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# MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE SILVER BLAZE

(Continued.)

"I thought so. A very delicate blade, devised for a man to carry with him upon a rough expedition, especially as it would not rust in his pocket."

"The tip was guarded by a disk of cork which we found beside his body," said the inspector. "His wife tells us that the knife had lain 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-dealer's accounts. One of them is a letter of instructions from Col. Ross. The other is a miller's account for thirty-seven pounds fifteen, made out by Madame Leursin, of Bond Street, to William Derbyshire. Mrs. Straker tells us that Derbyshire was a friend of her husband's, and that occasionally his letters were addressed here."

"Madame Derbyshire had somewhat expensive tastes," remarked Holmes, glancing down the account. "Twenty-two guineas is rather heavy for a single costume. However, there appears to be nothing more to learn, and we may go down to the scene of the crime."

As we entered 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 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 were a costume of dove-colored 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 fern bush upon which the coat had been hung.

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the moor. The sun was beginning to sink behind the table of Mapleton, and the long, sloping plain in front of us was tinged with gold, deepening into rich, ruddy browns where the faded ferns and brambles caught the evening light. But the glories of the landscape were all lost upon my companion, who was sunk in the deepest thought.

"It's this way, Watson," said he at last. "We may leave the question of who killed John Straker for the instant, and confine ourselves to finding out what has become of the horse. Now, supposing that he broke away during or after the tragedy, where could he have gone to? The horse is a very gregarious creature. If left to himself, his instincts would have been either to return to King's Pyland or to go over to Mapleton. Why should he run wild upon the moor? He would surely have been seen by now. And why should anyone kidnap him? These people always clear out when they hear of trouble, for they do not wish to be peevish, and they do not wish to be taken in. Surely that is clear."

"Where is he, then?"

"I have already said that he must have gone to King's Pyland or to Mapleton. He is at King's Pyland. Therefore he is at Mapleton. Let us take that as a working hypothesis and see what it leads us to. This part of the moor, as the inspector remarked, is very hard and dry. But it falls away toward Mapleton, and you can see from here that there is a long hollow over yonder, which must have been very wet on Monday night. If our supposition is correct, then the horse must have crossed that, and there is the point where we should look for his tracks."

We had been walking briskly during this conversation, and a few more minutes brought us to the hollow in question. At Holmes' request I walked down the bank to the right, and he to the left, but I had not taken fifty paces when I heard him give a shout, and saw him waving his hand to me. The track of a horse was plainly outlined in the soft earth in front of him, the shoe which he took from his pocket exactly fitted the impression.

"See the value of imagination," said Holmes. "It is the one quality which Gregory lacks. We imagined what might have happened, and upon the supposition, and find ourselves justified. Let us proceed."

We crossed the marshy bottom and passed over a quarter of a mile of dry hard turf. Again the ground sloped, and again we came on the tracks. Then we met them for half a mile, but only to pick them up once more quite close to Mapleton. It was Holmes who saw them first, and he stood pointing with a look of triumph upon his face. A man's track was visible beside the horse's.

"The horse was alone before," I cried.

"Quite so. It was alone before. But what's this?"

The double track turned sharp off and took the direction of King's Pyland. Holmes whistled, and we both followed along after. His eye was on the trail, but I happened to look a little to one side, and saw to my surprise the same

tracks coming back again in the opposite direction.

"One for you, Watson," said Holmes, when I pointed it out. "You have saved us a long walk, which would have brought us back to our own tracks. Let us follow the return track."

We had not gone far. It ended at the paving of asphalt which led up to the gates of the Mapleton stables. As we approached a groom ran out from them.

"We don't want any loiterers about here," said he.

"Groom, you, I air, if anyone is about, he will be, for he is always the first stirring. But here he is, air, to answer your questions for himself. No, sir, no, it is as much as my place is worth to let him see me touch your money. Afterwards, if you like."

As Sherlock Holmes replaced the half crown which he had drawn from his pocket, a fierce-looking elderly man strode out from the gate with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand.

"What's that, Dawson?" he said. "No gossiping! Go about your business! And you, what the devil do you want here?"

"Ten minutes' talk with you, my good sir," said Holmes in the sweetest of voices.

"I've no time to talk to every gadabout. We want no strangers here. Be off, or you may find a dog at your heels."

Holmes leaned forward and whispered something in the groom's ear. He started violently and dashed to the temple.

"It's a lie!" he shouted; "an infernal lie!"

"Very good. Shall we argue about it in public or talk it over in your parlour?"

"Oh, come in if you wish to."

Holmes smiled. "I shall not keep you more than a few minutes, Watson," said he. "Now, Mr. Brown, I am quite at your disposal."

It was twenty minutes, and the reds had faded into greys, before Holmes and the groom disappeared. Never had I seen such a change as had been brought about in Sir John Brown in that short time. His face was ashy pale, beads of perspiration shone upon his brow, and his hands shook until the hunting-crop wagged like a branch in the wind. His bullying, overbearing manner was all gone, too, and he cringed along at my companion's side like a dog with his master.

"Your instructions will be done. It shall all be done," said he.

"These must be no mistakes," said Holmes, looking round at him. The other winced as he read the menace in his eyes.

"Oh, no, there shall be no mistakes. It shall be done. Should I change it first or not?"

Holmes thought a little and then burst out laughing. "No, don't," said he. "I shall write to you about it. No tricks, now, or—"

"Oh, you can trust me, you can trust me!"

"Yes, I think I can. Well, you shall

hear from me tomorrow." He turned upon his heel, disregarding the trembling hand which the other held out to him, and we set off for King's Pyland.

"A more perfect compound of the bully, coward, and sneak than Master Sir John Brown I have seldom met with," remarked Holmes as we trudged along together.

"He has the horse, then?"

"He tried to bluster out of it, but I described to him so exactly what his actions had been that morning that he is convinced that I was watching him. Of course you observed the peculiarly square toes in the impressions, and that his own boots exactly correspond to them. Again, of course no subordinate would have dared to do such a thing. I described to him how, when according to his custom he was first down, he perceived a strange horse wandering over the moor. How he went out to it, and his astonishment at recognizing from the white forehead which has given the favorite its name, that chance had put in his power the only horse which could beat the one upon which he had his money. Then I described how his first impulse had been to

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