my companion.

“ ‘I thought you were the brokers,’²⁷ said she, ‘we have had some trouble with a tradesman.’

“ ‘That’s not quite good enough,’ answered Forbes. ‘We have reason to believe that you have taken a paper of importance from the Foreign Office, and that you ran in here to dispose of it. You must come back with us to Scotland Yard to be searched.’

“It was in vain that she protested and resisted. A four-wheeler was brought and we all three drove back in it. We had first made an examination of the kitchen, and especially of the kitchen fire, to see whether she might have made

away with the papers during the instant that she was alone. There were no signs, however, of any ashes or scraps. When we reached Scotland Yard she was handed over at once to the female searcher. I waited in an agony of suspense until she came back with her report. There were no signs of the papers.



“Why, if it isn’t Mr. Phelps!”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Then for the first time the horror of my situation came in its full force. Hitherto I had been acting, and action had numbed thought. I had been so confident of regaining the treaty at once that I had not dared to think of what would be the consequence if I failed to do so. But now, there was nothing more to be done, and I had leisure to realise my position. It was horrible. Watson there would tell you that I was a nervous, sensitive boy at school. It is my nature. I thought of my uncle and of his colleagues in the Cabinet, of the shame which I had brought upon him, upon myself, upon everyone connected with me. What though I was the victim of an extraordinary accident? No allowance is made for accidents where diplomatic interests are at stake. I was ruined, shamefully, hopelessly ruined. I don’t know what I did. I fancy I must have made a scene. I have a dim recollection of a group of officials who crowded round me, endeavouring to soothe me. One of them drove down with me to Waterloo, and saw me into the Woking train.²⁸ I believe that he would have come all the way had it not been that Dr. Ferrier,²⁹ who lives near me, was going down by that very train. The doctor most kindly took charge of me, and it was well he did so, for I had a fit in the station, and before we reached home I was practically a raving maniac.

“You can imagine the state of things here when they were roused from their

beds by the doctor's ringing and found me in this condition. Poor Annie here and my mother were broken-hearted. Dr. Ferrier had just heard enough from the detective at the station to be able to give an idea of what had happened, and his story did not mend matters. It was evident to all that I was in for a long illness, so Joseph was bundled out of this cheery bedroom, and it was turned into a sickroom for me. Here I have lain, Mr. Holmes, for over nine weeks, unconscious, and raving with brain-fever. If it had not been for Miss Harrison here and for the doctor's care, I should not be speaking to you now. She has nursed me by day and a hired nurse has looked after me by night for in my mad fits I was capable of anything. Slowly my reason has cleared, but it is only during the last three days that my memory has quite returned. Sometimes I wish that it never had. The first thing that I did was to wire to Mr. Forbes, who had the case in hand. He came out, and assures me that, though everything has been done, no trace of a clue has been discovered. The commissionaire and his wife have been examined in every way without any light being thrown upon the matter. The suspicions of the police then rested upon young Gorot, who, as you may remember, stayed overtime in the office that night. His remaining behind and his French name were really the only two points which could suggest suspicion; but, as a matter of fact, I did not begin work until he had gone, and his people are of Huguenot³⁰ extraction, but as English in sympathy and tradition as you and I are. Nothing was found to implicate him in any way, and there the matter dropped. I turn to you, Mr. Holmes, as absolutely my last hope. If you fail me, then my honour as well as my position are for ever forfeited."

The invalid sank back upon his cushions, tired out by this long recital, while his nurse poured him out a glass of some stimulating medicine. Holmes sat silently, with his head thrown back and his eyes closed, in an attitude which might seem listless to a stranger, but which I knew betokened the most intense self-absorption.

"Your statement has been so explicit," said he at last, "that you have really left me very few questions to ask. There is one of the very utmost importance, however. Did you tell anyone that you had this special task to perform?"

"No one."

"Not Miss Harrison here, for example?"

"No. I had not been back to Woking between getting the order and executing the commission."

"And none of your people had by chance been to see you?"

"None."

"Did any of them know their way about in the office?"

"Oh, yes, all of them had been shown over it."

“Still, of course, if you said nothing to anyone about the treaty these inquiries are irrelevant.”

“I said nothing.”

“Do you know anything of the commissioner?”

“Nothing except that he is an old soldier.”

“What regiment?”

“Oh, I have heard—Coldstream Guards.”³¹

“Thank you. I have no doubt I can get details from Forbes. The authorities are excellent at amassing facts, though they do not always use them to advantage. What a lovely thing a rose is!”

He walked past the couch to the open window and held up the drooping stalk of a moss-rose,³² looking down at the dainty blend of crimson and green. It was a new phase of his character to me, for I had never before seen him show any keen interest in natural objects.

“There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion,” said he, leaning with his back against the shutters. “It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras,³³ and so, I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers.”



“What a lovely thing a rose is.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

Percy Phelps and his nurse looked at Holmes during this demonstration with surprise and a good deal of disappointment written upon their faces. He had fallen into a reverie, with the moss-rose between his fingers. It had lasted some minutes before the young lady broke in upon it.

“Do you see any prospect of solving this mystery, Mr. Holmes?” she asked with a touch of asperity in her voice.

“Oh, the mystery!” he answered, coming back with a start to the realities of life. “Well, it would be absurd to deny that the case is a very abstruse and complicated one, but I can promise you that I will look into the matter and let

you know any points which may strike me.”

“Do you see any clue?”

“You have furnished me with seven,³⁴ but of course I must test them before I can pronounce upon their value.”

“You suspect someone?”

“I suspect myself.”

“What!”

“Of coming to conclusions too rapidly.”

“Then go to London and test your conclusions.”

“Your advice is very excellent, Miss Harrison,” said Holmes, rising. “I think, Watson, we cannot do better. Do not allow yourself to indulge in false hopes, Mr. Phelps, the affair is a very tangled one.”

“I shall be in a fever until I see you again,” cried the diplomatist.

“Well, I’ll come out by the same train tomorrow, though it’s more than likely that my report will be a negative one.”

“God bless you for promising to come,” cried our client. “It gives me fresh life to know that something is being done. By the way, I have had a letter from Lord Holdhurst.”

“Ha! what did he say?”

“He was cold, but not harsh. I dare say my severe illness prevented him from being that. He repeated that the matter was of the utmost importance, and added that no steps would be taken about my future—by which he means, of course, my dismissal—until my health was restored and I had an opportunity of repairing my misfortune.”

“Well, that was reasonable and considerate,” said Holmes. “Come, Watson, for we have a good day’s work before us in town.”

Mr. Joseph Harrison drove us down to the station, and we were soon whirling up in a Portsmouth train. Holmes was sunk in profound thought and hardly opened his mouth until we had passed Clapham Junction.

“It’s a very cheery thing to come into London by any of these lines which run high and allow you to look down upon the houses like this.”

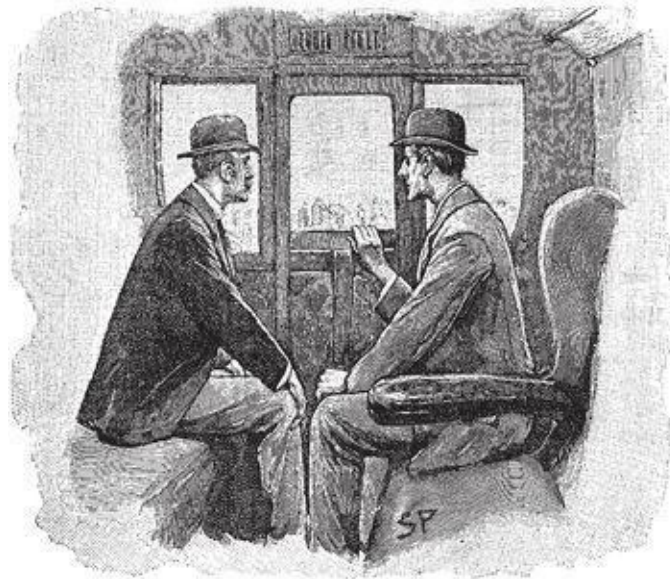
I thought he was joking, for the view was sordid enough, but he soon explained himself.

“Look at those big, isolated clumps of buildings rising up above the slates, like brick islands in a lead-coloured sea.”

“The board-schools.”³⁵

“Light-houses, my boy! Beacons of the future! Capsules with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, out of which will spring the wiser, better England of

the future. I suppose that man Phelps does not drink?”



“The view was sordid enough.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893



Playtime at a board school (1900).

Victorian and Edwardian London

“I should not think so.”

“Nor should I, but we are bound to take every possibility into account. The poor devil has certainly got himself into very deep water, and it’s a question whether we shall ever be able to get him ashore. What do you think of Miss Harrison?”

“A girl of strong character.”

“Yes, but she is a good sort, or I am mistaken. She and her brother are the only children of an iron-master somewhere up Northumberland³⁶ way. He got engaged to her when travelling last winter, and she came down to be introduced

to his people, with her brother as escort. Then came the smash, and she stayed on to nurse her lover, while brother Joseph, finding himself pretty snug, stayed on, too. I've been making a few independent inquiries, you see. But to-day must be a day of inquiries."

"My practice—" I began.

"Oh, if you find your own cases more interesting than mine—" said Holmes with some asperity.

"I was going to say that my practice could get along very well for a day or two, since it is the slackest time in the year."

"Excellent," said he, recovering his good-humour. "Then we'll look into this matter together. I think that we should begin by seeing Forbes. He can probably tell us all the details we want until we know from what side the case is to be approached."

"You said you had a clue?"

"Well, we have several, but we can only test their value by further inquiry. The most difficult crime to track is the one which is purposeless. Now this is not purposeless. Who is it who profits by it? There is the French ambassador, there is the Russian, there is whoever might sell it to either of these, and there is Lord Holdhurst."

"Lord Holdhurst!"

"Well, it is just conceivable that a statesman might find himself in a position where he was not sorry to have such a document accidentally destroyed."

"Not a statesman with the honourable record of Lord Holdhurst?"

"It is a possibility and we cannot afford to disregard it. We shall see the noble lord to-day and find out if he can tell us anything. Meanwhile I have already set inquiries on foot."

"Already?"

"Yes, I sent wires from Woking station to every evening paper in London. This advertisement will appear in each of them."

He handed over a sheet torn from a notebook. On it was scribbled in pencil:

"£10 reward. The number of the cab which dropped a fare at or about the door of the Foreign Office in Charles Street at quarter to ten in the evening of May 23d. Apply 221B, Baker Street."

"You are confident that the thief came in a cab?"

"If not, there is no harm done. But if Mr. Phelps is correct in stating that there is no hiding-place either in the room or the corridors, then the person must have come from outside. If he came from outside on so wet a night, and yet left no

trace of damp upon the linoleum, which was examined within a few minutes of his passing, then it is exceedingly probable that he came in a cab. Yes, I think that we may safely deduce a cab.”

“It sounds plausible.”

“That is one of the clues of which I spoke. It may lead us to something. And then, of course, there is the bell—which is the most distinctive feature of the case. Why should the bell ring? Was it the thief who did it out of bravado? Or was it someone who was with the thief who did it in order to prevent the crime? Or was it an accident? Or was it—?” He sank back into the state of intense and silent thought from which he had emerged; but it seemed to me, accustomed as I was to his every mood, that some new possibility had dawned suddenly upon him.

It was twenty past three when we reached our terminus, and after a hasty luncheon at the buffet we pushed on at once to Scotland Yard. Holmes had already wired to Forbes, and we found him waiting to receive us—a small, foxy man with a sharp but by no means amiable expression. He was decidedly frigid in his manner to us, especially when he heard the errand upon which we had come.

“I’ve heard of your methods before now, Mr. Holmes,” said he tartly. “You are ready enough to use all the information that the police can lay at your disposal, and then you try to finish the case yourself and bring discredit on them.”

“On the contrary,” said Holmes, “out of my last fifty-three cases my name has only appeared in four, and the police have had all the credit in forty-nine. I don’t blame you for not knowing this, for you are young and inexperienced, but if you wish to get on in your new duties you will work with me and not against me.”

“I’d be very glad of a hint or two,” said the detective, changing his manner. “I’ve certainly had no credit from the case so far.”

“What steps have you taken?”

“Tangey, the commissionaire, has been shadowed. He left the Guards with a good character, and we can find nothing against him. His wife is a bad lot, though. I fancy she knows more about this than appears.”

“Have you shadowed her?”

“We have set one of our women on to her. Mrs. Tangey drinks, and our woman has been with her twice when she was well on, but she could get nothing out of her.”

“I understand that they have had brokers in the house?”

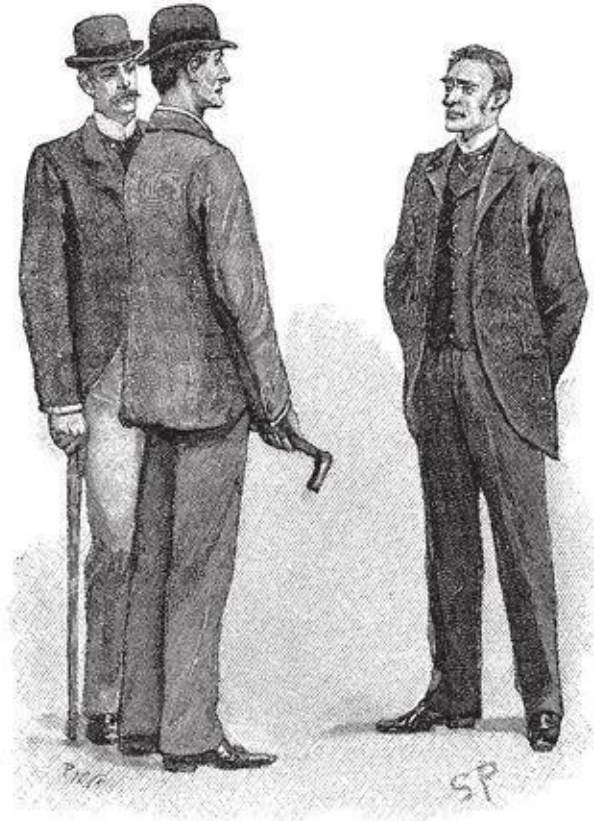
“Yes, but they were paid off.”

“Where did the money come from?”

“That was all right. His pension was due. They have not shown any sign of being in funds.”

“What explanation did she give of having answered the bell when Mr. Phelps rang for the coffee?”

“She said that her husband was very tired and she wished to relieve him.”



“I’ve heard of your methods before now, Mr. Holmes.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Well, certainly that would agree with his being found a little later asleep in his chair. There is nothing against them then but the woman’s character. Did you ask her why she hurried away that night? Her haste attracted the attention of the police constable.”

“She was later than usual and wanted to get home.”

“Did you point out to her that you and Mr. Phelps, who started at least twenty minutes after her, got home before her?”

“She explains that by the difference between a ’bus³⁷ and a hansom.”

“Did she make it clear why, on reaching her house, she ran into the back kitchen?”

“Because she had the money there with which to pay off the brokers.”

“She has at least an answer for everything. Did you ask her whether in leaving she met anyone or saw anyone loitering about Charles Street?”

“She saw no one but the constable.”

“Well, you seem to have cross-examined her pretty thoroughly. What else have you done?”

“The clerk Gorot has been shadowed all these nine weeks, but without result. We can show nothing against him.”

“Anything else?”

“Well, we have nothing else to go upon—no evidence of any kind.”

“Have you formed any theory about how that bell rang?”

“Well, I must confess that it beats me. It was a cool hand, whoever it was, to go and give the alarm like that.”

“Yes, it was a queer thing to do. Many thanks to you for what you have told me. If I can put the man into your hands you shall hear from me. Come along, Watson.”

“Where are we going to now?” I asked as we left the office.

“We are now going to interview Lord Holdhurst, the cabinet minister and future premier of England.”

We were fortunate in finding that Lord Holdhurst was still in his chambers in Downing Street, and on Holmes sending in his card we were instantly shown up. The statesman received us with that old-fashioned courtesy for which he is remarkable and seated us on the two luxuriant lounges on either side of the fireplace. Standing on the rug between us, with his slight, tall figure, his sharp features, thoughtful face, and curling hair prematurely tinged with grey, he seemed to represent that not too common type, a nobleman who is in truth noble.



An omnibus.

Past Positive

“Your name is very familiar to me, Mr. Holmes,” said he, smiling. “And of course I cannot pretend to be ignorant of the object of your visit. There has only

been one occurrence in these offices which could call for your attention. In whose interest are you acting, may I ask?"

"In that of Mr. Percy Phelps," answered Holmes.

"Ah, my unfortunate nephew! You can understand that our kinship makes it the more impossible for me to screen him in any way. I fear that the incident must have a very prejudicial effect upon his career."

"But if the document is found?"

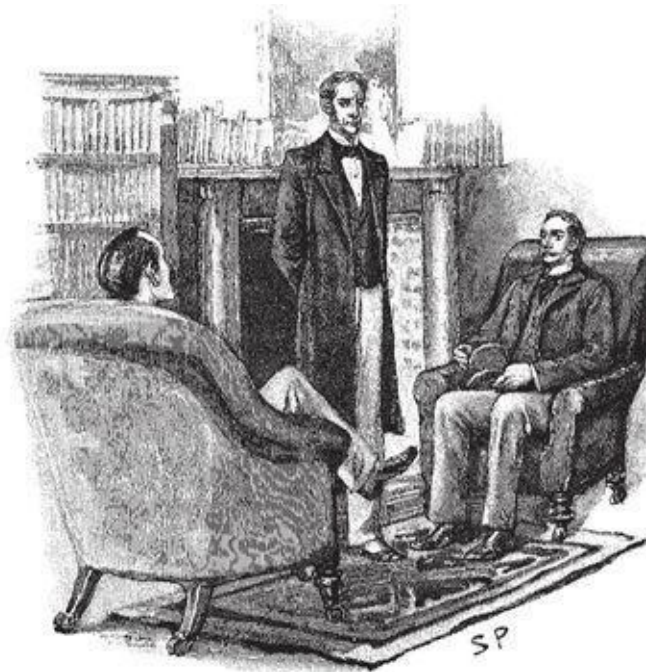
"Ah, that, of course, would be different."

"I had one or two questions which I wished to ask you, Lord Holdhurst."



"Standing on the rug between us."

W. H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, 1893



“A nobleman.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“I shall be happy to give you any information in my power.”

“Was it in this room that you gave your instructions as to the copying of the document?”

“It was.”

“Then you could hardly have been overheard?”

“It is out of the question.”

“Did you ever mention to anyone that it was your intention to give anyone the treaty to be copied?”

“Never.”

“You are certain of that?”

“Absolutely.”

“Well, since you never said so, and Mr. Phelps never said so, and nobody else knew anything of the matter, then the thief’s presence in the room was purely accidental. He saw his chance and he took it.”

The statesman smiled. “You take me out of my province there,” said he.

Holmes considered for a moment. “There is another very important point which I wish to discuss with you,” said he. “You feared, as I understand, that very grave results might follow from the details of this treaty becoming known.”

A shadow passed over the expressive face of the statesman. “Very grave results indeed.”

“And have they occurred?”

“Not yet.”

“If the treaty had reached, let us say, the French or Russian Foreign Office, you would expect to hear of it?”

“I should,” said Lord Holdhurst with a wry face.

“Since nearly ten weeks have elapsed, then, and nothing has been heard, it is not unfair to suppose that for some reason the treaty has not reached them.”

Lord Holdhurst shrugged his shoulders.

“We can hardly suppose, Mr. Holmes, that the thief took the treaty in order to frame it and hang it up.”

“Perhaps he is waiting for a better price.”

“If he waits a little longer he will get no price at all. The treaty will cease to be secret in a few months.”

“That is most important,” said Holmes. “Of course, it is a possible supposition that the thief has had a sudden illness—”

“An attack of brain-fever, for example?” asked the statesman, flashing a swift glance at him.

“I did not say so,” said Holmes imperturbably. “And now, Lord Holdhurst we have already taken up too much of your valuable time, and we shall wish you good-day.”

“Every success to your investigation, be the criminal who it may,” answered the nobleman as he bowed us out at the door.

“He’s a fine fellow,” said Holmes as we came out into Whitehall. “But he has a struggle to keep up his position. He is far from rich and has many calls. You noticed, of course, that his boots had been resoled. Now, Watson, I won’t detain you from your legitimate work any longer. I shall do nothing more to-day unless I have an answer to my cab advertisement. But I should be extremely obliged to you if you would come down with me to Woking tomorrow by the same train which we took to-day.”³⁸

I met him accordingly next morning and we travelled down to Woking together. He had had no answer to his advertisement, he said, and no fresh light had been thrown upon the case. He had, when he so willed it, the utter immobility of countenance of a red Indian,³⁹ and I could not gather from his appearance whether he was satisfied or not with the position of the case. His conversation, I remember, was about the Bertillon⁴⁰ system of measurements, and he expressed his enthusiastic admiration of the French savant.

We found our client still under the charge of his devoted nurse, but looking considerably better than before. He rose from the sofa and greeted us without

difficulty when we entered.

“Any news?” he asked eagerly.

“My report, as I expected, is a negative one,” said Holmes. “I have seen Forbes, and I have seen your uncle, and I have set one or two trains of inquiry upon foot which may lead to something.”

“You have not lost heart, then?”

“By no means.”

“God bless you for saying that!” cried Miss Harrison. “If we keep our courage and our patience the truth must come out.”

“We have more to tell you than you have for us,” said Phelps, reseating himself upon the couch.

“I hoped you might have something.”

