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THE SHERLOCK HOLMES COLLECTION

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

His Last Bow

The Hound of the Baskervilles

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

The Return of Sherlock Holmes

The Sign of the Four

A Study in Scarlet

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The Tragedy of the Korosko

*The Casebook
of Sherlock Holmes*

PREFACE

I fear that Mr Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences. This must cease, and he must go the way of all flesh,* material or imaginary. One likes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of imagination, some strange, impossible place where the beaux of Fielding may still make love to the belles of Richardson, where Scott's heroes still may strut, Dickens's delightful cockneys still raise a laugh, and Thackeray's worldlings continue to carry on their reprehensible careers.* Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla,* Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated.

His career has been a long one – though it is possible to exaggerate it: decrepit gentlemen who approach me and declare that his adventures formed the reading of their boyhood do not meet the response from me which they seem to expect. One is not anxious to have one's personal dates handled so unkindly. As a matter of cold fact, Holmes made his debut in *A Study in Scarlet* and in *The Sign of Four*, two small booklets which appeared between 1887 and 1889.* It was in 1891 that 'A Scandal in Bohemia', the first of the long series of short stories, appeared in the *Strand Magazine*. The public seemed appreciative and desirous of more, so that from that date, thirty-six years ago, they have been produced in a broken series which now contains no fewer than fifty-six stories, republished in *The Adventures*, *The Memoirs*, *The Return* and *His*

Last Bow, and there remain these twelve published during the last few years which are here produced under the title of *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*. He began his adventures in the very heart of the later Victorian era, carried it through the all-too-short reign of Edward, and has managed to hold his own little niche even in these feverish days.* Thus it would be true to say that those who first read of him as young men have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine. It is a striking example of the patience and loyalty of the British public.

I had fully determined at the conclusion of *The Memoirs* to bring Holmes to an end, as I felt that my literary energies should not be directed too much into one channel. That pale, clear-cut face and loose-limbed figure were taking up an undue share of my imagination. I did the deed, but, fortunately, no coroner had pronounced upon the remains, and so, after a long interval, it was not difficult for me to respond to the flattering demand and to explain my rash act away.* I have never regretted it, for I have not in actual practice found that these lighter sketches have prevented me from exploring and finding my limitations in such varied branches of literature as history, poetry, historical novels, psychic research and the drama.* Had Holmes never existed, I could not have done more, though he may perhaps have stood a little in the way of the recognition of my more serious literary work.

And so, reader, farewell to Sherlock Holmes! I thank you for your past constancy, and can but hope that some return has been made in the shape of that distraction from the worries of life and stimulating change of thought which can only be found in the fairy kingdom of romance.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

THE ADVENTURE OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT

“IT CAN’T HURT NOW,” was Mr Sherlock Holmes’s comment when, for the tenth time in as many years, I asked his leave to reveal the following narrative. So it was that at last I obtained permission to put on record what was, in some ways, the supreme moment of my friend’s career.

Both Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish bath. It was over a smoke in the pleasant lassitude of the drying room that I have found him less reticent and more human than anywhere else. On the upper floor of the Northumberland Avenue establishment there is an isolated corner where two couches lie side by side, and it was on these that we lay upon 3rd September 1902, the day when my narrative begins. I had asked him whether anything was stirring, and for answer he had shot his long, thin, nervous arm out of the sheets which enveloped him and had drawn an envelope from the inside pocket of the coat which hung beside him.

“It may be some fussy, self-important fool, it may be a matter of life or death,” said he as he handed me the note. “I know no more than this message tells me.”

It was from the Carlton Club,* and dated the evening before. This is what I read:

Sir James Damery presents his compliments to Mr Sherlock Holmes, and will call upon him at 4.30 tomorrow. Sir James begs to say that the matter upon which he desires to consult Mr Holmes is very delicate, and also very important. He trusts,

therefore, that Mr Holmes will make every effort to grant this interview, and that he will confirm it over the telephone to the Carlton Club.

“I need not say that I have confirmed it, Watson,” said Holmes as I returned the paper. “Do you know anything of this man Damery?”

