

Arthur  
Conan Doyle

THE MEMOIRS  
OF SHERLOCK  
HOLMES

  
GIUNTI CLASSICS

  
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SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

# The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Edited with an Introduction by  
Luciana Pirè

 **GIUNTI**

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## Introduction

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born on 22 May 1859 in Edinburgh to a Catholic Irishwoman, who romantically traced her family line from one of Oliver Cromwell's officers, and to a civil servant frustrated artist. They were ten children and "they lived in the hardy and bracing atmosphere of poverty", as Conan Doyle remarked in his autobiography *Memories and Adventures* (1924). His father, who lost his job and turned increasingly to alcohol, did not figure largely in Arthur's upbringing. His mother, a forceful and intelligent woman with great ambitions for her eldest son, imbued him with ideals of chivalry and courtesy. Later this code of honour dominated Doyle's historical tales of fourteenth-century English knighthood, especially *The White Company* (1891) and its sequel *Sir Nigel* (1906).

Conan Doyle was educated at the most prominent Jesuit schools in England and then studied medicine at Edinburgh University. He was still a third year student when his father was institutionalised for alcoholism and mental illness. Arthur felt obliged to earn a living immediately. He went on a seven-month voyage to the Arctic as a surgeon on a whaler and, after graduation, he made a second trip as a ship's doctor on a steamer travelling to the West Coast of Africa. Back in Britain he rented a house at Southsea, a suburb of Portsmouth, where he built up a medical practice for almost ten years before moving to London to set up as an eye specialist. The practice was soon going as badly as his others. He never had a single patient, but he spent the time in his consulting room writing stories. In October 1879 an Edinburgh weekly printed his first story, *The Mystery of Sarassa Valley*, and thereafter he had other stories and articles published in the highly regarded "Cornhill Magazine", "London Society" and "All the Year Around". When it became evident that "I could live entirely by my pen", he abandoned a physician's career for a writer's. His medical training, however, seems to lie behind his conception of Sherlock Holmes as a "scientific detective".

In 1885 he married Louise Hawkins, who in a few years' time would be found to have tuberculosis. Conan Doyle was a good husband and, when his two children were born, a good father. He was by now a

giantlike figure, a good boxer and a man of great physical strength; he laughed at good jokes, drank beer and wine, and enjoyed Scotch whisky. He was honest, sometimes brutally so, with his friends; but, given his rigid Victorian morality, he never betrayed his invalid wife, even when he met and fell in love with a young woman, Jean Leckie. For the next ten years they maintained a secret but scrupulously platonic relationship, not marrying until a proper year after Louise had died. They married in 1907 and had three children.

Sherlock Holmes made his first appearance in the short novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, published in "Beeton's Christmas Annual" in 1887. Its creator had difficulty in finding a publisher and the first Sherlock Holmes novel attracted no particular attention. One of its readers, an editor of the American "Lippincott's Monthly Magazine", came to London to contract with Conan Doyle for a new Sherlock Holmes story (*The Sign of Four*, 1890). But it was not until Conan Doyle hit on the new idea of serialising a concatenation of 'cases' that he became a best seller. What allowed each month's instalment to advertise the next was not the narrative development, nor a consistent chronological order, but an unchanging cast of characters. Between April and August 1891, Conan Doyle wrote six more Sherlock Holmes short stories under the overall title of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. The series was immediately accepted by the recently founded *Strand Magazine*, which readily agreed to pay a great deal more for further instalments. The general Victorian reverence for science was strong and ready to accept a detective who approached criminal cases by intellectual reasoning and deductive skill. In 1897 Doyle wrote a play called *Sherlock Holmes*, which was sold to the American actor William Gillette; Gillette resembled the drawings of Holmes made by the artist Sidney Paget so remarkably that first sight of him took Conan Doyle's breath away.