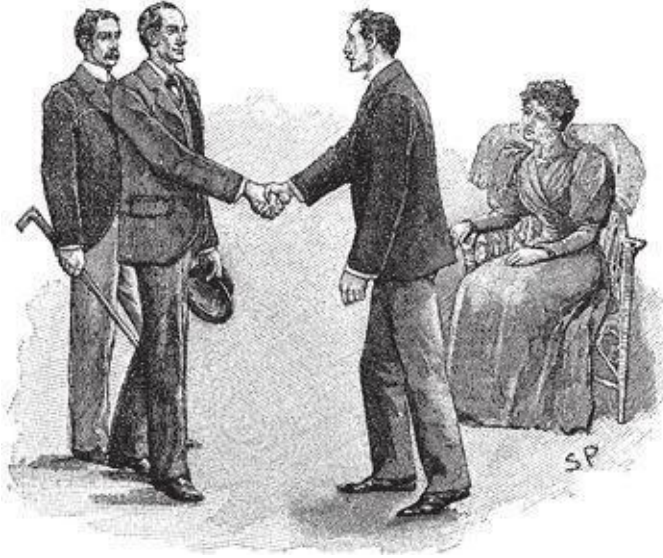
“Yes, we have had an adventure during the night, and one which might have proved to be a serious one.” His expression grew very grave as he spoke, and a look of something akin to fear sprang up in his eyes. “Do you know,” said he, “that I begin to believe that I am the unconscious centre of some monstrous conspiracy, and that my life is aimed at as well as my honour?”

“Ah!” cried Holmes.

“It sounds incredible, for I have not, as far as I know, an enemy in the world. Yet from last night’s experience I can come to no other conclusion.”

“Pray let me hear it.”

“You must know that last night was the very first night that I have ever slept without a nurse in the room. I was so much better that I thought I could dispense with one. I had a night-light burning, however. Well, about two in the morning I had sunk into a light sleep when I was suddenly aroused by a slight noise. It was like the sound which a mouse makes when it is gnawing a plank, and I lay listening to it for some time under the impression that it must come from that cause. Then it grew louder, and suddenly there came from the window a sharp metallic snick.⁴¹ I sat up in amazement. There could be no doubt what the sounds were now. The first ones had been caused by someone forcing an instrument through the slit between the sashes, and the second by the catch being pressed back.



“ ‘Any news?’ he asked.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“There was a pause then for about ten minutes, as if the person were waiting to see whether the noise had awakened me. Then I heard a gentle creaking as the window was very slowly opened. I could stand it no longer, for my nerves are not what they used to be. I sprang out of bed and flung open the shutters. A man was crouching at the window. I could see little of him, for he was gone like a flash. He was wrapped in some sort of cloak which came across the lower part of his face. One thing only I am sure of, and that is that he had some weapon in his hand. It looked to me like a long knife. I distinctly saw the gleam of it as he turned to run.”

“This is most interesting,” said Holmes. “Pray what did you do then?”

“I should have followed him through the open window if I had been stronger. As it was, I rang the bell and roused the house. It took some little time, for the bell rings in the kitchen and the servants all sleep upstairs. I shouted, however, and that brought Joseph down, and he roused the others. Joseph and the groom found marks on the bed outside the window, but the weather has been so dry lately that they found it hopeless to follow the trail across the grass. There’s a place, however, on the wooden fence which skirts the road which shows signs, they tell me, as if someone had got over, and had snapped the top of the rail in doing so. I have said nothing to the local police yet, for I thought I had best have your opinion first.”

This tale of our client’s appeared to have an extraordinary effect upon Sherlock Holmes. He rose from his chair and paced about the room in uncontrollable excitement.

“Misfortunes never come single,” said Phelps, smiling, though it was evident that his adventure had somewhat shaken him.

“You have certainly had your share,” said Holmes. “Do you think you could walk round the house with me?”

“Oh, yes, I should like a little sunshine. Joseph will come, too.”

“And I also,” said Miss Harrison.

“I am afraid not,” said Holmes, shaking his head. “I think I must ask you to remain sitting exactly where you are.”

The young lady resumed her seat with an air of displeasure. Her brother, however, had joined us and we set off all four together. We passed round the lawn to the outside of the young diplomatist’s window. There were, as he had said, marks upon the bed, but they were hopelessly blurred and vague. Holmes stooped over them for an instant, and then rose shrugging his shoulders.

“I don’t think anyone could make much of this,” said he. “Let us go round the house and see why this particular room was chosen by the burglar. I should have thought those larger windows of the drawingroom and dining-room would have had more attractions for him.”

“They are more visible from the road,” suggested Mr. Joseph Harrison.

“Ah, yes, of course. There is a door here which he might have attempted. What is it for?”

“It is the side entrance for trades-people. Of course it is locked at night.”

“Have you ever had an alarm like this before?”

“Never,” said our client.

“Do you keep plate in the house, or anything to attract burglars?”

“Nothing of value.”

Holmes strolled round the house with his hands in his pockets and a negligent air which was unusual with him.

“By the way,” said he to Joseph Harrison, “you found some place, I understand, where the fellow scaled the fence. Let us have a look at that!”

The plump young man led us to a spot where the top of one of the wooden rails had been cracked. A small fragment of the wood was hanging down. Holmes pulled it off and examined it critically.

“Do you think that was done last night? It looks rather old, does it not?”

“Well, possibly so.”

“There are no marks of anyone jumping down upon the other side. No, I fancy we shall get no help here. Let us go back to the bedroom and talk the matter over.”

Percy Phelps was walking very slowly, leaning upon the arm of his future brother-in-law. Holmes walked swiftly across the lawn, and we were at the open

window of the bedroom long before the others came up.

“Miss Harrison,” said Holmes, speaking with the utmost intensity of manner, “you must stay where you are all day. Let nothing prevent you from staying where you are all day. It is of the utmost importance.”

“Certainly, if you wish it, Mr. Holmes,” said the girl in astonishment.

“When you go to bed lock the door of this room on the outside and keep the key. Promise to do this.”

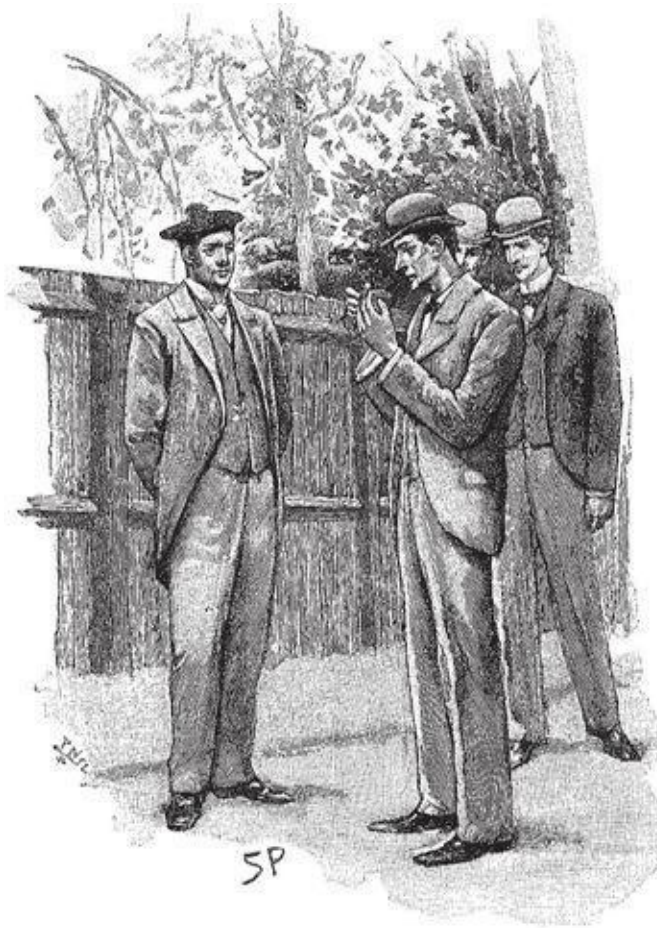
“But Percy?”

“He will come to London with us.”

“And am I to remain here?”

“It is for his sake. You can serve him. Quick! Promise!”

She gave a quick nod of assent just as the other two came up.



“Holmes examined it critically.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Why do you sit moping there, Annie?” cried her brother. “Come out into the sunshine!”

“No, thank you, Joseph. I have a slight headache and this room is deliciously cool and soothing.”

“What do you propose now, Mr. Holmes?” asked our client.

“Well, in investigating this minor affair we must not lose sight of our main inquiry. It would be a very great help to me if you would come up to London with us.”

“At once?”

“Well, as soon as you conveniently can. Say in an hour.”

“I feel quite strong enough, if I can really be of any help.”

“The greatest possible.”

“Perhaps you would like me to stay there to-night?”

“I was just going to propose it.”

“Then, if my friend of the night comes to revisit me, he will find the bird flown. We are all in your hands, Mr. Holmes, and you must tell us exactly what you would like done. Perhaps you would prefer that Joseph came with us so as to look after me?”

“Oh, no, my friend Watson is a medical man, you know, and he’ll look after you. We’ll have our lunch here, if you will permit us, and then we shall all three set off for town together.”

It was arranged as he suggested, though Miss Harrison excused herself from leaving the bedroom, in accordance with Holmes’s suggestion. What the object of my friend’s manoeuvres was I could not conceive, unless it were to keep the lady away from Phelps, who, rejoiced by his returning health and by the prospect of action, lunched with us in the dining-room. Holmes had a still more startling surprise for us, however, for, after accompanying us down to the station and seeing us into our carriage, he calmly announced that he had no intention of leaving Woking.

“There are one or two small points which I should desire to clear up before I go,” said he. “Your absence, Mr. Phelps, will in some ways rather assist me. Watson, when you reach London you would oblige me by driving at once to Baker Street with our friend here, and remaining with him until I see you again. It is fortunate that you are old school-fellows, as you must have much to talk over.⁴² Mr. Phelps can have the spare bedroom⁴³ to-night, and I will be with you in time for breakfast, for there is a train which will take me into Waterloo at eight.”

“But how about our investigation in London?” asked Phelps ruefully.

“We can do that tomorrow. I think that just at present I can be of more immediate use here.”

“You might tell them at Briarbrae that I hope to be back tomorrow night,”

cried Phelps, as we began to move from the platform.

“I hardly expect to go back to Briarbrae,” answered Holmes, and waved his hand to us cheerily as we shot out from the station.

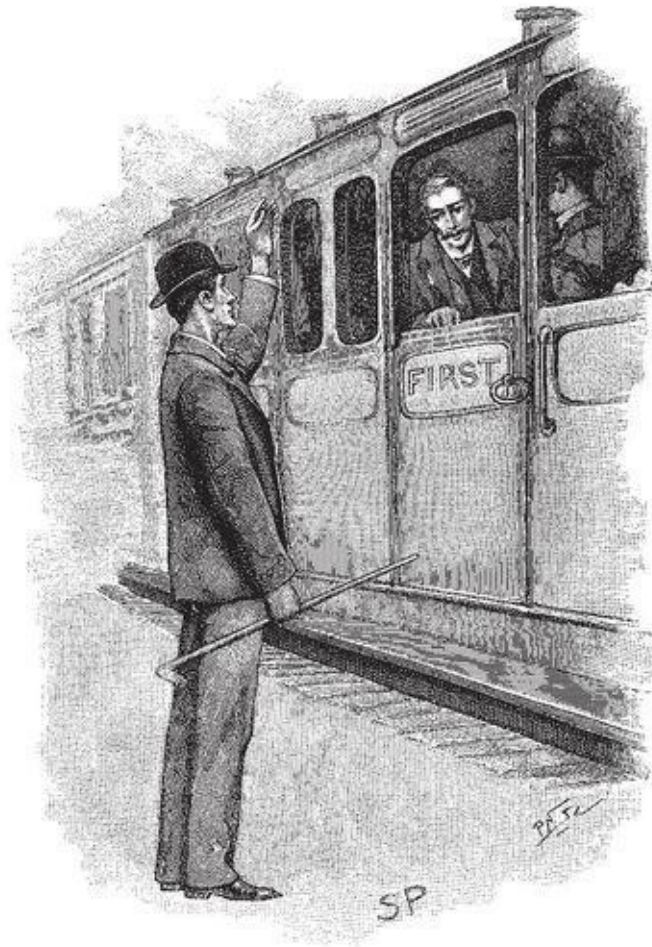
Phelps and I talked it over on our journey, but neither of us could devise a satisfactory reason for this new development.

“I suppose he wants to find out some clues as to the burglary last night, if a burglar it was. For myself, I don’t believe it was an ordinary thief.”

“What is your own idea, then?”

“Upon my word, you may put it down to my weak nerves or not, but I believe there is some deep political intrigue going on around me, and that for some reason that passes my understanding my life is aimed at by the conspirators. It sounds high-flown and absurd, but consider the facts! Why should a thief try to break in at a bedroom window where there could be no hope of any plunder, and why should he come with a long knife in his hand?”

“You are sure it was not a house-breaker’s jimmy?”



“I hardly expect to go back to Briarbrae.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Oh, no, it was a knife. I saw the flash of the blade quite distinctly.”

“But why on earth should you be pursued with such animosity?”

“Ah, that is the question.”

“Well, if Holmes takes the same view, that would account for his action, would it not? Presuming that your theory is correct, if he can lay his hands upon the man who threatened you last night he will have gone a long way towards finding who took the naval treaty. It is absurd to suppose that you have two enemies, one of whom robs you, while the other threatens your life.”

“But Holmes said that he was not going to Briarbrae.”

“I have known him for some time,” said I, “but I never knew him do anything yet without a very good reason,” and with that our conversation drifted off on to other topics.

But it was a weary day for me. Phelps was still weak after his long illness, and his misfortunes made him querulous and nervous. In vain I endeavoured to interest him in Afghanistan, in India, in social questions, in anything which might take his mind out of the groove. He would always come back to his lost treaty, wondering, guessing, speculating as to what Holmes was doing, what steps Lord Holdhurst was taking, what news we should have in the morning. As the evening wore on his excitement became quite painful.

“You have implicit faith in Holmes?” he asked.

“I have seen him do some remarkable things.”

“But he never brought light into anything quite so dark as this?”

“Oh, yes, I have known him solve questions which presented fewer clues than yours.”

“But not where such large interests are at stake?”

“I don’t know that. To my certain knowledge he has acted on behalf of three of the reigning houses of Europe⁴⁴ in very vital matters.”

“But you know him well, Watson. He is such an inscrutable fellow that I never quite know what to make of him. Do you think he is hopeful? Do you think he expects to make a success of it?”

“He has said nothing.”

“That is a bad sign.”

“On the contrary. I have noticed that when he is off the trail he generally says so. It is when he is on a scent and is not quite absolutely sure yet that it is the right one that he is most taciturn. Now, my dear fellow, we can’t help matters by making ourselves nervous about them, so let me implore you to go to bed and so

be fresh for whatever may await us tomorrow.”

I was able at last to persuade my companion to take my advice, though I knew from his excited manner that there was not much hope of sleep for him. Indeed, his mood was infectious, for I lay tossing half the night myself, brooding over this strange problem and inventing a hundred theories, each of which was more impossible than the last. Why had Holmes remained at Woking? Why had he asked Miss Harrison to remain in the sickroom all day? Why had he been so careful not to inform the people at Briarbrae that he intended to remain near them? I cudgelled my brains until I fell asleep in the endeavour to find some explanation which would cover all these facts.

It was seven o'clock when I awoke, and I set off at once for Phelps's room to find him haggard and spent after a sleepless night. His first question was whether Holmes had arrived yet.

“He'll be here when he promised,” said I, “and not an instant sooner or later.”

And my words were true, for shortly after eight a hansom dashed up to the door and our friend got out of it. Standing in the window we saw that his left hand was swathed in a bandage and that his face was very grim and pale. He entered the house, but it was some little time before he came upstairs.

“He looks like a beaten man,” cried Phelps.

I was forced to confess that he was right. “After all,” said I, “the clue of the matter lies probably here in town.”

Phelps gave a groan.

“I don't know how it is,” said he, “but I had hoped for so much from his return. But surely his hand was not tied up like that yesterday. What can be the matter?”

“You are not wounded, Holmes?” I asked as my friend entered the room.

“Tut, it is only a scratch through my own clumsiness,” he answered, nodding his good-morning to us. “This case of yours, Mr. Phelps, is certainly one of the darkest which I have ever investigated.”

“I feared that you would find it beyond you.”

“It has been a most remarkable experience.”

“That bandage tells of adventures,” said I. “Won't you tell us what has happened?”

“After breakfast, my dear Watson. Remember that I have breathed thirty miles of Surrey air this morning. I suppose that there has been no answer from my cabman advertisement? Well, well, we cannot expect to score every time.”

The table was all laid, and just as I was about to ring Mrs. Hudson entered with the tea and coffee. A few minutes later she brought in three covers, and we all drew up to the table, Holmes ravenous, I curious, and Phelps in the gloomiest

state of depression.

“Mrs. Hudson has risen to the occasion,” said Holmes, uncovering a dish of curried chicken. “Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman. What have you there, Watson?”

“Ham and eggs,” I answered.

“Good! What are you going to take, Mr. Phelps—curried fowl or eggs, or will you help yourself?”

“Thank you. I can eat nothing,” said Phelps.

“Oh, come! Try the dish before you.”

“Thank you, I would really rather not.”

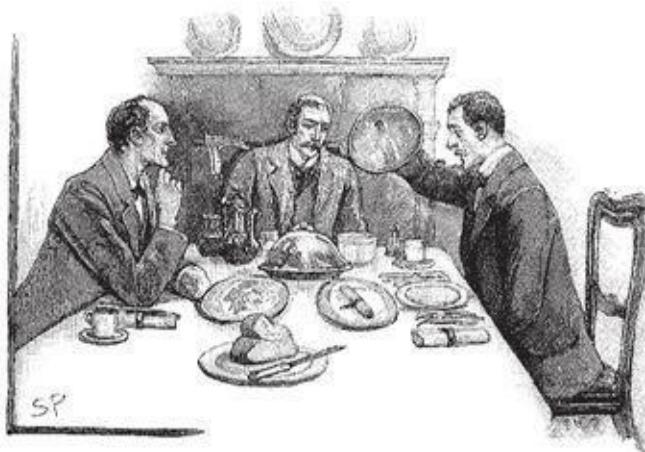
“Well, then,” said Holmes with a mischievous twinkle, “I suppose that you have no objection to helping me?”

Phelps raised the cover, and as he did so he uttered a scream and sat there staring with a face as white as the plate upon which he looked. Across the centre of it was lying a little cylinder of blue-grey paper. He caught it up, devoured it with his eyes, and then danced madly about the room, pressing it to his bosom and shrieking out in his delight. Then he fell back into an arm-chair, so limp and exhausted with his own emotions that we had to pour brandy down his throat to keep him from fainting.

“There! There!” said Holmes soothingly, patting him upon the shoulder. “It was too bad to spring it on you like this, but Watson here will tell you that I never can resist a touch of the dramatic.”

Phelps seized his hand and kissed it. “God bless you!” he cried. “You have saved my honour.”

“Well, my own was at stake, you know,” said Holmes. “I assure you it is just as hateful to me to fail in a case as it can be to you to blunder over a commission.”



“Phelps raised the cover.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

Phelps thrust away the precious document into the innermost pocket of his coat.

“I have not the heart to interrupt your breakfast any further, and yet I am dying to know how you got it and where it was.”

Sherlock Holmes swallowed a cup of coffee and turned his attention to the ham and eggs. Then he rose, lit his pipe, and settled himself down into his chair.

“I’ll tell you what I did first, and how I came to do it afterwards,” said he. “After leaving you at the station I went for a charming walk through some admirable Surrey scenery to a pretty little village called Ripley, where I had my tea at an inn and took the precaution of filling my flask and of putting a paper of sandwiches in my pocket. There I remained until evening, when I set off for Woking again and found myself in the highroad outside Briarbrae just after sunset.

“Well, I waited until the road was clear—it is never a very frequented one at any time, I fancy—and then I clambered over the fence into the grounds.”

“Surely the gate was open!” ejaculated Phelps.

“Yes, but I have a peculiar taste in these matters. I chose the place where the three fir-trees stand, and behind their screen I got over without the least chance of anyone in the house being able to see me. I crouched down among the bushes on the other side and crawled from one to the other—witness the disreputable state of my trouser knees—until I had reached the clump of rhododendrons just opposite to your bedroom window. There I squatted down and awaited developments.

“The blind was not down in your room, and I could see Miss Harrison sitting there reading by the table. It was quarter-past ten when she closed her book, fastened the shutters, and retired. I heard her shut the door and felt quite sure that she had turned the key in the lock.”

“The key!” ejaculated Phelps.

“Yes, I had given Miss Harrison instructions to lock the door on the outside and take the key with her when she went to bed. She carried out every one of my injunctions to the letter, and certainly without her co-operation you would not have that paper in your coat-pocket. She departed then and the lights went out, and I was left squatting in the rhododendron-bush.