“Only that his name is a household word in society.”

“Well, I can tell you a little more than that. He has rather a reputation for arranging delicate matters which are to be kept out of the papers. You may remember his negotiations with Sir George Lewis over the Hammerford will case.* He is a man of the world with a natural turn for diplomacy. I am bound, therefore, to hope that it is not a false scent and that he has some real need for our assistance.”

“Our?”

“Well, if you will be so good, Watson.”

“I shall be honoured.”

“Then you have the hour – four thirty. Until then we can put the matter out of our heads.”

I was living in my own rooms in Queen Anne Street* at the time, but I was round at Baker Street before the time named. Sharp to the half-hour, Colonel Sir James Damery was announced. It is hardly necessary to describe him, for many will remember that large, bluff, honest personality, that broad, clean-shaven face – above all, that pleasant, mellow voice. Frankness shone from his grey Irish eyes, and good humour played round his mobile, smiling lips. His lucent top hat, his dark frock coat – indeed, every detail, from the pearl pin in the black satin cravat to the lavender spats over the varnished shoes – spoke of the meticulous care in dress for which he was famous. The big, masterful aristocrat dominated the little room.

“Of course, I was prepared to find Doctor Watson,” he remarked with a courteous bow. “His collaboration may be very necessary, for we are dealing on this occasion, Mr Holmes, with a

man to whom violence is familiar and who will, literally, stick at nothing. I should say that there is no more dangerous man in Europe.”

“I have had several opponents to whom that flattering term has been applied,” said Holmes with a smile. “Don’t you smoke? Then you will excuse me if I light my pipe. If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran,* then he is indeed worth meeting. May I ask his name?”

“Have you ever heard of Baron Gruner?”

“You mean the Austrian murderer?”

Colonel Damery threw up his kid-gloved hands with a laugh. “There is no getting past you, Mr Holmes! Wonderful! So you have already sized him up as a murderer?”

“It is my business to follow the details of Continental crime. Who could possibly have read what happened at Prague and have any doubts as to the man’s guilt? It was a purely technical legal point and the suspicious death of a witness that saved him! I am as sure that he killed his wife when the so-called ‘accident’ happened in the Splügen Pass* as if I had seen him do it. I knew, also, that he had come to England, and had a presentiment that sooner or later he would find me some work to do. Well, what has Baron Gruner been up to? I presume it is not this old tragedy which has come up again?”

“No, it is more serious than that. To revenge crime is important, but to prevent it is more so. It is a terrible thing, Mr Holmes, to see a dreadful event, an atrocious situation, preparing itself before your eyes, to clearly understand whither it will lead and yet to be utterly unable to avert it. Can a human being be placed in a more trying position?”

“Perhaps not.”

“Then you will sympathize with the client in whose interests I am acting.”

“I did not understand that you were merely an intermediary. Who is the principal?”

“Mr Holmes, I must beg you not to press that question. It is important that I should be able to assure him that his honoured name has been in no way dragged into the matter. His motives are, to the last degree, honourable and chivalrous, but he prefers to remain unknown. I need not say that your fees will be assured and that you will be given a perfectly free hand. Surely the actual name of your client is immaterial?”

“I am sorry,” said Holmes. “I am accustomed to have mystery at one end of my cases, but to have it at both ends is too confusing. I fear, Sir James, that I must decline to act.”

Our visitor was greatly disturbed. His large, sensitive face was darkened with emotion and disappointment.

“You hardly realize the effect of your own action, Mr Holmes,” said he. “You place me in a most serious dilemma, for I am perfectly certain that you would be proud to take over the case if I could give you the facts, and yet a promise forbids me from revealing them all. May I, at least, lay all that I can before you?”

“By all means, so long as it is understood that I commit myself to nothing.”

“That is understood. In the first place, you have no doubt heard of General de Merville?”

“De Merville of Khyber* fame? Yes, I have heard of him.”