In a series of separate cases, nothing prevents an author from making money by spinning out more episodes and nothing stops the public from demanding sequels even when an author has become sick of them. This is what happened when Conan Doyle revealed to his mother "I think of slaying Holmes in the last... He takes my mind from better things". Conan Doyle thought of himself as a serious novelist and, as he wrote in his memories, "I saw that I was in danger of having my hand forced... Therefore as a sign of my resolution I determined to end the life of my hero. The idea was in my mind when I went with my wife for a short holiday in Switzerland, in the course of which we saw the wonderful falls of Reichenbach, a terrible place, and one that I thought would make a worthy tomb for poor Sherlock". In *The Final Problem*, the last of the new twelve\* stories collected in *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894), Doyle resolutely put an end to his hero: he pushed

Holmes over the Reichenbach Falls, locked in the embrace of his arch-enemy and master-criminal, Professor Moriarty. Critics have examined *The Final Problem* as a “miniature epic”, a work of art of extraordinary power, possibly the best short story he ever wrote.

More than twenty thousand people cancelled their subscription to the *Strand*; people wore mourning in the streets of London; there were protests outside magazine offices and letters of complaint were sent to newspapers, Members of Parliament and even the Prince of Wales. But for eight years Holmes remained dead. Now Doyle could achieve recognition for work more akin to his literary ambitions. Away from Holmes’s domination, he produced several contemporary works, ranging from professional articles on aspects of medical science for the learned journals, to political pamphlets, military histories, tales of terror and autobiographies. He also worked on an unsuccessful comic opera with one of his dearest Scottish friends J.M. Barrie, the famous author of *Peter Pan*. Furthermore, this period saw the publication of his two most popular historical romances, *The Exploits of Brigadier Gerard* (1895) concerning an officer in Napoleon’s army; and *Rodney Stone* (1896) a tale of boxing and mystery in the Regency period. Together with *Micah Clarke* (1889), these books emphasise the author’s idealistic view of the English past. However, many critics found it difficult to take this sort of varied writing seriously.

During the Boer War which started in October 1899, Conan Doyle emerged as a public figure and a supporter of Britain’s imperialism. On Christmas Eve, Doyle, essentially a man of action, decided to volunteer for South Africa. He answered his mother, who was angry and distressed about his departure, by saying that she must not blame him, because he had learned patriotism from her. In his pamphlet, *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct* (1902) which was translated into many languages and sold more than 300,000 copies, he defended the behaviour of British forces against European “defamation”, as Doyle considered it to be. Before the pamphlet appeared, he had stood for Parliament in the 1900 General Election as a Conservative candidate, both strongly advocating divorce law reform and opposing women’s suffrage. Contradictory as they may seem, Conan Doyle’s politics were idiosyncratic. In fact, he thought of individual people and issues, rather than parties. He lost the election but he was offered a knighthood by King Edward VII. His immediate reaction was to refuse what he called a discredited title. Conan Doyle’s mother urged him to accept. In 1902 at Buckingham Palace, he became Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

When Conan Doyle’s publisher realised how much the Holmes stories were worth, he offered him a fortune to ‘resuscitate’ Holmes. Conan Doyle was no fool about business – and he joked that his bank account

had been dying with his detective. There was always the possibility of a story about the detective from earlier days. He brought Holmes back in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and the novel was such a huge success that he received a lucrative offer from America of £4,000 for each story. He had made a lecture tour in the United States in 1894 with his brother Innes, and proved a popular reader of his own works. The Americans loved the Holmes stories as much as the British did.

Doyle capitulated, and finally the first new story, *The Adventure of the Empty House* appeared, revealing that Holmes had miraculously survived. The author combined it with the next twelve stories as *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1905. His readers, he recognized, had been remarkable for their “constancy”, their “patience and loyalty”. Holmes continued to appear in new adventures: in a fourth and final novel, *The Valley of Fear* (1915) and in two more collections of short stories: *His Last Bow* (1917) and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927). There are good stories in these last volumes, increasingly dealing with psychological problems and more sophisticated plots. Especially in *His Last Bow*, the greater freedom of expression achieved in the 1920s was utilised by Conan Doyle to enter more deeply into psycho-sexual situations than any of his other work. During these years several films were made of the Holmes stories. Conan Doyle particularly liked John Barrimore playing Holmes in a very entertainingly Gothic atmosphere.