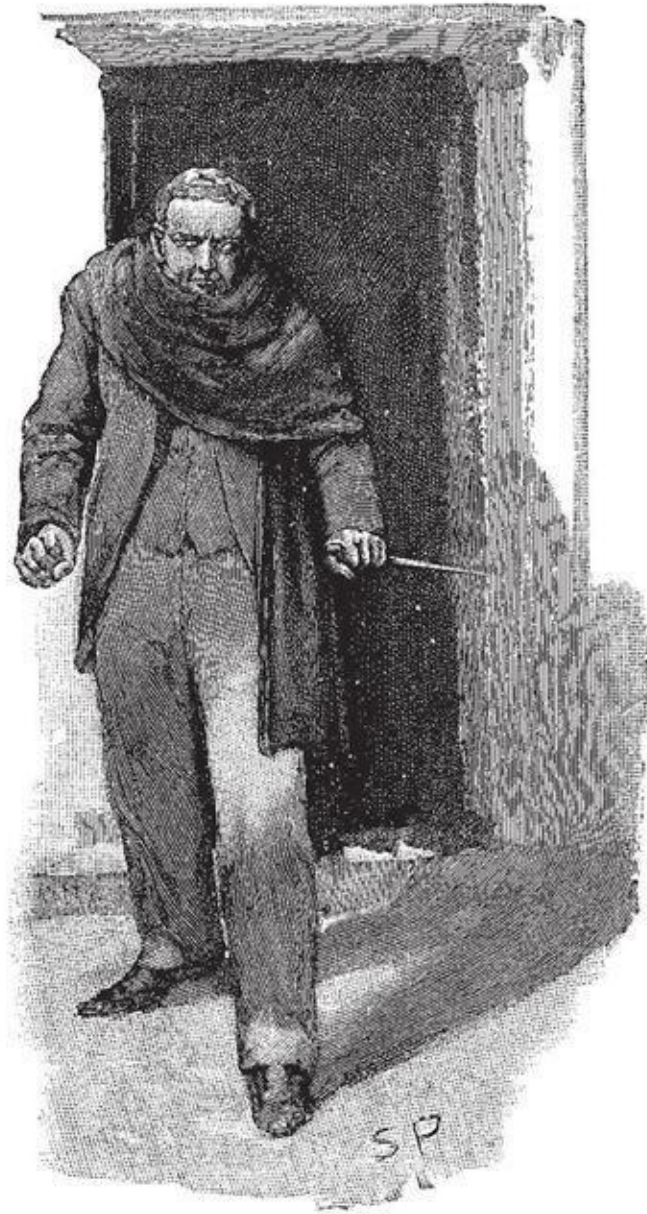
“The night was fine, but still it was a very weary vigil. Of course it has the sort of excitement about it that the sportsman feels when he lies beside the watercourse and waits for the big game. It was very long, though—almost as

long, Watson, as when you and I waited in that deadly room when we looked into the little problem of the Speckled Band. There was a church-clock down at Woking which struck the quarters, and I thought more than once that it had stopped. At last, however, about two in the morning, I suddenly heard the gentle sound of a bolt being pushed back and the creaking of a key. A moment later the servants' door was opened, and Mr. Joseph Harrison stepped out into the moonlight."

"Joseph!" ejaculated Phelps.

"He was bare-headed, but he had a black cloak thrown over his shoulder, so that he could conceal his face in an instant if there were any alarm. He walked on tiptoe under the shadow of the wall, and when he reached the window he worked a long-bladed knife through the sash and pushed back the catch. Then he flung open the window, and putting his knife through the crack in the shutters, he thrust the bar up and swung them open.

"From where I lay I had a perfect view of the inside of the room and of every one of his movements. He lit the two candles which stood upon the mantelpiece, and then he proceeded to turn back the corner of the carpet in the neighbourhood of the door. Presently he stooped and picked out a square piece of board, such as is usually left to enable plumbers to get at the joints of the gas-pipes. This one covered, as a matter of fact, the T joint which gives off the pipe which supplies the kitchen underneath. Out of this hiding-place⁴⁵ he drew that little cylinder of paper, pushed down the board, rearranged the carpet, blew out the candles, and walked straight into my arms as I stood waiting for him outside the window.



“Joseph Harrison stepped out.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“Well, he has rather more viciousness than I gave him credit for, has Master Joseph. He flew at me with his knife, and I had to grass⁴⁶ him twice, and got a cut over the knuckles, before I had the upper hand of him. He looked murder out of the only eye he could see with when we had finished, but he listened to reason and gave up the papers. Having got them I let my man go, but I wired full particulars to Forbes this morning. If he is quick enough to catch his bird, well and good. But if, as I shrewdly suspect, he finds the nest empty before he gets

there, why, all the better for the government. I fancy that Lord Holdhurst, for one, and Mr. Percy Phelps for another, would very much rather that the affair never got as far as a police-court.”

“My God!” gasped our client. “Do you tell me that during these long ten weeks of agony the stolen papers were within the very room with me all the time?”

“So it was.”

“And Joseph! Joseph a villain and a thief!”

“Hum! I am afraid Joseph’s character is a rather deeper and more dangerous one than one might judge from his appearance. From what I have heard from him this morning, I gather that he has lost heavily in dabbling with stocks, and that he is ready to do anything on earth to better his fortunes. Being an absolutely selfish man, when a chance presents itself he did not allow either his sister’s happiness or your reputation to hold his hand.”

Percy Phelps sank back in his chair.

“My head whirls,” said he. “Your words have dazed me.”

“The principal difficulty in your case,” remarked Holmes in his didactic fashion, “lay in the fact of there being too much evidence. What was vital was overlaid and hidden by what was irrelevant. Of all the facts which were presented to us we had to pick just those which we deemed to be essential, and then piece them together in their order, so as to reconstruct this very remarkable chain of events. I had already begun to suspect Joseph from the fact that you had intended to travel home with him that night, and that therefore it was a likely enough thing that he should call for you, knowing the Foreign Office well, upon his way.⁴⁷ When I heard that someone had been so anxious to get into the bedroom, in which no one but Joseph could have concealed anything—you told us in your narrative how you had turned Joseph out when you arrived with the doctor—my suspicions all changed to certainties, especially as the attempt was made on the first night upon which the nurse was absent, showing that the intruder was well acquainted with the ways of the house.”

“How blind I have been!”⁴⁸

“The facts of the case, as far as I have worked them out, are these: This Joseph Harrison entered the office through the Charles Street door, and knowing his way he walked straight into your room the instant after you left it. Finding no one there he promptly rang the bell, and at the instant that he did so his eyes caught the paper upon the table. A glance showed him that chance had put in his way a State document of immense value, and in an instant he had thrust it into his pocket and was gone. A few minutes elapsed, as you remember, before the

sleepy commissionaire drew your attention to the bell, and those were just enough to give the thief time to make his escape.

“He made his way to Woking by the first train, and, having examined his booty and assured himself that it really was of immense value, he had concealed it in what he thought was a very safe place, with the intention of taking it out again in a day or two, and carrying it to the French embassy, or wherever he thought that a long price was to be had. Then came your sudden return. He, without a moment’s warning, was bundled out of his room, and from that time onward there were always at least two of you there to prevent him from regaining his treasure. The situation to him must have been a maddening one. But at last he thought he saw his chance. He tried to steal in, but was baffled by your wakefulness. You may remember that you did not take your usual draught that night.”

“I remember.”

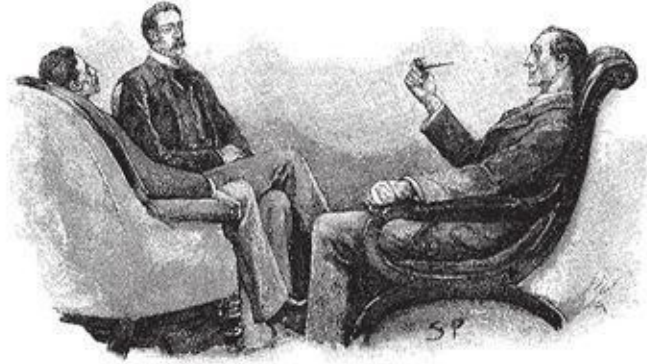
“I fancy that he had taken steps to make that draught efficacious, and that he quite relied upon your being unconscious. Of course, I understood that he would repeat the attempt whenever it could be done with safety. Your leaving the room gave him the chance he wanted. I kept Miss Harrison in it all day so that he might not anticipate us. Then, having given him the idea that the coast was clear, I kept guard as I have described. I already knew that the papers were probably in the room, but I had no desire to rip up all the planking and skirting in search of them. I let him take them, therefore, from the hiding-place, and so saved myself an infinity of trouble. Is there any other point which I can make clear?”

“Why did he try the window on the first occasion,” I asked, “when he might have entered by the door?”

“In reaching the door he would have to pass seven bedrooms. On the other hand, he could get out on to the lawn with ease. Anything else?”

“You do not think,” asked Phelps, “that he had any murderous intention? The knife was only meant as a tool.”

“It may be so,” answered Holmes, shrugging his shoulders. “I can only say for certain that Mr. Joseph Harrison is a gentleman to whose mercy I should be extremely unwilling to trust.”



“Is there any other point which I can make clear?”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

1 “The Naval Treaty” was published in two parts in the *Strand Magazine* in October and November 1893 and in *Harper’s Weekly* (New York) on October 14 and 21, 1893.

2 If the description of “specialist” means a private detective, von Waldbaum joins the elite company of only three other “competitors” mentioned by name in the Canon: Barker (“The Retired Colourman”), Le Brun (“The Illustrious Client”), and François Le Villard (*Sign of the Four*). These men are all, of course, inferior to Holmes: Barker (his “hated rival on the Surrey shore”) does “only what [Holmes] told him” in their joint case; all that is known of Le Brun is that the Baron Gruner (“The Illustrious Client”) utterly defeated him; and Villard is described as “deficient” but is worshipful of Holmes.

3 A story entitled “The Adventure of the Second Stain” was recorded by Watson and published in the *Strand Magazine* (December 1904) and *Collier’s Weekly* (January 28, 1905). One may search the story in vain for any mention of Fritz von Waldbaum or Monsieur Dubuque or for the “implication” of “many” of the “first families of the kingdom” (beyond, that is, that of Trelawney Hope). To confuse matters further, in “The Yellow Face” (published in February 1893), Watson refers to an “affair of ‘the second stain.’ ”

Somewhat unconvincingly, Anatole Chujoy asserts that the published version of “*The Second Stain*” was edited by Holmes to eliminate the spy hunt that followed it. “Watson, of course, had not expected that Holmes would censor *The Second Stain*; he had never done so before. Hence the apparent discrepancy between the reference to the story in *The Naval Treaty* and the story itself.” Yet Chujoy fails to explain why the story that was published took place in autumn (not, as Watson states here, in July) and featured Watson living as a bachelor on Baker Street. William S. Baring-Gould further punctures Chujoy’s argument by noting that Watson has been uncharacteristically specific about the date of this “Adventure of the Second Stain,” an effort that seems superfluous were he attempting to obscure the real facts. Thus it appears that, unlikely as it sounds, Holmes handled two separate cases that involved the significance of a second stain.

4 David R. McCallister makes a case for the “school” as the British Public School of St. Mary’s at Winchester, commonly known as Winchester College. One of the elite “Clarendon Schools,” Winchester best fits the Canonical clues for its location, its lack of rugby, and its utilization of the “Division” system (which permitted men of the same age to be separated in classes, as Phelps and Watson apparently were). McCallister amasses a wealth of evidence, including enrollment of several Phelps and Watsons over the years, but surely the most interesting point is his suggestion that Holmes abstained from public involvement in the “Jack the Ripper” case out of allegiance to Watson: Scotland Yard’s leading candidate for the killer was Montague John Druitt, a Winchester graduate. William S. Baring-Gould, in *Sherlock Holmes of Baker*

Street, designates Wellington College, Hampshire, without analysis, while Ian McQueen concurs with Winchester.

5 The Conservative party, at this time, reigned supreme over England's political hierarchy, having evolved over a complicated history of ideologies, loyalties, even names. Britain's first political parties, the Whigs and the Tories, developed in the late 1600s during the effort to exclude the Duke of York (later James II), a Roman Catholic, from the line of succession. The Presbyterian Whigs opposed the duke and later advocated a greater role for Parliament; the Tories supported James and believed in the right of divine monarchy. As the power of the monarchy diminished, the Whigs came to represent the interests of wealthy landowners and merchants; the Tories the landed gentry, the Church of England, and British isolationism.

The Tories transformed into the Conservative party after 1830, when John Wilson Croker described the faction with that term in the *Quarterly Review*. (Conservatives may still be referred to as Tories, but the Whigs were subsumed by the emerging Liberal party—which eventually disintegrated and gave way to the Labour party in the early twentieth century.) Out of favor in a time of anti-imperialism, Conservatives weathered a fallow period of three decades before being brought triumphantly back to prominence by Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (1868, 1874–1880), who saw the need for the party to reach out to a broader populace and encourage social reform. He did this in large part by leading passage of the surprising (for the elitist Tories) Reform Act of 1867, which more than doubled the electorate when previously only one out of every six adult males was able to vote. Disraeli's courting of the middle and working classes was a master stroke, and it paid off handsomely; as A. N. Wilson reports, "Conservatism, of a sort, was the dominant political creed of the second half of Victoria's reign."

6 O. F. Grazebrook, in his *Studies in Sherlock Holmes, II: Politics and Premiers*, identifies Lord Holdhurst with the Conservative Lord Salisbury, who was prime minister in 1888, when the events of "The Naval Treaty" occurred. (In all, Salisbury served three terms from 1885 to 1902, and was also foreign minister four times.) Grazebrook amasses pieces of circumstantial evidence to prove his case, including Salisbury's notoriety for untidy boots! Most scholars conclude that the disguised "Lord Bellinger" of "The Second Stain" and "Lord Holdhurst" must be the same individual and opt for Salisbury for both. However, Jon Lellenberg, quoting official government papers, conclusively identifies Lord Bellinger as William Ewart Gladstone, the four-time Liberal prime minister. It is difficult to square this identification with the description of Lord Holdhurst as a Conservative. F. E. Morgan also disagrees with the identification of Lord Salisbury, arguing that instead of the Foreign Office, the agency involved was really the Admiralty, and "Salisbury" was Lord George Hamilton, First Lord of the Admiralty.

7 Little wonder, for the milieu of the elite English public school—that bastion of the upper class and of good breeding—was notorious for submitting its pupils to every sort of childhood torture, and more. Fighting and bullying were rampant, as was an atmosphere of authoritarianism that fostered hierarchical cruelties such as flogging, caning, and sexual molestation. In flogging their students, historian Peter Gay writes, some headmasters were perhaps "only gratifying their barely suppressed sexual needs in the guise of penalizing absentmindedness, poor study habits, a missed lesson, an insubordinate look—or reached for the rod for no discernible reason at all." Headmasters whose sexual indiscretions caught up with them frequently were asked quietly to "retire"; and it often seemed that the public schools were concerned less with educating their students than with attempting to suppress their individuality. As A. N. Wilson marvels, "One of the mysteries of English life, from the 1820s to the present day, is why otherwise kind parents were prepared to entrust much-loved children to the rigours of boarding-school education." Yet the schoolboy's torment was literature's gain. Wilson goes on to write that the "school story" (*Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *Jane Eyre*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and others) was a major contribution to Victorian letters, noting, "There are no Elizabethan or Jacobean tragedies about school."

8 Chase.

9 Lord Donegall translates for “Trans-Atlantic” researchers: “What it means is that Watson and his Teddy-Boy friends chased young ‘Tadpole’ Phelps round the playground and bashed him about with cricket-stumps—which makes it the more peculiar that Percy should have come to John H. with his subsequent troubles!” (For those still confused, a wicket—in the game of cricket—consists of three wooden stumps, or stakes, each approximately two feet tall and one inch wide. Two shorter pieces of wood, called bails, are placed atop the stumps. The bowler throws the ball toward the wicket, attempting to hit the wicket such that the bails fall off; the batter defends the wicket by swinging his or her bat. Presumably, young Watson and his friends used not the entire wicket but, as Donegall guesses, merely the stumps, which, for a mischievous schoolboy, might seem custom-made to inflict damage.)

10 A vessel or chamber in which substances are distilled or decomposed by heat.

11 Named after Robert Bunsen, the German chemist who introduced (but did not invent) it in 1855, the Bunsen burner combines a hollow metal tube with a valve at the base that allows for regulation of the supply of air. Flammable gas and air together are forced upward through the tube and then lit to produce a hot flame. The principles behind the Bunsen burner paved the way for the invention of the gas-stove burner and the gas furnace.

12 A soft slipper with a pointed toe, often embroidered and with a leather sole, emanating from Persia (now Iran) or Turkey. Although legendary, Holmes’s use of the Persian slipper as a receptacle for tobacco is mentioned only in “The Empty House,” “The Illustrious Client,” “The Musgrave Ritual,” and “The Naval Treaty.”

13 Howard Brody suggests that this “commonplace little murder” is a poisoning by carbolic acid of Mary Sutherland, the hapless typist of “A Case of Identity,” whose story chronologists date to sometime just before the events in “The Naval Treaty.” Brody further pins the deed on Sutherland’s duplicitous stepfather James Windibank, fulfilling Holmes’s prophecy of his future (“That fellow will rise from crime to crime until he does something very bad, and ends on a gallow”). If this theory is correct, however, Holmes surprisingly shows no sign of any remorse here for his failure to warn Ms. Sutherland about Windibank’s potential to cause her still more harm.

14 Holmes called himself one in “The Reigate Squires.”

15 During their visit to Woking, a residential suburb in Surrey, Holmes and Watson might not only have passed England’s first crematorium (officially opened in 1885) but also encountered construction of a mosque of future renown. It was erected in 1889 for an intended institute of Oriental culture; but when those plans fell through, the mosque was converted into a place of worship in 1913, drawing Muslims to Woking from all over Britain.

16 Watson’s moustache is mentioned again in “Charles Augustus Milverton” and “The Red Circle.” Paget generally depicts the moustache as thick, with a slight taper toward the ends, a style adopted by both David Burke and Edward Hardwicke in the Granada Television productions of the Canon. Nigel Bruce, paired with Basil Rathbone in a long series of Fox and Universal Films in the 1930s and 1940s, wore much the same style.

17 Fletcher Pratt observes that there was a secret treaty between England and Italy entered into in 1887.

18 It is surprising that the British Foreign Office had no duplicating machines. While the photostatic process had not been invented, a variety of letter copying presses, roller copiers, and letter copying baths had proliferated since the patenting of a copying press by James Watt in 1780. In *Bureaucracy* (circa 1830), a story set in Paris in 1823, Balzac wrote of a government office worker who carried a handwritten memorandum “to an autographic printing house, where he obtained two pressed copies,” and of another office worker who was “considering whether these autographic presses could not be made to do the work of

copying clerks.”

19 In 1879, Germany and Austria-Hungary created a secret alliance as a defensive tactic against Russia. Italy joined the two in May 1882, out of anger at France over its invasion of Tunisia, and thus the Triple Alliance was born. In this delicate coalition (which eventually came to include Serbia and Romania), Italy was always something of an ambivalent outsider, given its rivalry with Austria-Hungary over the Balkans. Nonetheless, the treaty was periodically renewed until 1914 when Italy, contrary to the terms of the alliance, declared neutrality in World War I and ultimately joined the Allies to oppose its former conspirators.

20 While French is the traditional language of diplomacy, it is curious that a treaty between Britain and Italy should be written in French.

21 A charwoman was a cleaning woman. The word “char” has nothing to do with charcoal; rather, it derives from the Old English *cierr*, meaning turn (that is, a turn of work). After the term made its way across the Atlantic, it was modified into the uniquely American word “chore.”

22 The word “clock” appears in the American editions of the Canon in lieu of the word “church.”

23 There are two chiming clocks in the neighbourhood of Charles Street, explains Michael Harrison in *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*—the church clock at St. Margaret’s and the clock at Westminster Abbey. However, only a few yards from those clocks is Big Ben, whose chimes drown out its neighbours’. “It is extraordinary,” Harrison observes, “not only that Phelps should have mentioned the chiming of ‘a neighbouring church’ when Big Ben was practically overhead, but that Holmes should not have remarked upon this.”

24 The stiff cuff common in Victorian times. It was not as if Holmes had no notebook (see *The Sign of Four*). Watson observes that Dr. Mortimer used his shirtcuff similarly in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, but the context suggests that Watson thought it a sign of untidiness and absentmindedness.

25 Be that as it may, the activities of the commissioner’s wife, who has been hurrying about on the street, remain suspect. D. Martin Dakin puzzles over the matter and concludes that “[h]er movements are altogether wrapped in mystery. What was she doing between the time she came to Percy’s room and the time he left? Clearly not making the coffee.”

26 “List” here means a strip of cloth.

27 In modern slang, the “repo men.”

28 This could not have been the intended eleven o’clock train that Phelps had earlier hoped to catch. The theft occurred shortly before quarter to ten (Phelps notes the chimes), after which Phelps and the commissioner searched the premises—a process that may have occupied fifteen minutes to a half-hour: “The alarm had reached Scotland Yard by this time.” After Detective Forbes’s appearance, Phelps and Forbes took a hansom to the Tangey residence, reaching it “in half an hour.” “About ten minutes later,” the charwoman appeared. The examination of her residence and the return to Scotland Yard might have taken forty-five minutes, all told, and the search of Mrs. Tangey herself, another ten minutes. Phelps was then escorted to Waterloo. Thus the earliest Phelps could have possibly caught a train would be one hour and fifty minutes after the chimes, or about half-past eleven.

29 Surprisingly, no one has suggested any connection with the Ferriers of *A Study in Scarlet*.

30 French Protestants, who suffered continued persecution throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A prime example is the massacre of Saint Bartholomew’s Day, in which the attempted assassination of Huguenot leader Gaspard de Coligny (ordered by Catherine de’ Medici, the mother of

Charles IX) led to a royal plot to kill all of the Huguenot leaders. The massacre spun out of control, and from August to October of 1572, more than 3,000 Protestants were killed in Paris alone. (Some estimates put the number of those killed throughout France at 70,000.) Henry IV's Edict of Nantes in 1598 gave the Huguenots some degree of religious and political freedom, but when Louis XIV revoked the edict in 1685, more than 400,000 Huguenots abandoned France to settle in Britain, Prussia, the Netherlands, and the United States.