“He has a daughter, Violet de Merville – young, rich, beautiful, accomplished, a wonder-woman in every way. It is this daughter, this lovely, innocent girl, whom we are endeavouring to save from the clutches of a fiend.”

“Baron Gruner has some hold over her, then?”

“The strongest of all holds where a woman is concerned – the hold of love. The fellow is, as you may have heard, extraordinarily handsome, with a most fascinating manner, a gentle voice and that air of romance and mystery which means so much to a woman. He is said to have the whole sex at his mercy and to have made ample use of the fact.”

“But how came such a man to meet a lady of the standing of Miss Violet de Merville?”

“It was on a Mediterranean yachting voyage. The company, though select, paid their own passages. No doubt the promoters hardly realized the baron’s true character until it was too late. The villain attached himself to the lady, and with such effect that he has completely and absolutely won her heart. To say that she loves him hardly expresses it. She dotes upon him, she is obsessed by him. Outside of him there is nothing on earth. She will not hear one word against him. Everything has been done to cure her of her madness, but in vain. To sum up, she proposes to marry him next month. As she is of age and has a will of iron, it is hard to know how to prevent her.”

“Does she know about the Austrian episode?”

“The cunning devil has told her every unsavoury public scandal of his past life, but always in such a way as to make himself out to be an innocent martyr. She absolutely accepts his version and will listen to no other.”

“Dear me! But surely you have inadvertently let out the name of your client? It is no doubt General de Merville.”

Our visitor fidgeted in his chair.

“I could deceive you by saying so, Mr Holmes, but it would not be true. De Merville is a broken man. The strong soldier has been utterly demoralized by this incident. He has lost the nerve which never failed him on the battlefield and has become a weak, doddering old man, utterly incapable of contending with a brilliant, forceful rascal like this Austrian. My client, however, is an old friend, one who has known the general intimately for many years and taken a paternal interest in this young girl since she wore short frocks. He cannot see this tragedy consummated without some attempt to stop it. There is nothing in which Scotland Yard can act. It was his own suggestion that you should be called in, but it was, as I have said, on the express stipulation that he should not be personally involved in the matter. I have no doubt, Mr Holmes, with your great powers you could easily trace my client back through me, but I must ask you, as a point of honour, to refrain from doing so, and not to break in upon his incognito.”

Holmes gave a whimsical smile.

"I think I may safely promise that," said he. "I may add that your problem interests me, and that I shall be prepared to look into it. How shall I keep in touch with you?"

"The Carlton Club will find me. But, in case of emergency, there is a private telephone call:* 'XX.31'."

Holmes noted it down and sat, still smiling, with the open memorandum book upon his knee.

"The baron's present address, please?"

"Vernon Lodge, near Kingston.* It is a large house. He has been fortunate in some rather shady speculations and is a rich man — which, naturally, makes him a more dangerous antagonist."

"Is he at home at present?"

"Yes."

"Apart from what you have told me, can you give me any further information about the man?"

"He has expensive tastes. He is a horse fancier. For a short time he played polo at Hurlingham,* but then this Prague affair got noised about and he had to leave. He collects books and pictures. He is a man with a considerable artistic side to his nature. He is, I believe, a recognized authority upon Chinese pottery, and has written a book upon the subject."

"A complex mind," said Holmes. "All great criminals have that. My old friend Charlie Peace was a violin virtuoso. Wainwright was no mean artist.* I could quote many more. Well, Sir James, you will inform your client that I am turning my mind upon Baron Gruner. I can say no more. I have some sources of information of my own, and I dare say we may find some means of opening the matter up."

When our visitor had left us, Holmes sat so long in deep thought that it seemed to me that he had forgotten my presence. At last, however, he came briskly back to earth.

"Well, Watson, any views?" he asked.

"I should think you had better see the young lady herself."

“My dear Watson, if her poor old broken father cannot move her, how shall I, a stranger, prevail? And yet there is something in the suggestion if all else fails. But I think we must begin from a different angle. I rather fancy that Shinwell Johnson might be a help.”