Conan Doyle had become a celebrity. He received myriad letters from common people and even from police officers from all over the world, asking for help in solving criminal mysteries, dealing with incidents of injustice or even saving their marriages. He campaigned against official authorities, whose zeal to obtain conviction lead to premature adverse judgement, as in the cases of George Edalji and Oscar Slater. With all his usual indignation, he wrote a letter to George Bernard Shaw, published in the *Daily News*, in answer to what he saw as a shameful attack on the memory and reputation of the captain and sailors who had been aboard the *Titanic* on its fatal trip, in which over 1500 lives were lost. Meanwhile he never stopped writing for a day. By this time he was too busy creating a new striking hero, Professor Challenger. The novel was called *The Lost World* (1912) and represents something of a break in style for him; he followed this up with a less satisfactory sequel, *The Poison Belt* (1913), and later with a highly autobiographical novel, *The Land of Mist* (1926) in which Challenger becomes converted to Spiritualism.

For a long time he had resisted the popular feeling that war was inevitable. But when World War I began he himself absolutely supported the war effort, reported it and wrote an official account of the British



campaign in France and Flanders. Being too old to serve at the front he first set about organising the Civilian Reserve and then he joined the Volunteer Regiment as an ordinary soldier. Yet in spite of all this, the war brought him the deepest grief. First Kingsley, the only son of his first marriage, was killed; then, within a few weeks of each other, his much loved brother Innes died. These deaths must have added force and feeling to his interest in the occult, to which in the last years of his life he sacrificed his name, his money, and even his friends.

Having early lost his Catholic faith, Conan Doyle became more and more interested in spiritualism, the belief that the spirits of the dead survive the death of the body and can communicate with the living. He joined the British Society for Psychical Research in 1893, and in *The New Revelation* (1918) he publicly revealed himself as a committed exponent and prophet of the spiritualist movement. It was a courageous act because spiritualism was not taken seriously by everybody. In 1919 Conan Doyle completed *The Vital Message*, the second of his several spiritualist works, and promoted the book travelling all over the country and across Australia. He met another spiritualist, Harry Houdini, the magician and escapologist, and they quickly became close friends. One of his last enterprises was the opening of a Psychic Bookshop, Library and Museum on the ground floor and in the basement of Abbey House. His only disappointment was that his weakening health did not permit him to take advantage of his time.

On 7 July 1930, at the home in Crowborough, Sussex, where he had been living since his second marriage, Arthur Conan Doyle died. A crowd of eight thousand people filled Albert Hall for the memorial service. Special trains were run from London and for days afterward people of all classes and places arrived with armfuls of flowers for the grave.

In his volume *Through the Magic Door* (1907), Conan Doyle collected critical essays on his favourite writers. He acknowledged his debts, particularly to Edgar Allan Poe's detective Monsieur Auguste Dupin, who "had from my boyhood been one of my heroes". The Holmes now fixed in our memory is very tall and thin; his personal life is in some respects outrageous: he disregards the law at times, he injects himself with cocaine, and has long periods of total idleness extended on the sofa playing his violin. He has a sensitivity to significant detail, a ready imagination, a wide range of social and intellectual experience, and, most important, an analytic mind. He is a confirmed bachelor, although he once nursed some tender feelings for the adventuress Irene Adler, who appears in the very first short story, *A Scandal in Bohemia*. The choice of Watson, an educated and 'unostentatious' man as a partner is complementary enough to let Holmes's powers shine more brightly. One could hardly exist without the other.