31 The Coldstreams, also known as "Coalies," marched with General George Monck into London on February 2, 1660, to help restore the monarchy after Richard Cromwell's government collapsed. According to Mrs. Crichton Sellars in her "Dr. Watson and the British Army," the Coldstream Guards were "one of the most famous regiments in the whole British army. . . . Their service has been long and always honourable." In fact, Sellars wonders whether Watson didn't fabricate the commissionaire's association with that regiment in order to characterise him as a man entirely above reproach.

32 The intensely fragrant moss rose, which has large blossoms and many petals, is so named because the flower's sepals and stem appear to be covered in a green or reddish moss. Mutated from damask and centifolia (or "cabbage") roses, the moss rose was a particular favourite in Victorian times, whether in gardens, bouquets, or decorative art.

33 Vernon Rendell observes that Holmes "ignores the elementary fact, for students of natural history, that colour and scent are not 'extras' in blossoms. They are designed to attract the insects which fertilise them and so help produce the seed."

34 Whether by coincidence or design, Holmes seems to favour this number, providing seven separate explanations of the facts behind "The Copper Beeches" and seven different schemes for getting a glimpse of Godfrey Staunton's telegram ("The Missing Three-Quarter").

35 The schools were red-brick three-storey Queen Anne-style buildings that stood in the middle of walled asphalt playgrounds. These were England's first taxpayer-supported schools (not to be confused with "public schools," elite private institutions such as Eton, Harrow, and Winchester, which had once been founded to educate the poor but had altered, over the centuries, into sanctuaries of the rich, who took great pains to exclude the poor). Until the creation of a School Board for London in 1870, the only organisations dedicated to providing education to the impoverished London classes were the British and Foreign School Society, founded in 1808, and the National Society, founded in 1811, affiliated, respectively, with the Anglican and Nonconformist churches. Although they were committed (with various other religious denominations) to providing poor children with instruction—often through Sunday schools, which did not remove children from the workplace—the demands of a rapidly increasing population proved beyond their capabilities. In 1871, only 262,259 children, or 39 per cent of the estimated population of school age, could be accommodated by the public and Society schools. By October 1881 the School Board for London had supplied accommodation for more than 200,000 additional children, which gave a total number of places sufficient for some 500,000 children. It was not until 1899, with the establishment of the National Board of Education and the abolition of the fees paid by parents, that education was made compulsory and available to every child in England. The election of the School Board in 1870 broke new ground in other ways: Not only were women with property allowed to vote in the election, but they could stand for office. Dr. Elizabeth Garrett, the first woman doctor in England, was elected to the board with more votes than any other candidate.

36 England's northernmost county is a wild, chilly, remote locale, and its natives are described in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* as typically "stalwart and robust, and seldom corpulent. The people have mostly grey eyes, brown hair, and good complexions." Neither of the Harrisons display the typical physical characteristics of the typical Northumbrian. Could the Harrisons have been spies sent to obtain the treaty?

37 At that time, the omnibus that Mrs. Tangey took to her home would have been an enclosed carriage pulled by two horses, with seats for passengers both inside and on the roof. Although an eight-passenger omnibus with a single-cylinder engine was built in Germany in 1895, the vehicles were not motorized on any larger scale until the early twentieth century.

38 The American editions of the Canon have the word “yesterday” and not “to-day.”

39 Watson may be comparing Holmes here to a “cigar-store Indian,” or the traditional life-sized wooden figure that stood outside tobacco shops. The practice of carving and displaying such statues actually started in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with native Americans—who had introduced tobacco to English explorers and settlers—romantically and historically linked, in the British mind, to the cultivation and enjoyment of tobacco. Of course, Watson well may have seen real “Red Indians,” for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, which featured dozens and dozens of Native Americans, was a frequent visitor to London.

40 Before fingerprinting, there was *Bertillonage*, or the Bertillon system, which aimed to classify criminals through bodily measurements. The system was the creation of Alphonse Bertillon (1853–1914), who joined the Paris police force in 1879 and became its head of criminal identification. Inspired by his anthropologist father, Bertillon reasoned that while a criminal might alter his appearance by wearing a wig, or conceal his identity by using an alias, his physical dimensions were nearly impossible to change. Under the Bertillon system, officers took two pictures of each suspect, one face-forward and one side view (Bertillon is often credited with popularizing both the mug shot and the crime-scene photo) and then carefully noted on an index card the precise dimensions of the suspect’s head, various limbs, and appendages; any defining body characteristics; and in particular, the shape of the ear. Eleven different measurements were taken in all. The Bertillon system was officially adopted in France in 1888, and its use quickly spread to police departments throughout the world. But its imperfections were demonstrated when it was discovered in 1903 that two suspects, a Will West and a William West—though allegedly no relation—possessed almost identical measurements, and thus had been classified as the same person. The two Wests did, however, have different fingerprints. (While there is some dispute over the matter, it seems likely that the Wests were in fact identical twins.) Bertillon reluctantly began including fingerprinting as a supplement to his system, and eventually the practice replaced *Bertillonage* altogether. See also Volume II, “Sherlock Holmes and Fingerprinting,” an appendix to “The Norwood Builder.”

41 *The Oxford English Dictionary* credits “The Naval Treaty” as the first usage of this word to mean a sound.

42 S. C. Roberts, a tireless champion of the point of view that Holmes attended university at Oxford, points out that Holmes had several intimate conversations with Phelps (who had had a “triumphant career” at Cambridge), none of which made any reference to the school. “If Holmes had in fact also been a Cambridge man it is almost inconceivable that neither he nor Phelps should have mentioned the University which they had in common.” Therefore, concludes Roberts, Holmes and Phelps must have attended different universities.

43 Presumably Watson’s former bedroom, since he was no longer living at Baker Street.

44 There are Canonical references to Holmes’s efforts on behalf of rulers of Bohemia (“A Scandal in Bohemia”), Holland (“A Scandal in Bohemia”), and Scandinavia (“The Noble Bachelor” and “The Final Problem”).

45 How did Joseph Harrison know of the trapdoor? Although he was staying in the “cheery bedroom,” he must have been an odd sort to have idly searched the room or moved the carpet.

[46](#) To knock down or bring down. James Holroyd suggests that Holmes may have knocked him down *twice* for reasons other than Harrison's resilience. Instead, he suggests Holmes resented Harrison's earlier greeting, when he clucked, "Percy has been enquiring for you all morning. Ah, poor chap, he clings to any straw." To this may be added Harrison's insouciant response to Holmes's observation of his monogram: "For a moment I thought you had done something clever." Little wonder the proud Holmes might feel compelled to take Harrison down a few pegs, in more ways than one.

[47](#) Harrison, of course, had plenty of time to make an eleven o'clock train if he committed the theft at quarter to ten. He must have said that he waited for Percy at the station and when he did not appear, he assumed Percy to be working late. When Phelps arrived home, all had to be "roused from their beds," so Harrison's explanation of a late evening of work apparently caused no alarm.

[48](#) This editor, in a speculation entitled "From Prussia with Love: Contemplating 'The Naval Treaty.'" points out that if Phelps had been more observant, he might have noticed that not only did Joseph and Annie Harrison bear little resemblance to true Northumbrians (their supposed forebears) but even less resemblance to each other. Holmes may have missed the opportunity to expose both Harrisons as agents for the German imperial government, sent precisely to obtain the precious treaty. Joseph Harrison then attempted to break into Phelps's bedroom to *replace* the treaty, not to steal it, so that the British government would not be aware of its disclosure.

THE FINAL PROBLEM1

To paraphrase Watson, it was with heavy hearts that Strand Magazine readers began the tale Watson recorded as “The Final Problem,” which purported to include Watson’s “last words” about Sherlock Holmes. The story stunned the British public, cost the Strand Magazine twenty thousand subscribers, and led to an outbreak of black armbands. Watson kept his silence until 1901, eight years after publication of “The Final Problem,” when he published The Hound of the Baskervilles, another reminiscence of Holmes. The modern reader knows that Holmes did not die, as Watson evidently believed at the close of this account, but instead returned to London in 1894. For obscure reasons, Holmes refused to allow Watson to disclose this information to his readers until 1903, when Watson was permitted to reveal the true conclusion of the events of “The Final Problem” in connection with his report of “The Adventure of the Empty

House,” the first story of the volume entitled The Return of Sherlock Holmes. But “The Final Problem” is a fine drama in its own right, with the tense and thrilling encounters between Holmes and Professor Moriarty (copied by William Gillette with great success in his play Sherlock Holmes and aped in countless films thereafter). Moriarty, who has achieved near-legendary status as the arch-nemesis of Holmes, appears only in “The Final Problem,” “The Empty House,” and The Valley of Fear, and so the information about him in this tale has been carefully mined by scholars.

IT IS WITH a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished.² In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion, I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in his company from the chance which first brought us together at the period of the “Study in Scarlet,” up to the time of his interference in the matter of the “Naval Treaty”—an interference which had the unquestionable effect of preventing a serious international complication. It was my intention to have stopped there, and to have said nothing of that event which has created a void in my life which the lapse of two years has done little to fill. My hand has been forced, however, by the recent letters in which Colonel James Moriarty defends the memory of his brother,³ and I have no choice but to lay the facts before the public exactly as they occurred. I alone know the absolute truth of the

matter, and I am satisfied that the time has come when no good purpose is to be served by its suppression. As far as I know, there have been only three accounts in the public press: that in the *Journal de Geneve* on May 6th, 1891, the Reuter's⁴ dispatch in the English papers on May 7th, and finally the recent letters to which I have alluded. Of these the first and second were extremely condensed,⁵ while the last is, as I shall now show, an absolute perversion of the facts. It lies with me to tell for the first time what really took place between Professor Moriarty and Mr. Sherlock Holmes.



“The death of Sherlock Holmes.”

H. T. Webster, source unknown, April 25, 1921



“The Final Problem.”

E. S. Morris, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 10, 1912

It may be remembered that after my marriage, and my subsequent start in private practice, the very intimate relations which had existed between Holmes and myself became to some extent modified. He still came to me from time to time when he desired a companion in his investigations, but these occasions grew more and more seldom, until I find that in the year 1890 there were only three cases of which I retain any record.⁶ During the winter of that year and the early spring of 1891, I saw in the papers that he had been engaged by the French government upon a matter of supreme importance, and I received two notes from Holmes, dated from Narbonne and from Nimes, from which I gathered that his stay in France was likely to be a long one. It was with some surprise, therefore, that I saw him walk into my consulting-room upon the evening of April 24th. It struck me that he was looking even paler and thinner than usual.



“It was with some surprise . . . that I saw him walking
into my consulting-room.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

“Yes, I have been using myself up rather too freely,” he remarked, in answer to my look rather than to my words; “I have been a little pressed of late. Have you any objection to my closing your shutters?”

The only light in the room came from the lamp upon the table at which I had been reading. Holmes edged his way round the wall, and, flinging the shutters together, he bolted them securely.

“You are afraid of something?” I asked.

“Well, I am.”

“Of what?”

“Of airguns.”⁷

“My dear Holmes, what do you mean?”

“I think that you know me well enough, Watson, to understand that I am by no means a nervous man. At the same time, it is stupidity rather than courage to refuse to recognise danger when it is close upon you. Might I trouble you for a match?” He drew in the smoke of his cigarette as if the soothing influence was grateful to him.

“I must apologize for calling so late,” said he, “and I must further beg you to

be so unconventional as to allow me to leave your house presently by scrambling over your back garden wall.”⁸

“But what does it all mean?” I asked.

He held out his hand, and I saw in the light of the lamp that two of his knuckles were burst and bleeding.

“It’s not an airy nothing, you see,” said he, smiling. “On the contrary, it is solid enough for a man to break his hand over. Is Mrs. Watson in?”

“She is away upon a visit.”

“Indeed! You are alone?”

“Quite.”

“Then it makes it the easier for me to propose that you should come away with me for a week to the Continent.”

“Where?”

“Oh, anywhere. It’s all the same to me.”

There was something very strange in all this. It was not Holmes’s nature to take an aimless holiday, and something about his pale, worn face told me that his nerves were at their highest tension. He saw the question in my eyes, and, putting his finger-tips together and his elbows upon his knees, he explained the situation.



“Two of his knuckles were burst and bleeding.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“You have probably never heard of Professor Moriarty?” said he.

“Never.”⁹

“Ay, there’s the genius and the wonder of the thing!” he cried. “The man pervades London, and no one has heard of him. That’s what puts him on a

pinnacle in the records of crime. I tell you Watson, in all seriousness, that if I could beat that man, if I could free society of him, I should feel that my own career had reached its summit and I should be prepared to turn to some more placid line in life. Between ourselves, the recent cases in which I have been of assistance to the royal family of Scandinavia, and to the French republic, have left me in such a position that I could continue to live in the quiet fashion which is most congenial to me,¹⁰ and to concentrate my attention upon my chemical researches.¹¹ But I could not rest, Watson, I could not sit quiet in my chair, if I thought that such a man as Professor Moriarty were walking the streets of London unchallenged.”

“What has he done, then?”

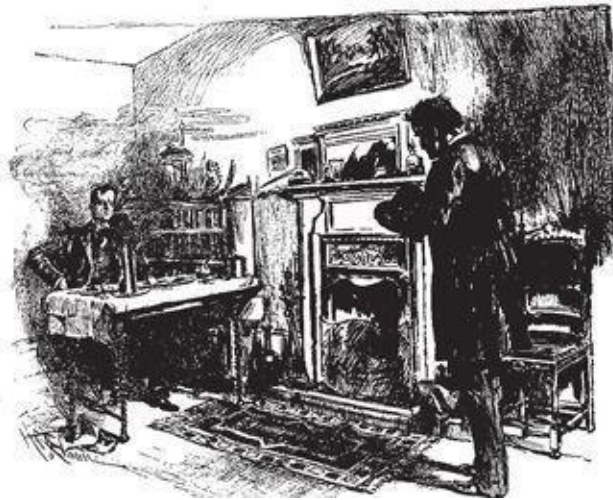
“His career has been an extraordinary one. He is a man of good birth and excellent education, endowed by nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty. At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise upon the Binomial Theorem,¹² which has had a European vogue. On the strength of it he won the Mathematical Chair at one of our smaller Universities, and had, to all appearances, a most brilliant career before him. But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers. Dark rumours gathered round him in the university town, and eventually he was compelled to resign his Chair and to come down to London, where he set up as an Army coach.¹³ So much is known to the world, but what I am telling you now is what I have myself discovered.

“As you are aware, Watson, there is no one who knows the higher criminal world of London so well as I do. For years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organizing power which for ever stands in the way of the law, and throws its shield over the wrong-doer. Again and again in cases of the most varying sorts—forgery cases, robberies, murders—I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its action in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally consulted. For years I have endeavoured to break through the veil which shrouded it, and at last the time came when I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me, after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty, of mathematical celebrity.

“He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand

radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organized. Is there a crime to be done, a paper to be abstracted, we will say, a house to be rifled, a man to be removed—the word is passed to the professor, the matter is organized and carried out. The agent may be caught. In that case money is found for his bail or his defence. But the central power which uses the agent is never caught—never so much as suspected. This was the organization which I deduced, Watson, and which I devoted my whole energy to exposing and breaking up.

“But the professor was fenced round with safeguards so cunningly devised that, do what I would, it seemed impossible to get evidence which would convict in a court of law. You know my powers, my dear Watson, and yet at the end of three months I was forced to confess that I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal. My horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration at his skill. But at last he made a trip—only a little, little trip—but it was more than he could afford, when I was so close upon him. I had my chance, and, starting from that point, I have woven my net round him until now it is all ready to close. In three days—that is to say, on Monday next—matters will be ripe, and the professor, with all the principal members of his gang, will be in the hands of the police. Then will come the greatest criminal trial of the century, the clearing up of over forty mysteries, and the rope for all of them; but if we move at all prematurely, you understand, they may slip out of our hands even at the last moment.



“ . . . Professor Moriarty stood before me.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

“Now, if I could have done this without the knowledge of Professor Moriarty, all would have been well. But he was too wily for that. He saw every step which I took to draw my toils round him. Again and again he strove to break away, but I as often headed him off. I tell you, my friend, that if a detailed account of that silent contest could be written, it would take its place as the most brilliant bit of thrust-and-parry work in the history of detection. Never have I risen to such a height, and never have I been so hard pressed by an opponent. He cut deep, and yet I just undercut him. This morning the last steps were taken, and three days only were wanted to complete the business. I was sitting in my room thinking the matter over when the door opened and Professor Moriarty stood before me.

“My nerves are fairly proof, Watson, but I must confess to a start when I saw the very man who had been so much in my thoughts standing there on my threshold. His appearance was quite familiar to me. He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head. He is clean-shaven, pale, and ascetic-looking, retaining something of the professor in his features. His shoulders are rounded from much study, and his face protrudes forward and is for ever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion. He peered at me with great curiosity in his puckered eyes.

“ ‘You have less frontal development¹⁴ than I should have expected,’ said he at last. ‘It is a dangerous habit to finger loaded firearms in the pocket of one’s dressing-gown.’

“The fact is that upon his entrance I had instantly recognised the extreme personal danger in which I lay. The only conceivable escape for him lay in silencing my tongue. In an instant I had slipped the revolver from the drawer into my pocket and was covering him through the cloth.¹⁵ At his remark I drew the weapon out and laid it cocked upon the table. He still smiled and blinked, but there was something about his eyes which made me feel very glad that I had it there.

“ ‘You evidently don’t know me,’ said he.

“ ‘On the contrary,’ I answered, ‘I think it is fairly evident that I do. Pray take a chair. I can spare you five minutes if you have anything to say.’



“ . . . Professor Moriarty stood before me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

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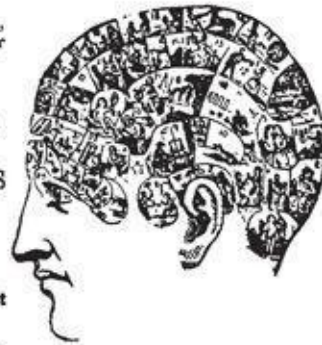
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“ ‘All that I have to say has already crossed your mind,’ said he.

“ ‘Then possibly my answer has crossed yours,’ I replied.

“ ‘You stand fast?’

“ ‘Absolutely.’

“He clapped his hand into his pocket, and I raised the pistol from the table. But he merely drew out a memorandum-book in which he had scribbled some dates.

“ ‘You crossed my path on the 4th of January,’ said he. ‘On the 23rd you incommoded me; by the middle of February I was seriously inconvenienced by you; at the end of March I was absolutely hampered in my plans; and now, at the close of April, I find myself placed in such a position through your continual persecution that I am in positive danger of losing my liberty. The situation is becoming an impossible one.’

“ ‘Have you any suggestion to make?’ I asked.

“ ‘You must drop it, Mr. Holmes,’ said he, swaying his face about. ‘You really must, you know.’

“ ‘After Monday,’¹⁶ said I.

“ ‘Tut, tut!’ said he. ‘I am quite sure that a man of your intelligence will see that there can be but one outcome to this affair. It is necessary that you should withdraw. You have worked things in such a fashion that we have only one resource left. It has been an intellectual treat to me to see the way in which you have grappled with this affair, and I say, unaffectedly, that it would be a grief to me to be forced to take any extreme measure. You smile, sir, but I assure you that it really would.’

“ ‘Danger is part of my trade,’ I remarked.

“ ‘This is not danger,’ said he. ‘It is inevitable destruction. You stand in the way not merely of an individual but of a mighty organization, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to realise. You must stand clear, Mr. Holmes, or be trodden under foot.’

“ ‘I am afraid,’ said I, rising, ‘that in the pleasure of this conversation I am neglecting business of importance which awaits me elsewhere.’

“He rose also and looked at me in silence, shaking his head sadly.

“ ‘Well, well,’ said he at last. ‘It seems a pity, but I have done what I could. I know every move of your game. You can do nothing before Monday. It has been a duel between you and me, Mr. Holmes. You hope to place me in the dock.¹⁷ I tell you that I will never stand in the dock. You hope to beat me. I tell you that you will never beat me. If you are clever enough to bring destruction upon me, rest assured that I shall do as much to you.’

“ ‘You have paid me several compliments, Mr. Moriarty,’ said I. ‘Let me pay

you one in return when I say that if I were assured of the former eventuality I would, in the interests of the public, cheerfully accept the latter.’

“ ‘I can promise you the one, but not the other,’ he snarled, and so turned his rounded back upon me and went peering and blinking out of the room.

“That was my singular interview with Professor Moriarty. I confess that it left an unpleasant effect upon my mind. His soft, precise fashion of speech leaves a conviction of sincerity which a mere bully could not produce. Of course, you will say: ‘Why not take police precautions against him?’ The reason is that I am well convinced that it is from his agents the blow would fall. I have the best of proofs that it would be so.”

“You have already been assaulted?”