I have not had occasion to mention Shinwell Johnson in these memoirs because I have seldom drawn my cases from the latter phases of my friend’s career. During the first years of the century he became a valuable assistant. Johnson, I grieve to say, made his name first as a very dangerous villain and served two terms at Parkhurst.* Finally, he repented and allied himself to Holmes, acting as his agent in the huge criminal underworld of London, and obtaining information which often proved to be of vital importance. Had Johnson been a “nark”* of the police, he would soon have been exposed, but as he dealt with cases which never came directly into the courts, his activities were never realized by his companions. With the glamour of his two convictions upon him, he had the entrée* of every nightclub, dosshouse and gambling den in the town, and his quick observation and active brain made him an ideal agent for gaining information. It was to him that Sherlock Holmes now proposed to turn.

It was not possible for me to follow the immediate steps taken by my friend, for I had some pressing professional business of my own, but I met him by appointment that evening at Simpson’s,* where, sitting at a small table in the front window and looking down at the rushing stream of life in the Strand, he told me something of what had passed.

“Johnson is on the prowl,” said he. “He may pick up some garbage in the darker recesses of the underworld, for it is down there, amid the black roots of crime, that we must hunt for this man’s secrets.”

“But if the lady will not accept what is already known, why should any fresh discovery of yours turn her from her purpose?”

“Who knows, Watson? Woman’s heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male. Murder might be condoned or explained, and yet some smaller offence might rankle. Baron Gruner remarked to me—”

“He remarked to you!”

“Oh, to be sure, I had not told you of my plans! Well, Watson, I love to come to close grips with my man. I like to meet him eye to eye and read for myself the stuff that he is made of. When I had given Johnson his instructions, I took a cab out to Kingston and found the baron in a most affable mood.”

“Did he recognize you?”

“There was no difficulty about that, for I simply sent in my card. He is an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky-voiced and soothing as one of your fashionable consultants, and poisonous as a cobra. He has breed* in him, a real aristocrat of crime, with a superficial suggestion of afternoon tea and all the cruelty of the grave behind it. Yes, I am glad to have had my attention called to Baron Adelbert Gruner.”

“You say he was affable?”

“A purring cat who thinks he sees prospective mice. Some people’s affability is more deadly than the violence of coarser souls. His greeting was characteristic. ‘I rather thought I should see you sooner or later, Mr Holmes,’ said he. ‘You have been engaged, no doubt, by General de Merville to endeavour to stop my marriage with his daughter, Violet. That is so, is it not?’

“I acquiesced.

“‘My dear man,’ said he, ‘you will only ruin your own well-deserved reputation. It is not a case in which you can possibly succeed. You will have barren work, to say nothing of incurring some danger. Let me very strongly advise you to draw off at once.’

“‘It is curious,’ I answered, ‘but that was the very advice which I had intended to give you. I have a respect for your brains, Baron, and the little which I have seen of your personality has not lessened it. Let me put it to you as man to man. No one wants to rake up your past and make you unduly uncomfortable. It is over, and you are now in smooth waters, but if you persist in this marriage, you will raise up a swarm of powerful enemies who will never leave you alone until they have made England too hot to hold you. Is the game worth it? Surely you would be wiser if you left the lady

alone. It would not be pleasant for you if these facts of your past were brought to her notice.'

"The baron has little waxed tips of hair under his nose, like the short antennae of an insect. These quivered with amusement as he listened, and he finally broke into a gentle chuckle.

"Excuse my amusement, Mr Holmes,' said he, 'but it is really funny to see you trying to play a hand with no cards in it. I don't think anyone could do it better, but it is rather pathetic, all the same. Not a colour card there, Mr Holmes – nothing but the smallest of the small.'

"So you think.'

"So I know. Let me make the thing clear to you, for my own hand is so strong that I can afford to show it. I have been fortunate enough to win the entire affection of this lady. This was given to me in spite of the fact that I told her very clearly of all the unhappy incidents in my past life. I also told her that certain wicked and designing persons – I hope you recognize yourself – would come to her and tell her these things, and I warned her how to treat them. You have heard of post-hypnotic suggestion, Mr Holmes? Well, you will see how it works, for a man of personality can use hypnotism without any vulgar passes or tomfoolery. So she is ready for you and, I have no doubt, would give you an appointment, for she is quite amenable to her father's will – save only in the one little matter.'