At first Conan Doyle called his detective 'Hope', after the *Hope*, the whaling ship of his teens. Then he switched to 'Holmes', a name he drew from Oliver Wendell Holmes, an American essayist, novelist, and a pioneer in medicine. Doyle chose the Christian name after he had played against a bowler on the Portsmouth cricket team who was called Sherlock. It is noteworthy, too, that a very well-known violinist of his times was named Alfred Sherlock. As for Holmes's famous paraphernalia, Conan Doyle himself liked wearing a purple dressing gown and smoking a pipe, and kept various kinds of tobacco in jars. There was much of Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle; and much of Sherlock Holmes's London is the Edinburgh of the child Conan.

Many biographies of Holmes have been written, all of them based upon the supposition that Holmes and Watson were real people and Conan Doyle merely their almost irrelevant recorder or literary agent. But what matters is that the Sherlock Holmes stories can be read again and again with never-ending pleasure. Despite his belittlement of his great achievement in the Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle himself became reconciled to his detective who had been, he admitted in the end, "a good friend to me in many ways". Sherlock Holmes remains both the perfect spokesman of the people of an increasingly scientific age and the supreme fictional detective of all time.

\* In the American edition of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* there are eleven stories. The first London edition of the *Memoirs*, published in 1894, did not include *The Cardboard Box*, although all twelve stories had appeared in the *Strand Magazine*. The first U.S. edition did include the story, but it was very quickly replaced with a revised edition that omitted it. The reasoning behind the suppression is unclear. In Britain the story was apparently removed at Conan Doyle's request as it included references to adultery and so was unsuitable for younger readers. This may have also been the cause for the rapid removal of the story from the U.S. edition. As a result, this story was not republished in the U.S. until many years later, when it was added to *His Last Bow*. Even today, most American editions of the canon include it together with *His Last Bow*, while most British editions keep the story in its original place.

The Memoirs of  
Sherlock Holmes



## Silver Blaze

“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 Dartmoor – 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 recharging 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 newsagent, 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 this 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 travelling-cap, 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 the window and glancing at his watch. “Our rate at present is fifty-three and a half miles an hour.”

“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. 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 which 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 cooperation.”

“Tuesday evening!” I exclaimed. “And this is Thursday morning. Why didn’t you 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 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 Isonomy 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 short 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.

"This 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 establish-

ment 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, which belongs to Lord Blackwater, and is managed by Silas Brown. In every other direction the moor is a complete wilderness, inhabited only by a few roaming gypsies. Such was the general situation last Monday night, when the catastrophe occurred.

“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 grey suit of tweed, 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.

“‘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.’”

“‘You are close to the King’s Pyland training-stables,’ she said.

“‘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!’ 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 the stranger was leaning through the window. A minute later, however, when Hunter rushed out with the hound he was gone, and though he 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 go through.

“Hunter waited until his fellow-grooms had returned, when he sent a message up 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.

“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 missing favourite, but they perceived something which warned them that they were in the presence of a tragedy.

“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 grasped a red and black silk cravat, which was recognized 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 gypsies 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, contain an appreciable quantity of powdered opium, while the people of the house partook of the same dish on the same night without any ill effect.

“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 with 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. 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 the 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 lawyer 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 it 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 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 really cannot 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 boss of a shield, in the middle of the huge circle of Dartmoor. Two gentlemen were awaiting us at 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 landau, 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.

“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 recognize 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 be 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 gypsies 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 gypsies, 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 gypsies. I have also examined every stable and out-house 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 stable?”

“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 grey-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. briar-root pipe, a pouch of seal-skin with half an ounce of long-cut Cavendish, a silver watch with a gold chain, five sovereigns in gold, an aluminum pencil-case, a few papers, and an ivory-handled knife with a very delicate inflexible blade marked "Weiss & Co., London."

"This is a very singular knife," said Holmes, lifting it up and examining it minutely. "I presume, as I see blood-stains 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 days 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. This other is a milliner's account for thirty-seven pounds fifteen, made out by Madame Lesurier, of Bond Street, to William Darbyshire. Mrs. Straker tells us that Darbyshire was a friend of her husband's and that occasionally his letters were addressed here."

"Madam 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.

"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 there 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?"

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 on 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."