“He turned his rounded back upon me.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

“My dear Watson, Professor Moriarty is not a man who lets the grass grow under his feet. I went out about midday to transact some business in Oxford Street. As I passed the corner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welbeck Street crossing a two-horse van furiously driven whizzed round and was on me like a flash. I sprang for the foot-path and saved myself by the fraction of a second. The van dashed round by Marylebone Lane and was gone in an instant. I kept to the pavement after that, Watson, but as I walked down

Vere Street a brick came down from the roof of one of the houses and was shattered to fragments at my feet. I called the police and had the place examined. There were slates and bricks piled up on the roof preparatory to some repairs, and they would have me believe that the wind had toppled over one of these. Of course I knew better, but I could prove nothing. I took a cab after that and reached my brother's rooms in Pall Mall, where I spent the day. Now I have come round to you, and on my way I was attacked by a rough with a bludgeon. I knocked him down, and the police have him in custody; but I can tell you with the most absolute confidence that no possible connection will ever be traced between the gentleman upon whose front teeth I have barked my knuckles and the retiring mathematical coach, who is, I daresay, working out problems upon a black-board ten miles away. You will not wonder, Watson, that my first act on entering your rooms was to close your shutters, and that I have been compelled to ask your permission to leave the house by some less conspicuous exit than the front door."

I had often admired my friend's courage, but never more than now, as he sat quietly checking off a series of incidents which must have combined to make up a day of horror.

"You will spend the night here?" I said.

"No, my friend, you might find me a dangerous guest. I have my plans laid, and all will be well. Matters have gone so far now that they can move without my help as far as the arrest goes, though my presence is necessary for a conviction. It is obvious, therefore, that I cannot do better than get away for the few days which remain before the police are at liberty to act. It would be a great pleasure to me, therefore, if you could come on to the Continent with me."



Oxford Street.

The Queen's London (1897) "The practice is quiet," said I, "and I have an accommodating neighbour. I should be glad to come."



“. . . he sat quietly checking off a series of incidents . . .”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

“And to start to-morrow morning?”

“If necessary.”

“Oh, yes, it is most necessary. Then these are your instructions, and I beg, my dear Watson, that you will obey them to the letter, for you are now playing a double-handed game with me against the cleverest rogue and the most powerful syndicate of criminals in Europe. Now listen! You will dispatch whatever luggage you intend to take by a trusty messenger unaddressed to Victoria to-night. In the morning you will send for a hansom, desiring your man to take neither the first nor the second which may present itself. Into this hansom you will jump, and you will drive to the Strand end of the Lowther Arcade,¹⁸ handing the address to the cabman upon a slip of paper, with a request that he will not throw it away. Have your fare ready, and the instant that your cab stops, dash through the Arcade, timing yourself to reach the other side at a quarter-past nine. You will find a small brougham waiting close to the curb, driven by a fellow with a heavy black cloak tipped at the collar with red. Into this you will step, and you will reach Victoria in time for the Continental express.”

“Where shall I meet you?”

“At the station. The second first-class carriage from the front will be reserved for us.”

“The carriage is our rendezvous, then?”

“Yes.”

It was in vain that I asked Holmes to remain for the evening. It was evident to me that he thought he might bring trouble to the roof he was under, and that that was the motive which impelled him to go. With a few hurried words as to our plans for the morrow he rose and came out with me into the garden, clambering over the wall which leads into Mortimer Street,¹⁹ and immediately whistling for a hansom, in which I heard him drive away.

In the morning I obeyed Holmes’s injunctions to the letter. A hansom was procured with such precautions as would prevent its being one which was placed ready for us, and I drove immediately after breakfast to the Lowther Arcade, through which I hurried at the top of my speed. A brougham was waiting with a very massive driver wrapped in a dark cloak, who, the instant that I had stepped in, whipped up the horse and rattled off to Victoria Station. On my alighting there he turned the carriage, and dashed away again without so much as a look in my direction.



“A brougham was waiting with a very massive driver in a dark cloak.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

So far all had gone admirably. My luggage was waiting for me, and I had no difficulty in finding the carriage which Holmes had indicated, the less so as it was the only one in the train which was marked “Engaged.” My only source of anxiety now was the non-appearance of Holmes. The station clock marked only

seven minutes from the time when we were due to start. In vain I searched among the groups of travellers and leave-takers for the lithe figure of my friend. There was no sign of him. I spent a few minutes in assisting a venerable Italian priest, who was endeavouring to make a porter understand, in his broken English, that his luggage was to be booked through to Paris. Then, having taken another look round, I returned to my carriage, where I found that the porter, in spite of the ticket, had given me my decrepit Italian friend as a travelling companion. It was useless for me to explain to him that his presence was an intrusion, for my Italian was even more limited than his English, so I shrugged my shoulders resignedly, and continued to look out anxiously for my friend. A chill of fear had come over me, as I thought that his absence might mean that some blow had fallen during the night. Already the doors had all been shut and



the whistle blown, when—

“My decrepit Italian friend.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893



“Ah, there is Moriarty himself.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

“My dear Watson,” said a voice, “you have not even condescended to say good-morning.”

I turned in uncontrollable astonishment. The aged ecclesiastic had turned his face towards me. For an instant the wrinkles were smoothed away, the nose drew away from the chin, the lower lip ceased to protrude and the mouth to mumble, the dull eyes regained their fire, the drooping figure expanded. The next the whole frame collapsed again, and Holmes had gone as quickly as he had come.

“Good heavens!” I cried, “how you startled me!”

“Every precaution is still necessary,” he whispered. “I have reason to think that they are hot upon our trail. Ah, there is Moriarty himself.”

The train had already begun to move as Holmes spoke. Glancing back, I saw a tall man pushing his way furiously through the crowd, and waving his hand as if he desired to have the train stopped. It was too late, however, for we were rapidly gathering momentum, and an instant later had shot clear of the station.²⁰

“With all our precautions, you see that we have cut it rather fine,” said Holmes, laughing. He rose, and throwing off the black cassock²¹ and hat which had formed his disguise, he packed them away in a hand-bag.

“Have you seen the morning paper, Watson?”

“No.”

“You haven’t seen about Baker Street, then?”

“Baker Street?”

“They set fire to our rooms last night. No great harm was done.”

“Good heavens, Holmes, this is intolerable!”

“They must have lost my track completely after their bludgeonman was arrested. Otherwise they could not have imagined that I had returned to my rooms. They have evidently taken the precaution of watching you, however, and that is what has brought Moriarty to Victoria. You could not have made any slip in coming?”

“I did exactly what you advised.”

“Did you find your brougham?”

“Yes, it was waiting.”

“Did you recognise your coachman?”

“No.”

“It was my brother Mycroft.²² It is an advantage to get about in such a case without taking a mercenary into your confidence. But we must plan what we are to do about Moriarty now.”

“As this is an express, and as the boat runs in connection with it, I should think we have shaken him off very effectively.”

“My dear Watson, you evidently did not realise my meaning when I said that this man may be taken as being quite on the same intellectual plane as myself. You do not imagine that if I were the pursuer I should allow myself to be baffled by so slight an obstacle. Why, then, should you think so meanly of him?”

“What will he do?”

“What I should do.”

“What would you do, then?”

“Engage a special.”²³

“But it must be late.”

“By no means. This train stops at Canterbury; and there is always at least a quarter of an hour’s delay at the boat. He will catch us there.”

“One would think that we were the criminals. Let us have him arrested on his arrival.”

“It would be to ruin the work of three months. We should get the big fish, but the smaller would dart right and left out of the net. On Monday we should have them all. No, an arrest is inadmissible.”

“What then?”

“We shall get out at Canterbury.”

“And then?”

“Well, then we must make a cross-country journey to Newhaven, and so over to Dieppe.²⁴ Moriarty will again do what I should do. He will get on to Paris,²⁵ mark down our luggage, and wait for two days at the depot.²⁶ In the meantime

we shall treat ourselves to a couple of carpet-bags, encourage the manufactures of the countries through which we travel, and make our way at our leisure into Switzerland, via Luxembourg and Basle.”

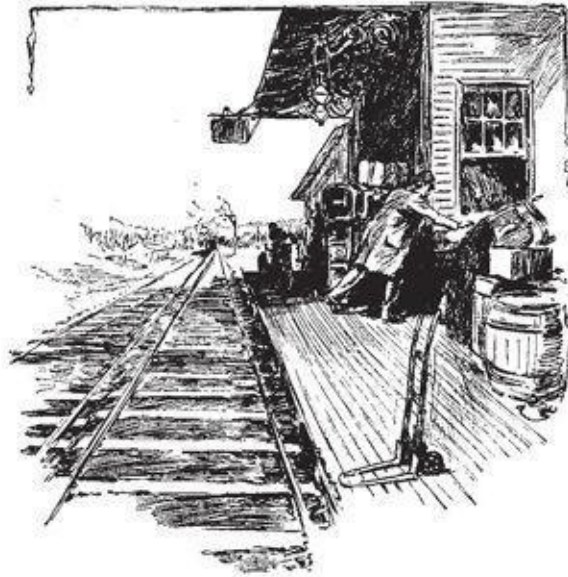
I am too old a traveller to allow myself to be seriously inconvenienced by the loss of my luggage, but I confess that I was annoyed at the idea of being forced to dodge and hide before a man whose record was black with unutterable infamies. It was evident, however, that Holmes understood the situation more clearly than I did.²⁷ At Canterbury, therefore, we alighted, only to find that we should have to wait an hour before we could get a train to Newhaven.

I was still looking rather ruefully after the rapidly disappearing luggage-van which contained my wardrobe, when Holmes pulled my sleeve and pointed up the line.

“Already, you see,” said he.

Far away, from among the Kentish woods there rose a thin spray of smoke. A minute later a carriage and engine could be seen flying along the open curve which leads to the station. We had hardly time to take our place behind a pile of luggage when it passed with a rattle and a roar, beating a blast of hot air into our faces.

“There he goes,” said Holmes, as we watched the carriage swing and rock over the points. “There are limits, you see, to our friend’s intelligence. It would have been a *coup-de-maitre*²⁸ had he deduced what I would deduce and acted accordingly.”²⁹



“We had hardly time to take our places behind a pile of

luggage when it passed with a rattle and a roar.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

“And what would he have done had he overtaken us?”

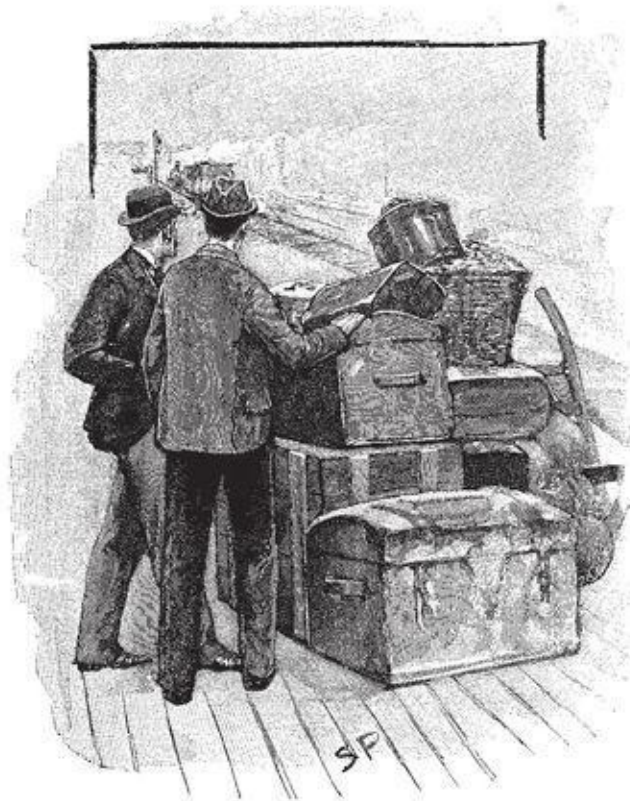
“There cannot be the least doubt that he would have made a murderous attack upon me. It is, however, a game at which two may play. The question now is whether we should take a premature lunch here, or run our chance of starving before we reach the buffet at Newhaven.”

We made our way to Brussels that night and spent two days there, moving on upon the third day as far as Strasburg.³⁰ On the Monday morning Holmes had telegraphed to the London police, and in the evening we found a reply waiting for us at our hotel. Holmes tore it open, and then with a bitter curse hurled it into the grate.

“I might have known it!” he groaned. “He has escaped!”

“Moriarty?”

“They have secured the whole gang with the exception of him.³¹ He has given them the slip. Of course, when I had left the country there was no one to cope with him. But I did think that I had put the game in their hands. I think that you had better return to England, Watson.”



“It passed with a rattle and a roar.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

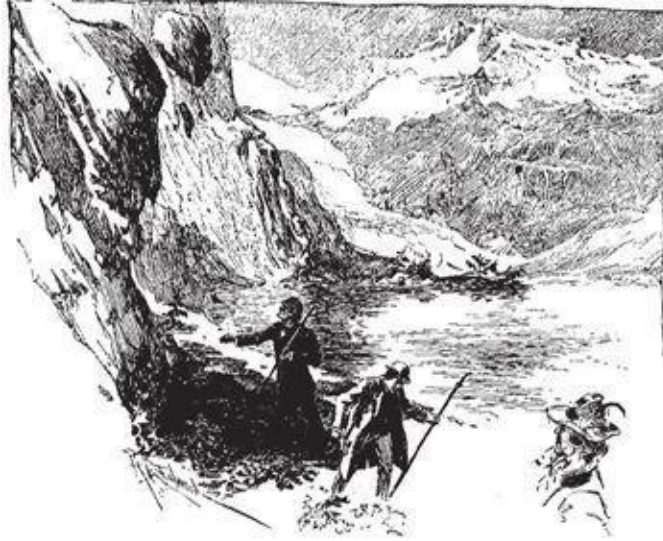
“Why?”

“Because you will find me a dangerous companion now. This man’s occupation is gone. He is lost if he returns to London. If I read his character right he will devote his whole energies to revenging himself upon me. He said as much in our short interview, and I fancy that he meant it. I should certainly recommend you to return to your practice.”

It was hardly an appeal to be successful with one who was an old campaigner as well as an old friend. We sat in the Strasburg *salle-à-manger*³² arguing the question for half an hour, but the same night we had resumed our journey and were well on our way to Geneva.³³

For a charming week we wandered up the valley of the Rhone, and then, branching off at Leuk, we made our way over the Gemmi Pass,³⁴ still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen. It was a lovely trip,³⁵ the dainty green of the spring below, the virgin white of the winter above; but it was clear to me that never for one instant did Holmes forget the shadow which lay across him. In the homely Alpine villages or in the lonely mountain passes, I could still tell by his quick glancing eyes and his sharp scrutiny of every face that passed us, that he was well convinced that, walk where we would, we could not walk ourselves clear of the danger which was dogging our footsteps.

Once, I remember, as we passed over the Gemmi, and walked along the border of the melancholy Daubensee, a large rock which had been dislodged from the ridge upon our right clattered down and roared into the lake behind us. In an instant Holmes had raced up on to the ridge, and, standing upon a lofty pinnacle, craned his neck in every direction. It was in vain that our guide assured him that a fall of stones was a common chance in the springtime at that spot. He said nothing, but he smiled at me with the air of a man who sees the fulfilment of that which he had expected.



“ . . . A large rock . . . clattered down and roared into the lake behind us.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

And yet for all his watchfulness he was never depressed. On the contrary, I can never recollect having seen him in such exuberant spirits. Again and again he recurred to the fact that if he could be assured that society was freed from Professor Moriarty he would cheerfully bring his own career to a conclusion.

“I think that I may go so far as to say, Watson, that I have not lived wholly in vain,” he remarked. “If my record were closed to-night I could still survey it with equanimity. The air of London is the sweeter for my presence. In over a thousand cases I am not aware that I have ever used my powers upon the wrong side. Of late I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by nature rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial state of society is responsible. Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson, upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe.”

I shall be brief, and yet exact, in the little which remains for me to tell. It is not a subject on which I would willingly dwell, and yet I am conscious that a duty devolves upon me to omit no detail.

It was on the third of May that we reached the little village of Meiringen, where we put up at the Englischer Hof, then kept by Peter Steiler the elder.³⁶ Our landlord was an intelligent man and spoke excellent English, having served for three years as waiter at the Grosvenor Hotel³⁷ in London. At his advice, on the afternoon of the fourth we set off together, with the intention of crossing the

hills and spending the night at the hamlet of Rosenloui. We had strict injunctions, however, on no account to pass the falls of Reichenbach, which are about halfway up the hills, without making a small detour to see them.³⁸

It is, indeed, a fearful place. The torrent, swollen by the melting snow, plunges into a tremendous abyss, from which the spray rolls up like the smoke from a burning house. The shaft into which the river hurls itself is an immense chasm, lined by glistening coal-black rock, and narrowing into a creaming, boiling pit of incalculable depth, which brims over and shoots the stream onward over its jagged lip. The long sweep of green water roaring for ever down, and the thick flickering curtain of spray hissing for ever upward, turn a man giddy with their constant whirl and clamour. We stood near the edge peering down at the gleam of the breaking water far below us against the black rocks, and listening to the half-human shout which came booming up with the spray out of the abyss.

The path has been cut halfway round the fall to afford a complete view,³⁹ but it ends abruptly, and the traveller has to return as he came. We had turned to do so, when we saw a Swiss lad come running along it with a letter in his hand. It bore the mark of the hotel which we had just left and was addressed to me by the landlord. It appeared that within a very few minutes of our leaving, an English lady had arrived who was in the last stage of consumption.⁴⁰ She had wintered at Davos Platz and was journeying now to join her friends at Lucerne, when a sudden hemorrhage had overtaken her. It was thought that she could hardly live a few hours, but it would be a great consolation to her to see an English doctor, and, if I would only return, *etc.* The good Steiler assured me in a postscript that he would himself look upon my compliance as a very great favour, since the lady absolutely refused to see a Swiss physician, and he could not but feel that he was incurring a great responsibility.



“. . . a Swiss lad . . . with a letter in his hand.”

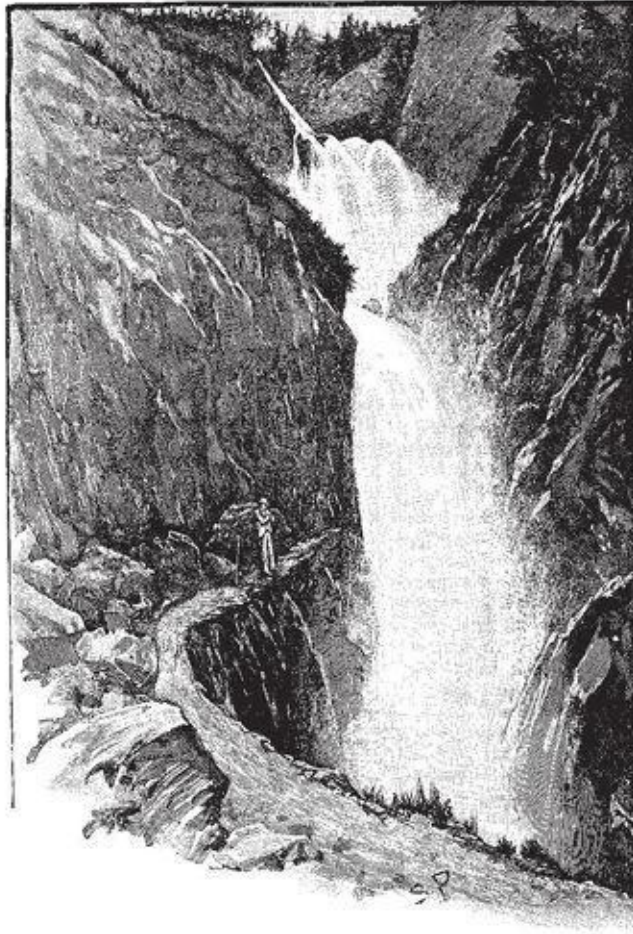
Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893

The appeal was one which could not be ignored. It was impossible to refuse the request of a fellow-countrywoman dying in a strange land. Yet I had my scruples about leaving Holmes. It was finally agreed, however, that he should retain the young Swiss messenger with him as guide and companion while I returned to Meiringen. My friend would stay some little time at the fall, he said, and would then walk slowly over the hill to Rosenloui, where I was to rejoin him in the evening. As I turned away I saw Holmes, with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of the waters. It was the last that I was ever destined to see of him in this world.



“I saw Holmes with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of the waters.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893



“I saw Holmes gazing down at the rush of the waters.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

When I was near the bottom of the descent I looked back. It was impossible, from that position, to see the fall, but I could see the curving path which winds over the shoulder of the hills and leads to it. Along this a man was, I remember, walking very rapidly.

I could see his black figure clearly outlined against the green behind him. I noted him, and the energy with which he walked, but he passed from my mind again as I hurried on upon my errand.

It may have been a little over an hour before I reached Meiringen. Old Steiler was standing at the porch of his hotel.

“Well,” said I, as I came hurrying up, “I trust that she is no worse?”

A look of surprise passed over his face, and at the first quiver of his eyebrows my heart turned to lead in my breast.

“You did not write this?” I said, pulling the letter from my pocket. “There is no sick Englishwoman in the hotel?”

