

The Return of Sherlock Holmes.

By A. Conan Doyle.

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign of the Four," "A Study in Scarlet," Etc.
(Illustrated by F. D. Steele.)

among the trees. He swears that the shadow of a man's head turned sideways was clearly visible on the blind and that this shadow was certainly not that of Peter Carey, whom he knew well. It was that of a bearded man, but the beard was short and bristled forward in a way very different from that of the captain. So he says, but he had been two hours in the public house, and it is some distance from the road to the window. Besides, this refers to the Monday, and the crime was done upon the Wednesday.

"On the Tuesday Peter Carey was in one of his blackest moods, flushed with drink and as savage as a dangerous wild beast. He roamed about the house, and the women ran for it when they heard him coming. Late in the evening he went down to his own hut. About 2 o'clock the following morning his daughter, who slept with her window open, heard a most fearful yell from that direction, but it was no unusual thing for him to bawl and shout when he was in drink, so no notice was taken. On rising at 7 one of the maids noticed that the door of the hut was open, but so great was the terror which the man caused that it was mid-day before any one would venture down to see what had become of him. Peeping into the open door, they saw a sight which sent them flying with white faces into the village. Within an hour I was on the spot and had taken over the case.

"Well, I have fairly steady nerves, as you know, Mr. Holmes, but I give you my word that I got a shake when I put my head into that little house. It was dripping like a hammock with the flies and bluebottles, and the door and walls were like a slaughter house. He had called it a cabin, and a cabin it was, sure enough, for you would have thought that you were in a ship. There was a bunk at one end, a sea chest, maps and charts, a picture of the Sea Unicorn, a line of logbooks on a shelf, all exactly as one would expect to find in a captain's room. And there, in the middle of it, was the man himself—his face twisted like a lost soul in torment, and his head beat like a hammer, stuck upward by his agony. He had thrust his head against a steel harpoon had been driven, and it had sunk deep into the wood of the wall behind him. He was pinned like a beetle on a cork. Of course he was up to dead and had been so from the time that he had uttered that last yell of agony.

"I know your methods, sir, and I applied them. Before I permitted anything to be moved I examined most carefully the ground outside and also the floor of the room. There were no footmarks."

"Meaning that you saw none?"

"I assure you, sir, that there were none."

"My good Hopkins, I have investigated many crimes, but I have never yet seen one which was committed by a flying creature. As long as the criminal remains upon two legs so long must there be some indication, some impression, some trifling displacement, which can be detected by the scientific searcher. It is incredible that this blood-spattered room contained no traces which could have aided me. I understand, however, from the inquiry that there were some objects which you failed to overlook."

"The young inspector winced at my companion's ironical remarks.

"I was a fool not to call you in at the time, Mr. Holmes. However, that's past praying for now. Yes, there were several objects in the room which called for special attention. One was the harpoon with which the deed was committed. It had been snatched down from a rack on the wall. Two others remained there, and there was a vacant place for the third. On the stock was engraved 'St. Sea Unicorn, Dundee.' This seemed to establish that the crime had been done in a moment of fury and that the murderer had seized the first weapon which came in his way. The fact that the crime was committed at 2 in the morning, and yet Peter Carey was fully dressed, suggested that he had an appointment with the

murderer, which is borne out by the fact that a bottle of rum and two dirty glasses stood upon the table."

"Yes," said Holmes, "I think that both inferences are permissible. Was there any other spirit than rum in the room?"

"Yes, there was a tantalus containing brandy and whisky on the sea chest. It is of no importance to us, however, since the decanters were full, and it had therefore not been used."

"For all that, its presence has some significance," said Holmes. "How so?"

"Let us hear some more about the objects which seem to you to bear upon the case."

"There was this tobacco pouch upon the table."

"What part of the table?"

"By the middle. It was of coarse, reddish-brown, straight-haired skin, with a leather thong to bind it. Inside were 'P. C.' on the flap. There was half an ounce of strong ship's tobacco in it."

"Excellent. What more?"

"Stanley Hopkins drew from his pocket a dirty-covered notebook. The outside was rough and worn, the leaves discolored. On the first page were written the initials 'J. H. N.' and the date '1883.' Holmes laid it on the table and examined it in his minute way, while Holmes and I gazed over each shoulder. On the second page were the printed letters 'P. R.' and then came several sheets of manuscript. Another heading was 'Argentine' and another 'P. R.' and then came several sheets of manuscript. Another heading was 'Argentine' and another 'P. R.' and then came several sheets of manuscript."

"What do you make of these?" asked Holmes.

"They appear to be lists of Stock Exchange securities. I thought that 'J. H. N.' were the initials of a member of the 'P. R.' may have been a client."

"Try Canadian Pacific railway," said Holmes.

Stanley Hopkins swore between his teeth, and struck his thigh with his clenched hand.

"What a fool I have been!" he cried. "Of course it is, you say. Then 'J. H. N.' are the only initials we have to solve. I have already examined the old Stock Exchange lists, and I can find no one in 1883, either in the house or among the outside brokers, whose initials correspond with these. Yet I feel that the clue is the most important one that I hold. You will admit, Mr. Holmes, that there is a possibility that these initials are those of the second person who was present—in other words, of the murderer. I would also urge that the introduction into the case of a document relating to large masses of valuable securities gives us for the first time some indication of a motive for the crime."

