THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

7.—The Red-Headed League

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By Sir A. Gnan Doyle

strange effects and extraordinary combinations we must go to life itself, which is always far more daring than any effort of the imagination."

"A problem which I took the liber it of doubtness."

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"Ou did, doctor, but none the less you must come round to my view, for appropriate it is hard to do to my view, for appropriate it is hard to do to a serie of the total property of doubtness."

"What is the name of this obligation of the 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 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 geve him. But, after all, if how very well that he could better limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how very well that he could better limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how very well that he could better limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how every limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how every limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how every limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how every limself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But, after all, if how exi

by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow. He word rather baggy gray shepherd's check trousers, a not over-clean black frock coat, unbuttoned in the front, and a grab waistooat with a heavy brassy Albert chain, 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.

Sherlock Holmee's cuick 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 labor, that he takes souff, that fre is a Freemson, 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 labor. It's true as gospel, for 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 worled with it, and the muscles are more developed." "Well, we can see for yourself of some years, and an extra couple of hundred would have been very mandy.

"Tell me all about it,' said I. "Well,' said he, showing me the advertisement, 'you can see for yourself the League has a vacancy and there is the address where you should have been very mand, with the writing?"

"Your hands, my dear sir. Your right hand is quite a size larger than your left. You have worled with it, and the muscless are more developed." "Well, we can see for yourself the League has a vacancy and there is the address where you should a poly the interior of your order, you use an are

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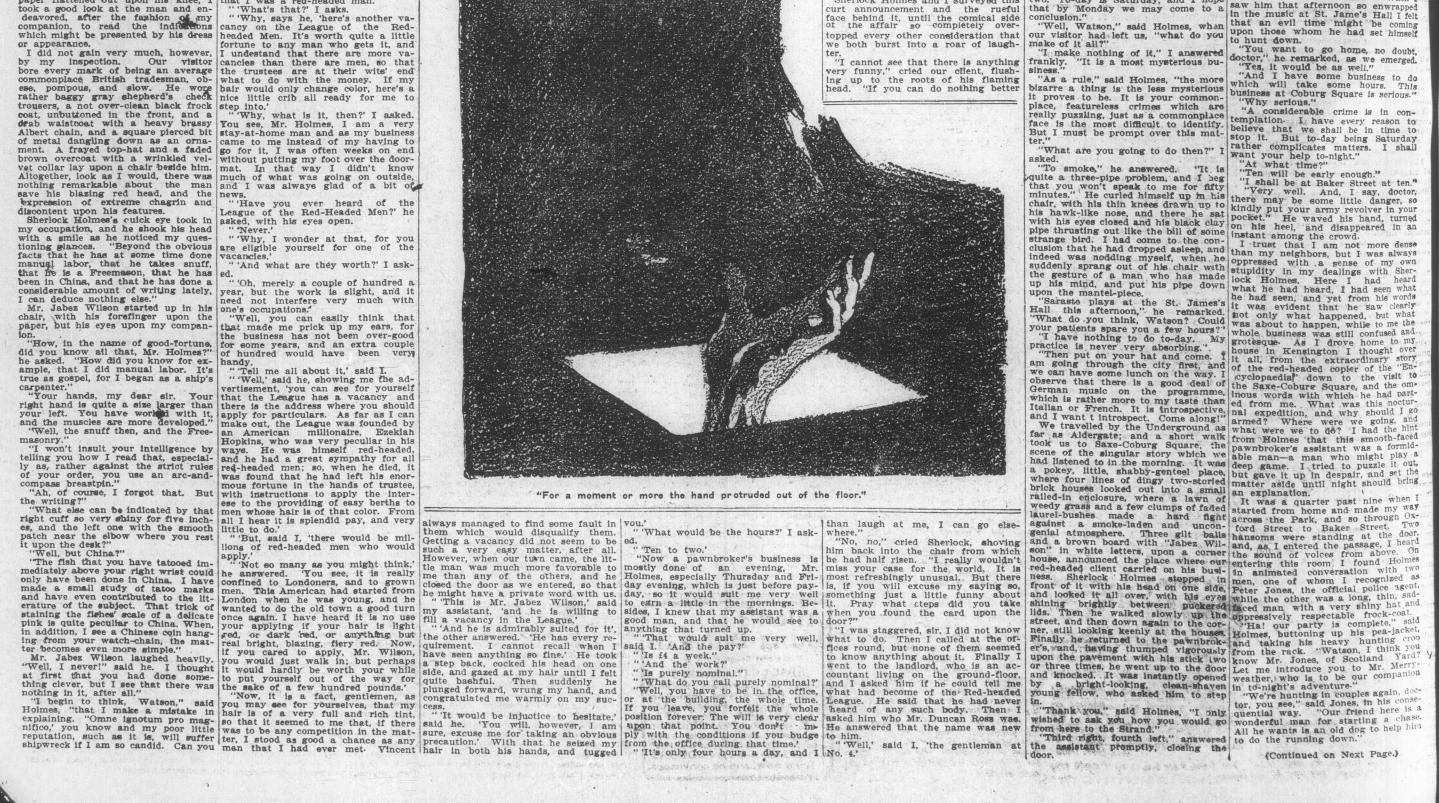
I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, ob-

| The called upon my freed, Mr. or first within product arrangement with the second product of the second prod

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, 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 Armor and Architecture and Attica, and hoped with diligence that I might get on to the B's before yeary long. It cost me semething in 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 "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 card-board hammered on to the middle of the panel with a tack. Here it is, and you can read for yourself."

He held up a piece of white cardboard about the size of a sheet of note-



"We shall endeavor 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 ome cheap."
"At half-wages, in fact."
"Yes." "What is he like, this Vincent

"And has your business been attended to in your absence?"

"The Red-headed League Is Dissolved.
October 9, 1890."

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 into a roar of laughter.

"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 that afternoon so enwrapped in the music at St. Jame's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.

"You want to go home, no doubt."

My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer but a composer of no ordinary merit. All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the 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 sleuthhound, Holmes the relentless, keenwitted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately ascented itself and be contained. "What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?"

"Small, stout-built, very quick in his ways, no hair on his face though he's ways, no hair on his face though he's 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 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?"

"What is he like, this Vincent bound, Holmes the relentless, Keenwitted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature attendable 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 languous to devouring nergy; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his arm-chair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions. Then it was that the lust of the case would spill him the secondary to the served that his earn and his improvisations and his black-letter editions. Then it was that the lust of the case would spill him the secondary truly formidable as when, for days on the case when, for d

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 puzzing, just as a commonplace."

"An are down.

"You want to go home, no doubt, doctor," he remarked, as we emerged.

"Are, it would be as well."

"An 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 contemptation."

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