“Certainly not!” he cried. “But it has the hotel mark upon it! Ha, it must have been written by that tall Englishman who came in after you had gone. He said —”

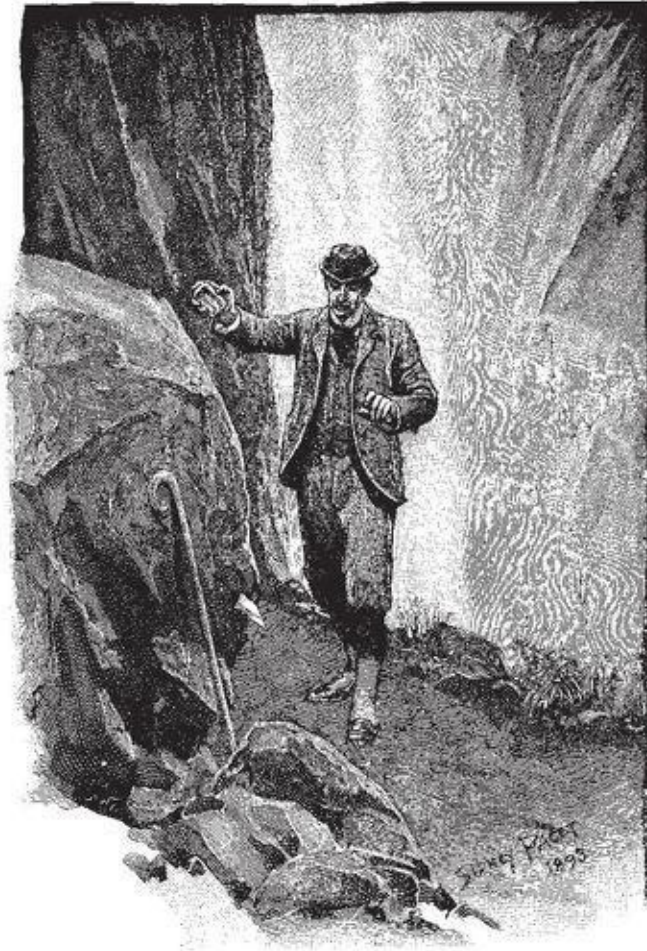
But I waited for none of the landlord’s explanation. In a tingle of fear I was already running down the village street, and making for the path which I had so lately descended. It had taken me an hour to come down. For all my efforts two more had passed before I found myself at the fall of Reichenbach once more.⁴¹ There was Holmes’s Alpine-stock⁴² still leaning against the rock by which I had left him. But there was no sign of him, and it was in vain that I shouted. My only answer was my own voice reverberating in a rolling echo from the cliffs around me.

It was the sight of that Alpine-stock which turned me cold and sick. He had not gone to Rosenlauri, then. He had remained on that three-foot path, with sheer wall on one side and sheer drop on the other, until his enemy had overtaken him. The young Swiss had gone too. He had probably been in the pay of Moriarty and had left the two men together. And then what had happened? Who was to tell us what had happened then?

I stood for a minute or two to collect myself, for I was dazed with the horror of the thing. Then I began to think of Holmes’s own methods and to try to practise them in reading this tragedy. It was, alas, only too easy to do. During our conversation we had not gone to the end of the path, and the Alpine-stock marked the place where we had stood. The blackish soil is kept for ever soft by the incessant drift of spray, and a bird would leave its tread upon it. Two lines of footmarks were clearly marked along the farther end of the path, both leading away from me. There were none returning. A few yards from the end the soil was all ploughed up into a patch of mud, and the brambles and ferns which fringed the chasm were torn and bedraggled. I lay upon my face and peered over with the spray spouting up all around me. It had darkened since I left, and now I could only see here and there the glistening of moisture upon the black walls, and far away down at the end of the shaft the gleam of the broken water. I shouted; but only that same half-human cry of the fall was borne back to my ears.

But it was destined that I should, after all, have a last word of greeting from my friend and comrade. I have said that his Alpine-stock had been left leaning against a rock which jutted on to the path. From the top of this boulder the gleam of something bright caught my eye, and raising my hand I found that it came from the silver cigarette-case which he used to carry. As I took it up a small square of paper upon which it had lain fluttered down on to the ground.

Unfolding it, I found that it consisted of three pages torn from his notebook and addressed to me. It was characteristic of the man that the direction was as precise, and the writing as firm and clear, as though it had been written in his study.



“A small square of paper fluttered down.”

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

MY DEAR WATSON:

I write these few lines through the courtesy of Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final discussion of those questions which lie between us. He has been giving me a sketch of the

methods by which he avoided the English police and kept himself informed of our movements. They certainly confirm the very high opinion which I had formed of his abilities. I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends,⁴³ and especially, my dear Watson, to you. I have already explained to you, however, that my career had in any case reached its crisis, and that no possible conclusion to it could be more congenial to me than this. Indeed, if I may make a full confession to you, I was quite convinced that the letter from Meiringen was a hoax, and I allowed you to depart on that errand under the persuasion that some development of this sort would follow. Tell Inspector Patterson⁴⁴ that the papers which he needs to convict the gang are in pigeonhole M., done up in a blue envelope and inscribed "Moriarty." I made every disposition of my property⁴⁵ before leaving England and handed it to my brother Mycroft. Pray give my greetings to Mrs. Watson, and believe me to be, my dear fellow,

Very sincerely yours,
SHERLOCK HOLMES.



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“Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final discussion of those questions with lie between us.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure's Magazine*, 1893



The death of Sherlock Holmes.

Sidney Paget, *Strand Magazine*, 1893

A few words may suffice to tell the little that remains. An examination by experts leaves little doubt that a personal contest between the two men ended, as it could hardly fail to end in such a situation, in their reeling over, locked in each other's arms. Any attempt at recovering the bodies was absolutely hopeless,⁴⁶ and there, deep down in that dreadful cauldron of swirling water and seething foam, will lie for all time the most dangerous criminal and the foremost champion of the law of their generation. The Swiss youth was never found again, and there can be no doubt that he was one of the numerous agents whom Moriarty kept in his employ. As to the gang, it will be within the memory of the public how completely the evidence which Holmes had accumulated exposed their organization, and how heavily the hand of the dead man weighed upon them.⁴⁷ Of their terrible chief few details came out during the proceedings, and if I have now been compelled to make a clear statement of his career, it is due to those injudicious champions who have endeavoured to clear his memory by attacks upon him whom I shall ever regard as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known.⁴⁸ ■

This is the last Will and Testament

of me Sherlock Holmes
of 221 B, Baker Street in the parish of St. Marylebone
in the County of London made this Twentieth
day of April, 1891 in the year of our Lord

I hereby revoke all former testamentary dispositions made by me and declare this to be my last Will.
I appoint my brother
Mycroft Holmes

to be my Executor, and direct that all my just Debts and Funeral and Testamentary Expenses shall be paid as soon as conveniently may be after my decease.

I give and bequeath unto _____

my devoted friend and associate, Dr. John H. Watson, often tried, sometimes trying, but never found wanting in loyalty; my well-intentioned though unavailing mentor against the blandishments of vice; my indispensable foil and whetstone; the perfect sop to my wounded vanity and too tactful to whisper "Norbury" in my ear when necessary; the ideal listener and the audience par excellence for those little tricks which others more discerning might well have deemed meretricious; the faithful Boswell to whose literary efforts - despite my occasional unkindly gibes - I owe whatever little fame I have enjoyed; in short, to the one true friend I have ever had, the sum of £2,000; also the choice of any books in my personal library (with such reservations as are mentioned below), including my commonplace books and the complete file of my cases, published and unpublished, with the sole exception of the papers in pigeonhole M, contained in a blue envelope and marked "Moriarty" which the proper authorities will take over in the event my demise should make it impossible for me to hand them over in person.

The Will of Sherlock Holmes, discovered by Nathan Bengis.

London Mystery Magazine



“A personal contest between the two men ended . . . in their reeling over, locked in each other’s arms.”

Harry C. Edwards, *McClure’s Magazine*, 1893

REVISIONS OF “THE FINAL PROBLEM”

“THE FINAL PROBLEM,” remarks Nicholas Utechin, in “The Importance of ‘The Final Problem,’ ” “has probably given rise to more discussion among Holmesians than any other in the Canon.” As may be expected, numerous radical theories are proposed to explain the inconsistencies and illogical events of the story: **Moriarty is imaginary**. First, there is the “Moriarty is imaginary” school: Benjamin S. Clark, in “The Final Problem,” proposes that Holmes staged the

entire affair to obtain a three-year rest-cure for his drug addiction. Irving L. Jaffee's essay "The Final Problem," in his book *Elementary My Dear Watson*, argues that Holmes imagined Moriarty and travelled to the falls bent on suicide. A. G. MacDonnell, in "Mr. Moriarty," concludes that Moriarty was invented by Holmes to explain his lack of success in an increasing number of cases; Holmes's ego would not allow him to admit that ordinary criminals had outsmarted him, so he invented a master criminal. T. S. Blakeney refutes at some length the hypothesis advanced by a "distinguished writer whose name may not be divulged" that Holmes and Moriarty were the same person.

Bruce Kennedy has two different theories: In "Problems with 'The Final Problem,'" he suggests that Holmes made up the entire story to take a three-year vacation; in "A Tribute, Though Not Necessarily Glowing, to the Napoleon of Crime," he argues that Watson made up the entire story, at the request of Colonel James Moriarty, to memorialize his brother, who died saving Holmes's life!

Jerry Neal Williamson concludes that Professor James "Moriarty" was in fact Professor James Holmes, an elder brother of Sherlock's, a younger brother of Mycroft's (" 'There Was Something Very Strange' "). "The flight from England must have been made to give James a chance to escape with his life. . . . Acting as a decoy, Sherlock Holmes 'fled,' vanished, and lived on the funds of his honest brother [Mycroft] until the gang was gone and James a free but broken man. Just as he found compassion for James Ryder, the detective found compassion for his criminal brother."

Perhaps more plausibly, in "Geopolitics and Reichenbach Falls," Frederick J. Crosson suggests that Holmes invented the story of Moriarty as a cover-up for a secret diplomatic mission he needed to undertake. That the professor is imaginary is also the conclusion of T. F. Foss, in "The Man They Called 'Ho,' Plus the Butcher Also," who concludes that the Holmes brothers and Watson made up the story to provide a foil for Holmes.

Moriarty is innocent. The "Moriarty is innocent" school is perhaps akin to the "Moriarty is imaginary" view. Daniel Moriarty (!) suggests, in "The Peculiar Persecution of Professor Moriarty," that Moriarty was persecuted by Holmes as revenge for Holmes's being forbidden to woo Moriarty's daughter. Nicholas Meyer, in *The Seven Per-Cent Solution*, perhaps the most famous of all Holmesian pastiches, imagines Moriarty as Holmes's childhood tutor, the seducer of Holmes's mother, upon whom Holmes projects a fantasy of criminality. Mary Jaffee, in "Yes, Dear Little Medea, There Was and Is a Professor Moriarty," contends that Moriarty was a wholly innocent bystander, killed by Holmes at the Reichenbach Falls while Holmes was "coked to the

gills,” and that Moriarty’s reputation was smeared to preserve Holmes’s.

Moriarty lives. Next, there is the “Moriarty lives” school: In “The Holmes-Moriarty Duel,” Eustace Portugal makes an elaborate case that Holmes died at the falls and Moriarty took his place. Kenneth Clark Reeler, in “Well Then, About That Chasm . . .,” suggests that Moriarty was never *in* the falls but lived to confront Holmes later in *The Valley of Fear*, which Reeler dates post-hiatus. In “A Game at Which Two Can Play: A Reichenbach Ruminantion,” Auberon Redfearn concludes that Moriarty escaped death because his black cloak (Watson notices only a “black figure,” but a black cape or cloak is standard garb for villains) acted as a parachute until it caught on a branch and Moran was able to rescue him. Roger Mortimore, in “Lying Detective,” proposes that Holmes killed the wrong man at the Reichenbach Falls and that Moriarty took on a new identity—Colonel Sebastian Moran. Jason Rouby reveals, in “A Confidential Communication,” that Holmes let Moriarty go and that Moriarty subsequently achieved moral rehabilitation and, assuming the name J. Edgar Hoover, pursued a career in law enforcement in the United States. C. Arnold Johnson, in “An East Wind,” concludes that Moriarty returned to London as Fu Manchu, while William Leonard (“Re: Vampires”) suggests that Moriarty was in fact Count Dracula and thus survived the falls. Robert Pasley, in “The Return of Moriarty,” and Rev. Wayne Wall (“The Satanic Motif in Moriarty”) argue that Moriarty was the Devil incarnate and thus could not be killed.

Holmes is guilty. There is a widespread school of “Holmes planned it all.” The idea is first suggested by Walter P. Armstrong, Jr. (“The Truth About Sherlock Holmes”), who proposes that neither Holmes nor Watson was fooled by Moriarty’s note and that Holmes had anticipated a confrontation and took comfort in his knowledge of Baritsu. A similar view is expressed by W. S. Bristowe in “The Truth About Moriarty,” and by Gordon R. Speck, in “Holmes, Heroics, Hiatus: A Man to Match Swiss Mountains.”

Albert and Myrna Silverstein, in “Concerning the Extraordinary Events at the Reichenbach Falls,” express the darker view that principally because Holmes could not obtain sufficient evidence to convict Moriarty, he enticed Moriarty to follow him to the falls for the express purpose of killing him. In “The Supreme Struggle,” Nicholas Utechin writes, “The fifty-six years old ex-Professor, army coach and ruined arch-criminal probably never even saw his assailant [Sherlock Holmes] before he was sent spinning to an instant death in the gorge below.”

Holmes killed the wrong man. In “The Unknown Moriarty,” Larry Waggoner argues that it was only a relative, a cousin or brother, of Moriarty who was thrown into the cauldron. Marvin Grasse, in “Who Killed Holmes?,” suggests that Watson and Mycroft dumped Holmes himself into the Reichenbach

Falls, while Tony Medawar argues, in “The Final Solution,” that Watson did it alone after Moriarty failed. Page Heldenbrand, in the heretical “The Duplicity of Sherlock Holmes,” concludes that Holmes had a tryst at the falls with Irene Adler and that she fell into the falls, perhaps committing suicide!

Faith of the fundamentalists. Finally, there is the fundamentalist school, which accepts that Holmes indeed died at the falls. Anthony Boucher, in “Was the Later Holmes an Imposter?,” suggests that after Holmes’s death, Mycroft replaced him with his cousin “Sherrinford.” In perhaps the earliest published theory, Monsignor Ronald A. Knox, in his seminal “Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes,” contends that the entire post-Reichenbach Canon was made up by Watson, to supplement his income.

1 “The Final Problem” was published in the *Strand Magazine* in December 1893, in the *Strand Magazine* (New York) Christmas Number 1893, and in a number of American newspapers in late November and early December 1893.

2 Christopher Morley, in *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: A Textbook of Friendship*, the first annotated collection of Sherlock Holmes stories, writes: “Devoted readers have rarely had such a shock as the opening words of this story when it first appeared . . .”

3 Note that Professor Moriarty’s Christian name is never given in “The Final Problem,” although in “The Empty House” Holmes calls the professor James Moriarty, curiously the same name as his brother’s. See Volume II, “The Empty House,” note 62.

4 Reuter’s Telegram Company was founded in London in October 1851 by a young German bank clerk named Paul Julius Reuters. Two years earlier, Reuters had used both telegraphy and carrier pigeons to transmit stockmarket quotations between Brussels and Aachen, Germany. His newest endeavour eschewed the pigeons, taking advantage of the new London-Calais cable to run stock prices between London and Paris. Soon the Reuter’s Telegram Company, which became known as Reuters, had expanded in leaps and bounds, relaying general and breaking news across England and all over Europe. By 1865, Reuters’s reputation and proficiency were such that it was the first European news organisation to break the story of President Lincoln’s assassination. Little wonder that it was one of the few places to report on Holmes and Moriarty.

5 As Bert Coules, head scriptwriter for the BBC’s most recent Sherlock Holmes radio series, points out, regardless of how “extremely condensed” the accounts were, the reporting of the death of a figure as famous as Holmes should have raised a massive public outcry. Yet until now, there was none, leading one to wonder whether those other accounts somehow came to the conclusion that Holmes was still alive. Coules theorises that perhaps Watson engineered some sort of media cover-up regarding Holmes’s death; after all, “the tone of the opening and closing of the piece is certainly in keeping with the initial breaking of devastating news, rather than the amplifying of already-known facts.”

6 To which three cases Watson refers is unclear. See *Chronological Table*.

7 The first known example of an air gun, which used compressed air to propel bullets, was a single-shot model made by Güter of Nuremberg circa 1530. Considerably cleaner and quieter than guns using powder,

air guns were used primarily to hunt game. Upper-class gentlemen in Victorian society were also known to carry .40- to .50-calibre air guns by concealing them in specially designed walking canes. One might imagine Holmes's nemesis using a gun of this type; but not only does Holmes not reveal what sort of air gun he feared, he also never mentions them again. "If Holmes is afraid of airguns, as he tells Watson he is," Bert Coules puzzles, "why don't these weapons figure at all in the rest of the story?" The omission remains unexplained until "The Empty House," when we learn that the chief lieutenant of Professor Moriarty carried one.

8 "[S]urely this endangers Watson even more," comments Dante M. Torrese, in "Some Musings on 'The Final Problem,'" "by giving Moriarty's men the impression that Holmes does remain for the night."

9 Professor Moriarty also appears in *The Valley of Fear*, which is generally regarded as occurring before "The Final Problem" (see *Chronological Table*). If such a date for *The Valley of Fear* is accepted, then Watson's remarks here must be seen as a pose, or, in the view of John Dardess, "merely literary license, necessary for the properly dramatic introduction of Moriarty to the public . . ."

10 Ian McQueen observes that "within less than ten years, since joining up with Watson, Holmes had advanced in fortune from being a man who had to share lodgings for reasons of expense to having achieved sufficient means to live as he pleased without worrying about money at all." See the Appendix, "I stand to win a little on this next race . . ." to "Silver Blaze" for one possible explanation.

11 By contrast, when Dr. Watson wrote the preface to *His Last Bow* in 1917, he reported that Holmes divided his time between philosophy and agriculture. Of course, it is possible that Holmes's chemical research and agricultural pursuits might have overlapped or that Watson used the word "philosophy" in its older sense of "the study of natural phenomena."

12 In mathematics, the theorem devised by Sir Isaac Newton in 1676 (and proved by Jakob Bernoulli in a posthumous 1713 publication) expressing, among other things, the expansion of a binomial—for example, $(a + b)^n$, raised to any power, such as $(a + b)^n = a^n + 2ab + b^2$. Where $n=2$, $(a+b)^n = a^2 + 2ab + b^2$.

13 A private tutor for entrance or promotional examinations for the officer corps.

14 Moriarty's reference to the Victorian science of phrenology is intended to insult Holmes. "Phrenologists were always weighing the brains of deceased murderers and madmen," Thomas M. McDade writes, "and comparing them in size with those of statesmen and writers, usually favourably to the latter."

Franz Joseph Gall, the "father" of phrenology, and his successors believed not just that the size of the brain dictated mental capacity (see "The Blue Carbuncle," note 12), but that personality traits such as self-esteem, wit, and a faculty for music or math were determined by thirty-five "organs" comprising the brain. A person's characteristics could thus be discerned by observing which parts of his or her skull seemed relatively large or small. Phrenology may have remained the province of scientific and intellectual debate had it not been for the American brothers Lorenzo and Orson Fowler, who founded the *American Phrenological Journal* in 1838 and began conducting "head readings," lectures, and courses in New York and England (Lorenzo opened the Fowler Institute in London in 1863). Older phrenologists regarded the avowedly practical Fowlers as hucksters, but the public took eagerly to this new "science"—with decidedly mixed results. The esteemed British journalist and abolitionist Harriet Martineau, in her 1877 *Autobiography*, expressed her reservations at the phenomenon by recounting how, after a phrenologist read the head of one Sydney Smith and proclaimed him a born naturalist, Mr. Smith, in wonderment, replied, "I don't know a fish from a bird"; and also how her own reading determined that she "could never accomplish any thing, through my remarkable deficiency in both physical and moral courage." Ambrose Bierce, in his satiric *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911; first published as *The Cynic's Word Book* in 1906), summed up his own skepticism by defining phrenology, in part, as "The science of picking the pocket through the scalp." Madeleine Stern suggests, in *The Game's a Head*, that Holmes himself may well have studied with Lorenzo

Fowler in London and points out many fields of interest common to the two scholars. Perhaps at the behest of Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle had a phrenological analysis made by the Institute in 1896.

That Moriarty calls attention to Holmes's lack of "frontal development" is a calculated slap in the face, for two of the major frontal organs were said to represent "comparism" (abstract thinking) and "causality" (the ability to determine cause and effect). The insult becomes even more pointed after consultation with George Combe's influential *A System of Phrenology* (Fifth Ed., 1853), which described the "causality" organ by declaring, "It has long been a matter of general observation, that men possessing a profound and comprehensive intellect, such as Socrates, Bacon, and Galileo, have the upper part of the forehead greatly developed."

15 David Merrell makes the startling suggestion that Holmes actually pulled the trigger, immediately killing Moriarty, and that the rest of his tale is a "cover-up," indulged in by brother Mycroft, for the purpose of preserving his reputation.

16 For Holmes to tip his hand so patently seems an uncharacteristic blunder or, as D. Martin Dakin puts it, "an incredible act of folly . . . just an invitation to [Moriarty] to make his escape, and probably give warning to all his associates too." More likely, Dakin believes, is that Holmes actually said something like "After your arrest," and that Watson put the day in his notes after the fact.

17 The enclosure for the prisoner in a criminal court.

18 A London bazaar, located in the Strand.

19 Mortimer Street, which runs parallel to Oxford Street, is strangely not in the neighbourhood of either of Watson's known medical practices, in Kensington and in the Paddington district.

20 Eustace Portugal contends that Moriarty deliberately missed the train, in order to lull Holmes into a false sense of security.

21 The close-fitting, long-sleeved, ankle-length cassock was worn by Catholic and Anglican clergy either as an ordinary, walking-around garment or as an undergarment beneath liturgical vestments. (These days, it is generally used only in the latter capacity.) Holmes's black cassock was standard for a common priest, whereas cardinals' cassocks are scarlet (and occasionally purple), and the pope's, white. Of course, either of the latter choices would have been a bit conspicuous as a disguise.