"Well, Watson, there seemed to be no more to say, so I took my leave with as much cold dignity as I could summon, but, as I had my hand on the door handle, he stopped me.

"By the way, Mr Holmes,' said he, 'did you know Le Brun, the French agent?'

"Yes,' said I.

"Do you know what befell him?'

"I heard that he was beaten by some Apaches* in the Montmartre district and crippled for life.'

"Quite true, Mr Holmes. By a curious coincidence he had been enquiring into my affairs only a week before. Don't do it,

Mr Holmes – it’s not a lucky thing to do. Several have found that out. My last word to you is: go your own way and let me go mine. Goodbye!

“So there you are, Watson. You are up to date now.”

“The fellow seems dangerous.”

“Mighty dangerous. I disregard the blusterer, but this is the sort of man who says rather less than he means.”*

“Must you interfere? Does it really matter if he marries the girl?”

“Considering that he undoubtedly murdered his last wife, I should say it mattered very much. Besides, the client! Well, well... we need not discuss that. When you have finished your coffee, you had best come home with me, for the blithe Shinwell will be there with his report.”

We found him sure enough – a huge, coarse, red-faced, scorbutic* man with a pair of vivid black eyes which were the only external sign of the very cunning mind within. It seems that he had dived down into what was peculiarly his kingdom, and beside him on the settee was a brand which he had brought up* in the shape of a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face, youthful, and yet so worn with sin and sorrow that one read the terrible years which had left their leprous mark upon her.

“This is Miss Kitty Winter,” said Shinwell Johnson, waving his fat hand as an introduction. “What she don’t know – well, there, she’ll speak for herself. Put my hand right on her, Mr Holmes, within an hour of your message.”

“I’m easy to find,” said the young woman. “Hell, London, gets me every time. Same address for Porky Shinwell. We’re old mates, Porky, you and I. But – by cripes!* – there is another who ought to be down in a lower hell than we if there was any justice in the world! That is the man you are after, Mr Holmes.”

Holmes smiled. “I gather we have your good wishes, Miss Winter.”

“If I can help to put him where he belongs, I’m yours to the rattle,”* said our visitor with fierce energy. There was an intensity of hatred in her white, set face and her blazing eyes such as woman

seldom and man never can attain. "You needn't go into my past, Mr Holmes. That's neither here nor there. But what I am, Adelbert Gruner made me. If I could pull him down!" She clutched frantically with her hands into the air. "Oh, if I could only pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many!"

"You know how the matter stands?"

"Porky Shinwell has been telling me. He's after some other poor fool and wants to marry her this time. You want to stop it. Well, you surely know enough about this devil to prevent any decent girl in her senses wanting to be in the same parish with him."

"She is not in her senses. She is madly in love. She has been told all about him. She cares nothing."

"Told about the murder?"

"Yes."

"My Lord, she must have a nerve!"

"She puts them all down as slanders."

"Couldn't you lay proofs before her silly eyes?"

"Well, can you help us do so?"

"Ain't I a proof myself? If I stood before her and told her how he used me..."

"Would you do this?"

"Would I? Would I not!"

"Well, it might be worth trying. But he has told her most of his sins and had pardon from her, and I understand she will not reopen the question."

"I'll lay he didn't tell her all," said Miss Winter. "I caught a glimpse of one or two murders besides the one that made such a fuss. He would speak of someone in his velvet way and then look at me with a steady eye and say: 'He died within a month.' It wasn't hot air, either. But I took little notice – you see, I loved him myself at that time. Whatever he did went with me, same as with this poor fool! There was just one thing that shook me. Yes – by cripes! – if it had not been for his poisonous, lying tongue that explains and soothes, I'd have left him that very night. It's a book he has – a brown-leather book with a lock, and his arms in gold