Sherlock Holmes' face showed that he was thoroughly taken aback by this new development.

"I must admit both your points," said he. "I confess that the notebook, which did not appear at the inquiry, modifies any views which I may have formed. I had come to a theory of the crime in which I can find no place for this. Have you endeavored to trace any of the securities here mentioned?"

"Inquiries are now being made at the offices, but I fear that the complete register of the stockholders of these South American concerns is in South America and that some weeks must elapse before we can trace the shares."

Holmes had been examining the cover of the notebook with his magnifying lens.

"Surely there is some discoloration here," said he.

"Yes, sir; it is a blood stain. I told you that I picked the book off the floor."

"Was the blood stain above or below?"

"On the side next the boards."

"Which proves, of course, that the book was dropped after the crime was committed."

"Exactly, Mr. Holmes. I appreciated that point, and I conjectured that it was dropped by the murderer in his hurried flight. It lay near the door."

"I suppose that none of these securities have been found among the property of the dead man?"

"No, sir."

"Have you any reason to suspect robbery?"

"No, sir. Nothing seemed to have been touched."

"Dear me, it is certainly a very interesting case. Then there was a knife, was there not?"

"A sheath knife, still in its sheath. It lay at the feet of the dead man. Mrs. Carey has identified it as being her husband's property."

Holmes was lost in thought for some time.

"Well," said he at last, "I suppose I shall have to come out and have a look at it."

Stanley Hopkins gave a cry of joy. "Thank you, sir. That will, indeed, be a weight off my mind."

Holmes shook his finger at the inspector.

"It would have been an easier task a week ago," said he. "But even now, my visit may not be entirely fruitless. Watson, if you can spare the time I should be very glad of your company. If you will call a four-wheeler, Hopkins, we shall be ready to start for Forest Row in a quarter of an hour."



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The outhouse was the simplest of dwellings, wooden walls, shingle roof, one window beside the door and one on the farther side. Stanley Hopkins drew the key from his pocket and had dropped to the lock when he paused with a look of attention and surprise on his face.

"Someone has been tampering with the lock," he said.

There could be no doubt of the fact. The woodwork was cut, and the handles shoved white through the paint, as if they had been there for instant use. Holmes had been examining the lock.

"Someone has tried to force this lock. Whoever it was has failed to do his way in. He must have been a very poor burglar."

"This is a most extraordinary thing," said the inspector. "I could swear that these marks were not here yesterday evening."

"Some curious person from the village, perhaps," I suggested.

"Very unlikely. Few of them would dare to set foot in the grounds, far less try to force their way into the cabin. What do you think of it, Mr. Holmes?"

"I think that fortune is very kind to us."

"You mean that the person will come again?"

"It is very probable. He came expecting to find the door open. He tried to get in with the blade of a very small penknife. He could not manage it. What would he do?"

"Come again next night with a more useful tool."

"So I should say. It will be our fault if we are not there to receive him. Meanwhile let me see the inside of the cabin."

The traces of the tragedy had been removed, but the furniture within the little room still stood as it had been on the night of the crime. For two hours with most intense concentration Holmes examined every object in turn, but his face showed that his quest was

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not a successful one. Once only he paused in his patient investigation.

"Have you taken anything off this shelf, Hopkins?"

"No; I have moved nothing."

"Something has been taken. There is less dust in this corner of the shelf than elsewhere. It may have been a book lying on its side. It may have been a box. Well, well, I can do nothing more. Let us walk in these beautiful woods, Watson, and give a few hours to the birds and the flowers. We shall meet you here later, Hopkins, and see if we can come to closer quarters with the gentleman who has paid this visit in the night."

It was past 11 o'clock when we formed our little ambuscade. Hopkins was for leaving the door of the hut open, but Holmes was of the opinion that this would rouse the suspicious of the stranger. The lock was a perfectly simple one, and only a strong blade was needed to push it back. Holmes also suggested that we should wait, not inside the hut, but outside it among the bushes which grew round the farther window. In this way we should be able to watch our man if he struck a light and see what his object was in this stealthy nocturnal visit.

It was a long and melancholy vigil, and yet brought with it something of the thrill which the hunter feels when he lies beside the water pool and awaits for the coming of the thirsty beast of prey. What savage creature was it which might steal upon us out of the darkness? Was it a fierce thief of crime, which could only be taken by a hardy hand with flashing fang and claw, or would it prove to be some skulking jackal, dangerous only to the weak and unguarded?

In absolute silence we crouched among the bushes, waiting for whatever might come. At first the steps of a few belated villagers or the sound of voices from the village lightened our vigil, but one by one these interruptions died away and an absolute stillness fell upon us, save for the chiming of the distant church, which told us of the progress of the night, and for the rustle and whisper of a fine rain falling amid the foliage which roofed us in.

To be continued.

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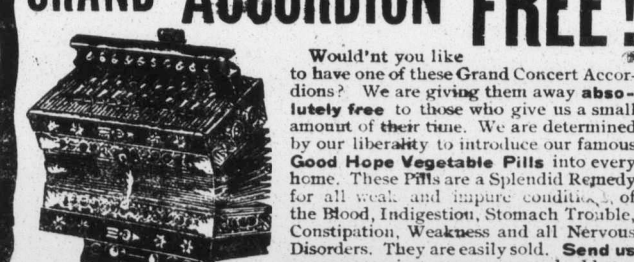
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