22 Although Mycroft Holmes's aid here seems purely altruistic, Ronald A. Knox believes instead that he was a double agent, working for Moriarty while feeding information to his brother. It is clear, argues Knox, that someone leaked information from Holmes's camp to the professor, and he accuses Mycroft of being the "mole." This information would have included both a description of Holmes, whose physical appearance was not, at this time, known by either the public or Moriarty (remember that Moriarty, upon meeting Holmes, "peered at [him] with great curiosity," yet Moriarty's gang recognized Holmes sufficiently to be able to attack him), and the precise time of Holmes's departure for Victoria Station (explaining how Moriarty could have followed so closely). Knox further identifies Mycroft as Moriarty's agent in "The Greek Interpreter" (see "The Greek Interpreter") and as Porlock, a *nom de plume* of an informant in the Moriarty camp in *The Valley of Fear*; yet he understands that Mycroft inhabits a difficult rôle as "a man playing a delicate part in an irreconcilable duel between his brother on the one hand, and a super criminal on the other." Sherlock Holmes knew of his brother's deceptions and boldly risked relying on him, concealing from Watson Mycroft's equivocal part.

23 By this, Holmes means that Moriarty, as a man of means, might be able to hire a smaller-sized, dedicated train to take him alone to his intended destination. "Though specials are still run for parties, the one-man train was usurped by the hire-car [rental car, in America] and did not survive the First World

War,” writes Bernard Davies, in “Canonical Connections.” “A purse deep enough for the suitably grand fare—usually five shillings a mile—could command a first-class carriage, a light engine, and a line cleared of slower traffic.”

24 The question of which train, and which route, the pair took from London to France is hotly debated by American, English, and French scholars. Christopher Morley, author of the first annotated collection of Holmes stories, notes that there were regular steamers that crossed the Channel from Dover to Calais, from Folkestone to Boulogne, and from Newhaven to Dieppe. Holmes’s original plan may have involved taking the Dover-Calais boat, which was the shortest of the three crossings at twenty-two miles. There were other possible trains too, which ran from London to Dover or Folkestone (but made no stop at Canterbury). Amid this confusion, scholars disagree as to which train was the “Continental Express” Holmes and Watson took from London, and what times it might have left Victoria Station and arrived at Canterbury and then at Dover.

Once Holmes decided to make the crossing at Newhaven instead (a much longer crossing, at sixty-seven miles), he and Watson would have had to take a fairly lengthy train ride from Canterbury to Newhaven, “a tedious [trip],” according to Morley, “involving probably two changes of trains at Ashford and Lewes, but passing along the beautiful country of the South Downs to which Holmes eventually retired.” The train from Canterbury to Newhaven, naturally, is also a matter of vehement discussion. More detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this volume but may be found in B. D. J. Walsh’s “Railways of Sherlock Holmes,” Bernard Prunet’s “The Final Problem: A Study in Railways,” and Bernard Davies’s “Canonical Connections.”

25 June Thomson suggests that Holmes underestimated Moriarty, who would have concluded that Holmes and Watson would not follow the luggage to Paris. Instead, Moriarty considered Brussels as their possible destination. Telegraphing to an agent there, he waited in Dover for information. Holmes and Watson were not travelling incognito, and it would not have been difficult to trace them.

26 D. Martin Dakin points out that this entire imagined scenario meant that Moriarty could not be ensnared by the London police on the following Monday, as Holmes had supposedly prearranged—unless for some reason Moriarty were to hurry back home in time to be captured. It is evident from later events that Holmes never expected the police to arrest “the big fish” and that he would have to personally deal with Moriarty.

27 The two preceding sentences appear only in the English book edition of “The Final Problem.”

28 French: a masterstroke.

29 Bernard Prunet wonders why Moriarty went to the trouble of chartering a “special” if he believed Holmes and Watson were proceeding to Dover, for the regular Continental Express at 11.00 A.M. would have delivered Moriarty to Dover in time to catch the same ship bound to Calais. Prunet also argues that Holmes could have already decided to leave the train at Canterbury before he even boarded it. Holmes never said explicitly that he intended that he and Watson go on to Paris—he told the porter only that his luggage was to be booked all the way through.

30 The case definitely began on Friday, April 24, 1891. Holmes and Watson travelled from London to Brussels on the following day (Saturday, the twenty-fifth, although Michael Kaser suggests that they arrived in the early morning of the twenty-sixth). They presumably spent Sunday, April 26, in Brussels, moving to Strasburg on Monday, April 27, the “third day.”

31 Holmes reveals in “The Empty House” that this was not true: Colonel Sebastian Moran, the second most dangerous man in London, was still very much at large, as was Parker, the garroter. As to the colonel’s escaping arrest, Holmes says, “So cleverly was the colonel concealed that, even when the Moriarty gang was broken up, we could not incriminate him.” How Parker escaped custody is unknown, except that

Holmes says of him, “He is a harmless enough fellow,” and so perhaps was not arrested.

32 The dining room of the hotel.

33 Holmes and Watson therefore departed for Geneva on the evening of Monday, the twenty-seventh (although Michael Kaser, after consulting the 1890–1891 winter timetable for the Swiss Federal Railways, concludes that they actually departed in the small hours (3:55 A.M.), arriving at 3:18 the following afternoon). If Kaser’s timetable is correct (although his dates are off by a day), the pair would have arrived in Geneva on the afternoon of Wednesday, April 29, 1891.

34 The Gemmi Pass crosses the Bernese Alps (a section of the central Alps) to connect the Bern and Valais cantons in southwestern Switzerland. To get to the Gemmi Pass, Holmes and Watson would have hiked through the mountains, alongside the glacier-fed Daubensee, and on to the summit, with its view of the Rhone Valley and the Alps. *Baedeker* describes the path as follows: “The windings are skilfully hewn in the rock, often resembling a spiral staircase, the upper parts actually projecting at places beyond the lower. The steepest parts and most sudden corners are protected by parapets. Distant voices reverberating in this gorge sometimes sound as if they are issued from its own recesses.” The guidebook estimates the ascent at two and a half hours.

35 Michael Kaser erroneously concludes that Holmes and Watson left Strasburg in the wee hours of April 29, which he mistakenly calls “the third day,” and places them in Geneva on Thursday, April 30. Seeing as how Watson soon reveals that he and Holmes had reached Meiringen by May 3, Kaser calculates that—given the speed of the train from Geneva to Meiringen—the two could have been travelling around the countryside for no more than one day (specifically May 1). “When Watson writes of a ‘week wandering up the valley,’ ” Kaser concludes, “it is obviously a sarcastic reference to the easy pace of the train, for while from Geneva the slowest train of the day took eight and three-quarter hours, even the fastest took six hours to reach Leuk: today the journey is less than three hours.” A correct computation, however, puts the pair in Geneva on Wednesday, April 29. There is no evidence that they spent a night in Geneva, and if they departed immediately, an arrival in Meiringen on Sunday, May 3, gives a four-day interval, which, while still not a “week,” is sufficient time to be “charming.”

Gordon Speck suggests that the leisurely travel was deliberately planned by Holmes, who intended to confront Moriarty and then escape overland: “First, Holmes must allow Moriarty time to discover his general location and direction of travel so that all three would arrive in the Meiringen area at approximately the same time. Second, he had to acclimate his muscles and lungs to Alpine conditions, partly to prepare for the fight with Moriarty and partly to accommodate his post-flight plan. Third, he needed to learn the tricks of travel in the Swiss mountains and to question the natives about shortcuts and byways to various points throughout the country.”

36 Many commentators have identified the “Englischer Hof” (which means literally a hotel where English is spoken) with the Hôtel du Sauvage, which had an English chapel.

37 Located at Victoria Station and opened for business in 1861, the Grosvenor was owned by the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway. Mr. Steiler must have set an elegant table in his new establishment, if his opulent former employer was any indication; Michael Harrison, in *The London of Sherlock Holmes*, writes that it, among others, “established new standards of luxury and paved the way for the ultra-luxurious standards of the hotels of the century’s end, when hotel standards reached a peak never attained either before or since.”

38 According to *Baedeker*, to reach the Reichenbach Falls—one of the highest waterfalls in the Alps—one would take a path from the Zur Zwirgi inn, an hour from Rosenlauri, to “a narrow gorge of the brawling Reichenbach, spanned by a wood bridge.” A different path, five minutes away, descends further to the falls themselves.

[39](#) Bryce Crawford, Jr., and R. C. Moore state that in 1891 there was no path up the right side of the hill (this is still true today), but that there was (and still is today) a path up the left side. “[A resident of the area] not only confirmed that there had been a ledge on the left side of the fall where the path would have come,” they report, “but also revealed that in March, 1944, there was a substantial erosion and fall of rock at the middle segment.”

[40](#) Until the early 1900s, the “white plague” was the leading cause of death in the Western world, and it remains epidemic in many developing nations today. Highly contagious, consumption, or tuberculosis of the lungs, had devastating consequences in the crowded urban neighbourhoods of Edwardian and Victorian society, where the substandard hygiene and sanitation created by rampant poverty left people particularly susceptible to infection. Symptoms included fever, loss of energy and weight, and a persistent, often bloody cough; if untreated, tuberculosis could ravage the body, eating away at the lungs and other organs. A test for the disease was developed after identification of the tubercle bacillus bacterium in 1882 by German physician Robert Koch, who won the 1905 Nobel Prize in medicine for his work and also isolated the microorganisms causing anthrax (1876), conjunctivitis (1883), and cholera (1884). (A tuberculosis vaccine was developed in France in 1908, but truly effective drug treatment was not available until the 1950s.) Tellingly, Arthur Conan Doyle records in his *Memories and Adventures* that his wife Louise was diagnosed with tuberculosis during a visit to the Reichenbach Falls in 1892.

Ebbe Curtis Hoff sees more than happenstance in the fact that the “English lady” was said to suffer from consumption. Although the circumstances of the death of Watson’s wife Mary were never revealed, Hoff concludes that she herself died of consumption sometime in the winter of 1893 and that Watson’s still-fresh grief made him particularly sympathetic toward this stranger who was similarly afflicted. “The genius of Moriarty is here revealed,” Hoff states admiringly, “that he chose the surest way of decoying Watson away from Holmes, knowing from his dossier on Watson that Mrs. Watson was herself a consumptive in an advanced stage.”

[41](#) Baedeker states that, from the Hotel Reichenbach in Meiringen, it is only a quarter-hour walk to the lower falls and a three-quarter-hour walk to the upper falls. Watson must have gotten lost on his unguided return but was embarrassed to say so.

[42](#) A walking stick.

[43](#) What friends? In “The Five Orange Pips,” Holmes says to Watson, “Except for yourself I have none.”

[44](#) What of this Inspector Patterson, who allowed Moriarty, Colonel Moran, and two other members of the gang to escape, and incorrectly advised Holmes that the “whole gang with the exception of Moriarty” had been captured? June Thomson surmises that he was likely in Moriarty’s pay, explaining, “Corrupt policemen are unfortunately not unknown and such a theory would explain why Moriarty knew Holmes’s every move and how he, along with other gang members, managed to elude arrest. It might also account for Holmes’s otherwise inexplicable behaviour in keeping such important documents in his desk.” Of course, Thomson concludes, in the end, Holmes had no choice but to turn over the documents to Patterson, as the official in charge of the case.

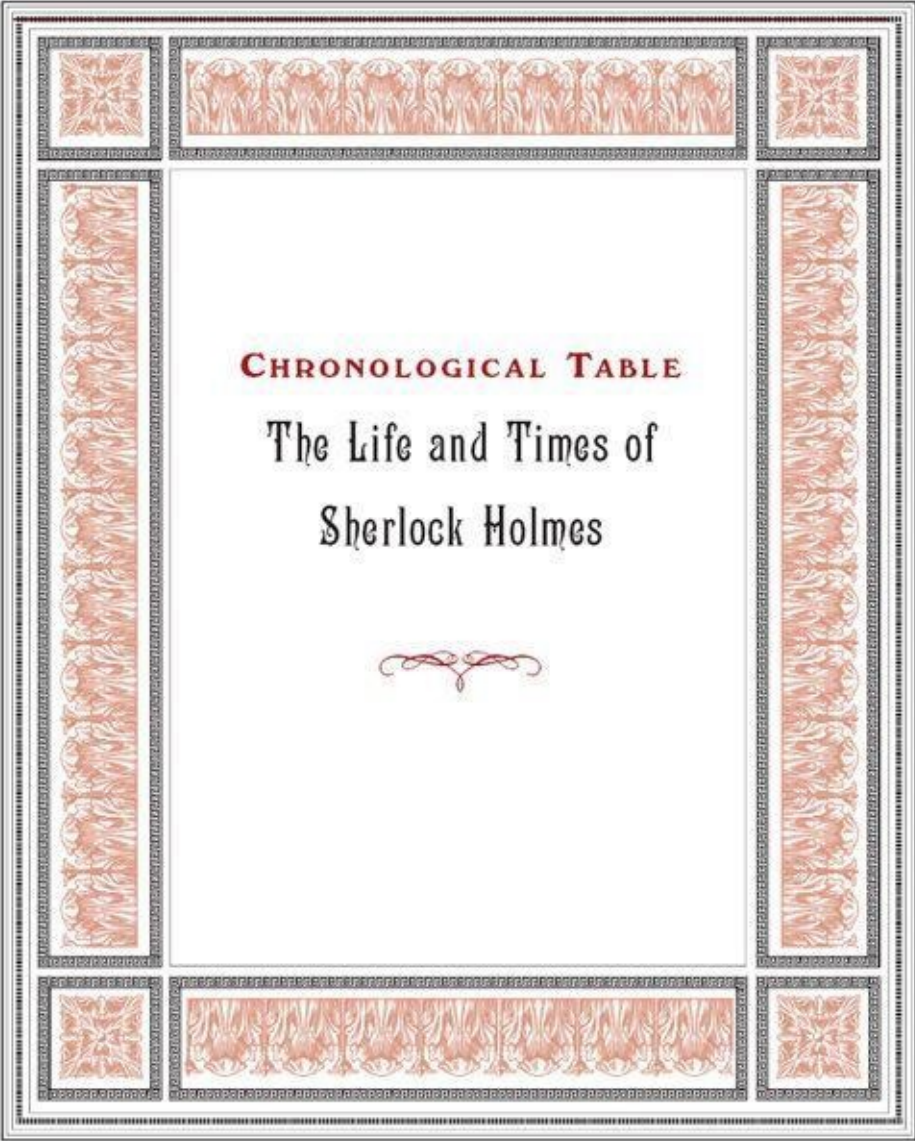
[45](#) In the *London Mystery Magazine* for June 1955, a document purporting to be the last will and testament of Sherlock Holmes is reproduced, with a prefatory note, unsigned, ascribing the discovery of the paper to Nathan L. Bengis, a prominent Sherlockian. Watson is bequeathed the sum of £5,000 and his choice of any of Holmes’s books or papers (with the exception of the blue envelope in pigeonhole M.).

[46](#) Holmes’s body, we learn in “The Empty House,” was not in the water for the simple reason that he did not go over the falls. A. Carson Simpson wonders why Moriarty’s body was not found. While the Reichenbach itself is turbulent, below the falls the water is quite calm as it slows into Brienz Lake. “Moriarty’s corpse should have been found floating in the lake or in one of the streams, but was not. This

cannot have been for lack of searching, since, when the incident occurred, it was believed that there were two bodies to look for—Holmes’s as well as the Professor’s.” Simpson concludes, as do others, that Moriarty did not perish in the Reichenbach episode. See the appendix below.

[47](#) In October 1891 the village of Meiringen was in great part destroyed by fire. Philip Hench recounts that the fire resulted from an out-of-control cooking fire but that “[i]n Meiringen there were those who declared at the time—indeed some who whisper it today—that the one violence [at the Falls] begot the subsequent violence, that Meiringen’s *auto-da-fé* was, in fact, the flaming revenge boldly decreed by the surviving eyewitness to the encounter of May 4, the Professor’s slinking partner in crime, Colonel Sebastian Moran, and subtly executed by, or with the help of, that anonymous hireling, the young ‘Swiss messenger.’ ”

[48](#) Watson’s final words form an altogether fitting coda, echoing as they do the relationship of another famous historical pair. In *Phaedo*, an account of the last hour of Socrates’s life, Plato describes his deceased mentor and friend—a man whose teachings are known largely through Plato’s chronicling of them—as “the best and wisest and most righteous man.”



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

The Life and Times of
Sherlock Holmes



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE1

The Life and Times of Sherlock Holmes

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1844	Siger Holmes and Violet Sherrinford marry.			Sarah Bernhardt, Richard D'Oyly-Carte born.	Charles XIV, King of Sweden and Norway, dies; Oscar I succeeds to throne. Friedrich Nietzsche born.	
1845	Sherrinford Holmes born.			Irish potato famine; Anglo-Sikh War begins.	Engels publishes <i>Condition of the Working Class in England</i> .	Poe publishes "The Raven." Texas and Florida become states.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1846	James Moriarty born.			Repeal of Corn Laws. Planet Neptune discovered.	Austrian and Russian troops enter Cracow; Austria annexes Cracow.	Oregon settlement sets U.S. boundary at 49th parallel. Mormons commence move to Utah.
1847	Mycroft Holmes born.			Ten Hours' Act.	Sonderbund War in Switzerland.	Thomas Alva Edison, inventor, born.
1848				W. G. Grace born.	Second French Republic. Birth of painter Paul Gauguin.	Marx and Engels's <i>Communist Manifesto</i> published.
1851				Opening of the Crystal Palace.	Foucault demonstrates earth's rotation with huge pendulum.	First Australian gold discoveries. <i>New York Times</i> first published.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1852		John Hamish Watson born.		First Derby-Disraeli government.	Louis Napoleon proclaims himself Napoleon III; Second French Empire begins.	Polygamy instituted in Utah.
1853				Lillie Langtry, Cecil Rhodes born.	Tenor Edouard de Reszke born.	Telegraph system established in India.
1854	William Sherlock Scott Holmes born.	Family moves to Australia (date approx.).		Crimean War begins. Birth of Oscar Wilde.	Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria, marries Bavarian Princess Elizabeth.	Kansas-Nebraska Act. Sacramento becomes capital of State of California.
1855	Holmes family sails to Bordeaux.			Lord Palmerston becomes Prime Minister. <i>Daily Telegraph</i> first published.	Paris World Fair.	Czar Nicholas I of Russia dies.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events the World
1856				Treaty of Paris ends Crimean War. "Big Ben" cast.	George Bernard Shaw born.	Sigmund Freud born.
1857				Joseph Conrad born.	Publication of Flaubert's <i>Madame Bovary</i> .	Incident of Mutiny. Transatlantic cable commences.
1858	Holmes family travels to Montpellier.			Second Derby-Disraeli government.		
1859			Arthur Conan Doyle born May 22 in Edinburgh, 2d child of Charles Doyle and Mary Foley.	Palmerston's second administration; Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> published.	King Oscar I of Sweden dies; succeeded by Charles XV; German Emperor William II born.	Charles Blondin crosses Niagara Falls tightrope.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1860	Holmes family returns to England. Violet's father dies; Holmes family sails to Rotterdam, settles in Cologne.			J. M. Barrie born; Wilkie Collins publishes <i>Woman in White</i> .	Lenoir constructs first practical internal combustion engine.	Abraham Lincoln elected president.
1861	Holmes family begins Continental tour.	Mary Morstan born.		Mrs. Beeton publishes <i>Book of Household Management</i> .	Alexander II emancipates Russian serfs.	Outbreak of American Civil War.
1862				Albert Memorial designed.	Bismarck becomes Prussian prime minister. Sarah Bernhardt debuts in Paris.	Henry David Thoreau dies.
1863				Metropolitan Railway (Underground) opens in London.	Civil War breaks out in Afghanistan.	Battle of Gettysburg. Birth of Henry Ford.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1864	Holmes family returns to England, leases villa in Kennington. Sent to a board school with Mycroft, Sherrinford sent to Oxford.				Prussia and Austria-Hungary defeat Denmark; beginning of Prussian expansion.	Alexander II emancipates the serfs.
1865	Severely ill.	Returns to England, attends Wellington College, Hampshire.		King George V, Rudyard Kipling born.	War breaks out between Boers of Orange Free State and Basutos.	Assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Ku Klux Klar founded.
1866	Taken to Yorkshire, entered as day boy at grammar school near Mycroft.			Herbert George Wells born. Third Derby-Disraeli government formed.	War between Prussia and Austro-Hungarian Empire.	Alfred Nobel invents dynamite.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1867				Extension of suffrage among male workers.	Karl Marx publishes Vol. I of <i>Das Kapital</i> .	Canada born through British North America Act; Organisation of Ku Klux Klan.
1868	Sails with parents to St. Malo, travels to Pau; enrolled in fencing salon.		Sent away to Hodder, prep school for Stonyhurst —Jesuit-run public school in Lancashire.	Gladstone (Liberal Party) takes office as prime minister. Publication of Wilkie Collins's <i>The Moonstone</i> . <i>Whitaker's Almanack</i> first appears.		Impeachment of U.S. president Andrew Johnson.
1869				Birth of Neville Chamberlain.	First performance of Wagner's <i>Das Rheingold</i> .	Completion of Suez Canal; Birth of Mahatma Gandhi.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events the World
1870			Enters Stonyhurst, remains for 5 years, excelling at cricket and displaying literary talent.	Death of Charles Dickens. Irish land reform.	Franco-Prussian War. Italian troops take Rome.	Birth Bernard Baruch.
1871	Holmes family returns to England.			Gilbert and Sullivan form partnership. Publication of Darwin's <i>Descent of Man</i> . Bank Holidays introduced.	Paris Commune; German Empire proclaimed at Versailles.	U.S. passed Ku Klux Klan Act, banning activities.
1872	Tutored by Professor James Moriarty. Enters Christ Church, Oxford.	Enrolls at University of London; works in surgery at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.		Disraeli's "Crystal Palace" speech.	Civil War in Spain.	U. S. Grant reelected president despite scandals; S. Grant Amnesty pardons 1 ex-Confederate

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Event the Wo
1873					Cities of Buda and Pesth united.	Guns firm o Reming & begins produce typewri
1874	“The ‘Gloria Scott’ ”*; enters Caius College, Cambridge.		Visits London, stays with uncle Richard Doyle, sees Henry Irving in <i>Hamlet</i> .	Disraeli (Conservative Party) becomes prime minister. Winston Churchill born.	Harry Houdini (Ehrich Weiss), Marconi born. First Impressionist exhibit.	He Hoover born.
1875			Passes matriculation exam with honors, spends year at Jesuit school at Feldkirch, Austria.	Disraeli acquires the Suez Canal. London main sewage system; first Gilbert and Sullivan operetta performed.	Birth of Albert Schweitzer.	Rising Bosnia Herzegovina against Turkish rule.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1876			Decides to become doctor and enrolls at Edinburgh University. Meets Dr. Joseph Bell and Professor Rutherford.	Disraeli becomes Earl of Beaconsfield.	Wagner's "Ring" first performed.	Alexander Graham Bell demonstrates telephone. Serbia and Montenegro declare war on Turkey.
1877	Takes rooms in Montague St. "Months of inaction."			Victoria becomes Empress of India.	Publication of Mozart's complete works begins. Schiaparelli observes canals on Mars.	Death of Brigham Young, leader of the Mormons. Thomas Edison patents phonograph. Publication of <i>Ala Pinkerton's Molly Maguires and the Detective</i> .

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events the World
1878		Receives degree of doctor of medicine. Attends Netley for army surgeons' course. Sails for India.	Takes part-time doctoring job.	Second Afghan War begins. First performance of <i>H.M.S. Pinafore</i> . C.I.D., New Scotland Yard, established.	Congress of Berlin; Austro-German alliance.	Birth of Carl Sandburg;
1879	"The Musgrave Ritual"; appears on London stage in <i>Hamlet</i> . Sails for America with Sasanoff Shakespeare Co.		Charles Doyle goes into nursing home. Early stories published anonymously.	Zulu War begins.	Albert Einstein born.	The Edison patents incandescent lamp. 1 of photography Edward Steichen

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1880	Returns to England from U.S.	Wounded at Battle of Maiwand; escapes to British lines. Suffers enteric fever at Peshawar. Returns to London on <i>Orontes</i> . Stays at private hotel in Strand.	Signs on as ship's doctor with Arctic whaler; 7-month voyage. Initial interest in spiritualism, paranormal.	Gladstone takes office again as prime minister. Swan and Edison devise first practical electric lights.		Birth of Douglas MacArthur.
1881	Meets John H. Watson. Takes up residence in Baker Street. <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> .	Meets Sherlock Holmes. Moves into Baker Street.	Bachelor of Medicine rec'd. Signs on as ship's doctor with West African steamer. Nearly dies of fever.	Death of Benjamin Disraeli, Thomas Carlyle. Irish Land Act. Flogging abolished in army and navy.	Birth of painter Pablo Picasso.	Tsar Alexander II assassinated; President James Garfield assassinated.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1882			Renounces Catholic faith. Joins George Budd, medical schoolmate, in practice in Plymouth. Becomes concerned about Budd's ethics and sets up own practice in Southsea, Portsmouth.	Death of Charles Darwin.	Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria, and Italy.	Franklin Delano Roosevelt born.
1883	"The Speckled Band."		Publishes first story.		Death of Karl Marx, Richard Wagner.	French expand in Indochina. Birth of John Maynard Keynes. Mark Twain writes the first book on the typewriter.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1884		Travels to America, woos Lucy Ferrier in San Francisco. 2	Begins first novel.	First deep tube (underground) railroad; General Gordon reaches Khartoum.	Germans occupy South-West Africa.	Birth of Harry Truman.
1885			Marries Louise Hawkins.	Lord Salisbury (Conservative) becomes prime minister. Death of General Charles George Gordon in Khartoum.	Germany annexes Tanganyika and Zanzibar.	Indian National Congress formed.
1886	“The Beryl Coronet.”	Returns to England. Weds Lucy Ferrier, buys practice in Kensington.		Gladstone, Salisbury, serve as prime minister. Irish Home Rule Bill.	Bonaparte and Orléans families banished from France.	Birth of painter Diego Rivera.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1887	“The Resident Patient,” “The Reigate Squires.”	Publishes <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> . 1st wife dies in December.	Publishes <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> .	Victoria celebrates golden anniversary of her reign. Field Marshal Montgomery born.	Birth of painter Marc Chagall.	Death of Henry Ward Beecher, Jenny Lind. Birth of artist Georgia O’Keeffe.
1888	<i>The Valley of Fear</i> , “The Noble Bachelor,” “The Yellow Face,”* “The Greek Interpreter,” <i>The Sign of Four</i> , “Silver Blaze,” “The Cardboard Box.”	Brother Henry dies. Meets and marries Mary Morstan. Buys practice in Paddington.		Jack the Ripper killings begin. T. E. Lawrence born.	Kaiser Wilhelm II takes throne.	Hertz discovers radio waves. Jim Thorpe born.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1889	<p>“A Scandal in Bohemia,”</p> <p>“Man with the Twisted Lip,”</p> <p>“A Case of Identity,”</p> <p>“The Blue Carbuncle,”</p> <p>“The Five Orange Pips,”</p> <p>“The Boscombe Valley Mystery,”</p> <p>“The Stock-Broker’s Clerk,”</p> <p>“The Naval Treaty,”</p> <p>“The Engineer’s Thumb,”</p> <p>“The Hound of the Baskervilles,”</p> <p>“The Crooked Man.”</p>	<p>Publishes <i>The Sign of Four</i> in <i>Lippincott’s Magazine</i> .</p>	<p>Daughter Mary Louise born.</p> <p>Publishes <i>Micah Clarke</i>, <i>The Sign of Four</i> .</p>	<p>Cecil Rhodes’s British South Africa Company granted royal charter;</p> <p>Barnum & Bailey’s Circus appears in London.</p>	<p>Birth of Adolf Hitler.</p> <p>Paris Exhibition and opening of Eiffel Tower.</p>	<p>Strowger files for patent for direct-dial telephone.</p>

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1891	“The Final Problem”; travels as “Sigerson.”	Sells Paddington practice, returns to Kensington. Arranges for publication of “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Red-Headed League,” “A Case of Identity,” “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” “The Five Orange Pips,” “The Man with the Twisted Lip” in <i>Strand</i> . Mary Morstan dies, possibly in early 1892.	Abandons Southsea practice, writes <i>Doings of Raffles Haw</i> . Returns to London and opens practice in Devonshire Place. Soon decides to give up medicine. First stories of <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> begin to appear in <i>Strand Magazine</i> .	Thomas Hardy publishes <i>Tess of the d’Urbervilles</i> .	Triple Alliance (Germany-Italy-Austria) renewed. Death of Parnell, leader of Irish Home Rule.	Zionism invented. Widespread famine in Russia. Earthquake in Japan kills almost 10,000 people.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1892	Continues to travel.	“The Blue Carbuncle,” “The Speckled Band,” “The Engineer’s Thumb,” “The Noble Bachelor,” “The Beryl Coronet,” “The Copper Beeches,” “Silver Blaze” published in <i>Strand</i> .	Takes up skiing. Son Kingsley born.	Gladstone again becomes prime minister. Death of Alfred, Lord Tennyson.	Invention of diesel engine by Rudolf Diesel.	Birth of John Paul Getty. Utah Constitution bans polygyny.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Event the Wo
1893	Settles in Montpellier to conduct coal-tar derivatives research.	<p>“The Cardboard Box,” “The Yellow Face,” “The Stock-Broker’s Clerk,” “The ‘Gloria Scott’,” “The Musgrave Ritual,” “The Reigate Squires,” “The Crooked Man,” “The Resident Patient,” “The Greek Interpreter,” “The Naval Treaty,” “The Final Problem” published in <i>Strand</i> .</p>	<p>Charles Doyle dies. Louise diagnosed with TB. Remainder of <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> and <i>The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes</i> stories published in <i>Strand</i> .</p>	<p>Premiere of <i>Under the Clock</i> , an “extravaganza” in one act starring Charles H. E. Brookfield as Sherlock Holmes.</p>	<p>Franco-Russian alliance signed.</p>	<p>Chi World’s Fair (Colum Exposit Second Internat Frano-Russian alliance signed.</p>

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1894	Returns to London. "The Empty House," "The Second Stain,"* 3 "The Golden Pince-Nez," "The Norwood Builder."	Sells practice, returns to Baker Street.	Successful lecture tour in America. Play <i>Waterloo</i> performed.	Lord Rosebery becomes prime minister.	Dreyfus case begins in France.	1st steel-framed skyscraper built in Chicago. Nicholas II becomes czar. Sino-Japanese War commences.
1895	"Wisteria Lodge,"* "The Three Students," "The Solitary Cyclist," "Black Peter," "The Bruce-Partington Plans."		Buys land in Hindhead for home; travels to Egypt. Publishes <i>Stark Munro Letters</i> .	Salisbury regains office of prime minister. Death of Lord Randolph Churchill. H.G. Wells publishes <i>The Time Machine</i> .	Lumiere brothers hold public film exhibitions in Paris.	Röntgen discovers X-rays. Gillette invents safety razor. Sino-Japanese War. Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey born.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1896	“The Veiled Lodger,” “The Sussex Vampire,” “The Missing Three-Quarter.”		Travels up Nile. Serves as war correspondent for British/Dervish fighting. Publishes <i>Brigadier Gerard</i> and <i>Rodney Stone</i> .	Czar Nicholas II visits London.	New evidence in Dreyfus case suppressed. Alfred Nobel dies, Nobel prizes created.	First modern Olympics held in Athens. Cracker Jacks, Tootsie Rolls, and S&H Green Stamps introduced.
1897	“The Abbey Grange,” “The Devil’s Foot.”		Meets and falls in love with Jean Leckie. Publishes <i>Uncle Bernac</i> .	Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. Publication of Bram Stoker’s <i>Dracula</i> .	First World Zionist Congress.	Klondike gold rush begins.
1898	“The Dancing Men.”			Death of Lewis Carroll. H. G. Wells publishes <i>War of the Worlds</i> . Lord Kitchener defeats Dervishes at Omdurman.	German naval race with England. Death of Otto von Bismarck.	Fashoda crisis, Spanish-American War.

				Gladstone dies.		
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Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Event the Wo
1899	“The Retired Colourman,” “Charles Augustus Milverton.”		Volunteers for army, rejected. A <i>Duet</i> published.	Second Boer War begins. Winston Churchill goes to South Africa as war correspondent. Emperor William II visits England. Kipling writes of “white man's burden.”	First magnetic recording of sound.	Wi Gillette product and sta <i>Sherloc Holmes</i> Syracuse NY.
1900	“The Six Napoleons.”		Serves in hospital unit in South Africa. Writes <i>The Great Boer War; The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct</i> . Stands as Unionist candidate in	Death of Sir Arthur Sullivan, Oscar Wilde.	Paris Metro opens. Death of Friedrich Nietzsche. Publication of Freud's <i>Interpretation of Dreams</i> .	Davis tennis matche inaugur First <i>Sherloc Holmes</i> film, <i>Sherloc Holmes Baffled</i> appears

		Edinburgh, loses.		
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Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Ev Wo
1901	“The Priory School,” “Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax,”* “Thor Bridge.”	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> published in <i>Strand</i> .	Publishes <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> .	Death of Queen Victoria. Edward VII (“Bertie”) ascends to throne. First British submarine launched. Boxing recognized as legal sport.	Negotiations for Anglo-German alliance end without agreement.	<i>A</i> of Mcl The Roc becu pres Aus becu Cor Birt Dis
1902	“Shoscombe Old Place,” “The Three Garridebs,” “The Three Gables,”* “The Illustrious Client,” “The Red Circle.”*	Moves to rooms in Queen Anne Street. Remarries, returns to practice.	Knighted.	Lord Salisbury retires as prime minister; Arthur Balfour takes office. England signs peace treaty with Boers.	Triple Alliance renewed for six years.	An allia recc Enr. Dea Stra

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1903	“The Blanched Soldier,” “The Mazarin Stone,” “The Creeping Man”; Holmes retires.	Publishes “The Empty House,” “The Norwood Builder,” “The Dancing Men,” “The Solitary Cyclist.”	First stories of <i>The Return of Sherlock Holmes</i> appear in <i>Strand</i> . Publishes <i>Adventures of Gerard</i> .	First motor taxis appear in London.	First Tour de France (bicycle race).	Henry Ford founds Ford Motor Co.
1904		Publishes “The Priory School,” “Black Peter,” “Charles Augustus Milverton,” “The Six Napoleons,” “The Three Students,” “The Golden Pince-Nez,” “The Missing Three-Quarter,” “The Abbey Grange.”		First concert of London Symphony Orchestra.	Anglo-French Entente. Paris Conference on white slave trade.	Russo-Japanese war. Panama Canal started.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1905		Publishes "The Second Stain."		Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (L) becomes prime minister. Actor Henry Irving dies.	Tangier crisis precipitated by kaiser's visit.	Publication of Einstein's relativity theory.
1906			Runs again as Unionist candidate, loses. George Edalji case. Becomes involved in Divorce Law Reform Movement. Louise Doyle dies. Publishes <i>Sir Nigel</i> .	Social insurance and parliamentary reform proposed by Lloyd George.	Franco becomes prime minister of Spain.	International ban on women working night shifts.
1907	"The Lion's Mane."		Marries Jean Leckie. George Edalji released. <i>Through</i>	Baden-Powell founds Boy Scouts.	Triple Entente. 1st Cubist show in Paris. Oscar II, King of	Immigration to U.S restricted by law.

*the Magic
Door*
published.

Sweden,
dies.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1908		Publishes "Wisteria Lodge," "The Bruce-Partington Plans."		Herbert H. Asquith becomes prime minister as Liberal. <i>Strand Magazine</i> publishes <i>My African Journey</i> by Winston Churchill.	Bosnian crisis.	Jack Johnson becomes first black world heavyweight boxing champion.
1909			Writes <i>Crime of the Congo</i> . Son Denis born.	Girl Guides established.	First cross-Channel airplane flight.	Admiral Peary reaches North Pole.
1910		Publishes "The Devil's Foot."	Case of Oscar Slater taken up. Son Adrian born. Play <i>Speckled Band</i> first produced in London.	Death of King Edward VII ("Bertie"). George V takes throne.	Revolution in Portugal.	Death of Mark Twain, Florence Nightingale. Union of South Africa formed.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	E the
1911		Publishes "The Red Circle," "Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax."		Death of Sir William Gilbert.	Inauguration of air mail service.	Rev
1912	Leaves for America to infiltrate Irish secret society; travels to Chicago.		Publishes <i>Case of Oscar Slater</i> , <i>Lost World</i> . Daughter Lena Jean born.	Royal Flying Corps established.	Balkan crisis.	S Tit
1913		Publishes "The Dying Detective."	Publishes <i>Poison Belt</i> .	Suffragette demonstrations.	Balkan War ends.	bra inv
1914	Returns to England. "His Last Bow."	Assists Holmes in "His Last Bow."	Forms local volunteer force. Writes <i>To Arms!</i>	Ulster Crisis; World War I commences.	Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand; World War I commences.	W I cor

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1915		Publishes <i>The Valley of Fear</i> .	Begins 6-vol. history of <i>British Campaign in France and Flanders</i> . Publishes <i>The Valley of Fear</i> .	Herbert Asquith remains Prime Minister for Coalition.	Poison gas first used in war.	Ford sells millionth car. Gallipoli campaign begins.
1916			Visits fronts. Announces conversion to spiritualism.	Battle of Jutland; Irish troubles. David Lloyd George (Coalition) becomes prime minister.	Bloody battles at Verdun and the Somme.	Assassination of Rasputin.
1917		Publishes "His Last Bow."	Publishes "His Last Bow."	Mata Hari executed as spy.	U.S. enters the Great War. First large-scale use of tanks.	Russian Revolution. John Fitzgerald Kennedy born. "Buffalo Bill" Cody dies.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1918			Son Kingsley dies from pneumonia. Publishes <i>New Revelation</i> .	Women over 30 allowed to vote.	Armistice. Kaiser Wilhelm abdicates.	Knute Rockne becomes coach of University of Notre Dame.
1919			Brother Innes dies. Publishes <i>Vital Message</i> .	Government of India Act.	Peace of Versailles. Weimar Republic established in Germany. Death of Pierre-Auguste Renoir.	Death of Andrew Carnegie.
1920			Travels to Australia to promote spiritualism.	First Agatha Christie mystery novel published.	Clemenceau resigns; Millerand takes over as premier of France.	U.S. adopts women's suffrage.
1921		Publishes "The Mazarin Stone."	Mother dies. <i>Wanderings of a Spiritualist</i> published.		Einstein wins Nobel Prize.	First Indian Parliament meets.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events the World
1922		Publishes "Thor Bridge."	Lecture tour of America. Announces belief in fairies, publishes <i>Coming of the Fairies</i> .	Lloyd George resigns. Bonar Law becomes prime minister, first to come from an overseas possession. Irish Free State. BBC founded.	Mussolini becomes prime minister of Italy.	Washington disarmament conference
1923		Publishes "The Creeping Man."	Returns to America and Canada. Publishes <i>Our American Adventure</i> .	Stanley Baldwin becomes prime minister.	Hitler's "Beer Hall Putsch" fails.	Paa Nurmi runs near-four-minute mile.
1924		Publishes "The Sussex Vampire," "The Three Garridebs."	Publishes <i>Our Second American Adventure; Memories and Adventures</i> .	J. Ramsay MacDonald becomes prime minister, heads first Labor government; succeeded by Baldwin.	Hitler imprisoned.	Leopold and Lo sentenced for kidnapping Bobby Franks. Edgar Hoover becomes director F.B.I.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events the World
1925		Publishes "The Illustrious Client."	Presides over International Spiritualistic Congress in Paris.	Austen Chamberlain wins Nobel Peace Prize.	Hitler reorganizes Nazi Party, publishes first volume of <i>Mein Kampf</i> .	Harold G. P. Vanderbilt invents contract bridge.
1926	Publishes "The Blanched Soldier," "The Lion's Mane."	Publishes "The Three Gables," "The Retired Colourman."	Publishes <i>History of Spiritualism; Land of Mist</i> .	Queen Elizabeth II born.	Germany admitted to League of Nations.	Houdini dies.
1927		Publishes "The Veiled Lodger," "Shoscombe Old Place."	Oscar Slater freed. <i>The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes and Pheneas Speaks</i> published.	Parliament House opens in Canberra, Australia.	First television broadcast. "Black Friday" in Germany, economy collapses.	<i>The Singers</i> ("talkie") appears. Academy Awards inaugurated. Babe Ruth hits his 3000th home run. Lindbergh flies <i>Spirit of St. Louis</i> from New York to Paris.

Year	Life of Sherlock Holmes	Life of John H. Watson	Life of Arthur Conan Doyle	Events in England	Events on the Continent	Events in the World
1928			Travels to South Africa.	H. H. Asquith, actress Ellen Terry die.	Kellogg-Briand pact, outlawing war, signed in Paris by 65 states.	Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.
1929		Dies under circumstances unknown.	Visits Scandinavia, Holland, returns exhausted, has heart attack. Publishes <i>Maracot Deep, Our African Winter</i> .	MacDonald again becomes prime minister. Lillie Langtry dies.	Yugoslavia created as dictatorship.	Ernest Hemingway publishes <i>Farewell to Arms</i> . "Black Friday" New York world economic crisis begins.
1930			Publishes <i>Edge of the Unknown</i> ; dies July 7.	Britain, U.S., Japan, and Italy sign naval disarmament treaty.	Last Allied troops leave the Saar.	Sherlock Holmes radio broadcast in U.S., starring William Gillette.

1 The table includes speculations about the lives of Sherlock Holmes and John H. Watson, m.d., drawn from William S. Baring-Gould's *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective*, which are not supported by the text of the Canon. The dates given for the Canonical cases represent a "consensus" of the major chronologists compiled in "*The Date Being—?*": *A Compendium of Chronological Data*, by Andrew Jay Peck and Leslie S. Klinger. (A "consensus" is the choice of a majority of the fifteen chronologists for some cases; for others, the choice of a plurality of the major chronologists.) Those cases for which there is no consensus date are marked "*", and the date given is this editor's choice.

2 Baring-Gould actually proposed that Watson married one Constance Adams, based on the then-scant information about Arthur Conan Doyle's unpublished play *Angels of Darkness*, which had been suppressed by Sir Arthur's family. The play has subsequently been published, and the woman whom Watson is depicted as wooing is actually Lucy Ferrier, the former wife of Jefferson Hope (of *A Study in Scarlet*). Baring-Gould's thesis has therefore been corrected to refer to the woman actually named in the play. Few scholars today credit the play as a reliable source of historical data about Dr. Watson.

3 Some chronologists place this case before 1892.

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Leslie S. Klinger is also the editor of the *Sherlock Holmes Reference Library*, a nine-volume scholarly edition of the Sherlock Holmes stories published by Gasogene Press. The *Reference Library* quotes extensively from published Sherlockian criticism and provides detailed reviews of the scholarly literature.

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