

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

The Adventure of the Empty House

No. 1 of the Series

(Copyright, 1905, by A. Conan Doyle and Collins's Weekly.)
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But suddenly I was aware of that which his keen senses had already distinguished. A low, stealthy sound came to my ears not from the direction of Baker street, but from the back of the very house in which we lay concealed. A door opened and shut. An instant later steps crept down the passage—steps which were meant to be silent, but which reverberated harshly through the empty house. Holmes crouched back against the wall, and I did the same, my hand closing upon the handle of my revolver. Peering through the gloom, I saw the vague outline of a man, a shade blacker than the blackness of the open door. He stood for an instant, and then he crept forward, crouching, menacing, into the room. He was within three yards of us, his sinister figure and I had braced myself to meet him as he came, but he had no idea of our presence. He passed close beside us, stole over to the window and very softly and noiselessly raised it for half a foot. As he sank to the level of this opening the light of the street, no longer dimmed by the dusty glass, fell full upon his face.

The man seemed to be beside himself with excitement. His two eyes shone like stars, and his features were working convulsively. He was an elderly man, with a thin, projecting nose, a high, bald forehead and a huge grizzled mustache. An opera hat was pushed to the back of his head, and an evening dress shirt front gleamed out from under his open coat. His face was gaunt and swarthy, scored with deep, savage lines. In his hand he carried what appeared to be a stick, but as he laid it down upon the floor it gave a metallic clang. Then from the pocket of his overcoat he drew a bulky object, and he hustled himself in some task which ended with a loud, sharp click, which seemed to me to be the sound of a spring or bolt had fallen into its place. Still kneeling upon the floor, he bent forward and threw all his weight and strength upon some lever, with the result that there came a long, whirling, grinding noise, ending once more in a powerful click. He straightened himself then, and I saw that what he held in his hand was a sort of a gun with a curiously misshapen butt. He opened it at the breech, put something in and snapped the breechblock. Then, crouching down, he rested the end of the barrel upon the ledge of the open window, and I saw his long mustache droop over the stone at his side. I heard a little sigh of satisfaction as he cuddled the butt into his shoulder and saw that amazing target, the black man on the yellow ground, standing clear at the end of his foresight. For an instant he was rigid and motionless. Then his finger tightened on the trigger. There was a strange, loud whizz and a long, silvery tinkle of broken glass. At that instant Holmes sprang like a tiger on to the marksman's back and hurled him flat upon his face. He was up again in a moment, and with convulsive strength he seized Holmes by the throat, but I struck him on the head with the butt of my revolver, and he dropped again upon the floor, fell upon his side, and I held him by my coat as he drew a shrill call upon a whistle. There was the clatter of running feet upon the pavement, and two policemen in uniform.

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With one plain clothes detective, rushed through the front entrance and into the room.

"That you, Lestrade?" said Holmes.

"Yes, Mr. Holmes. I took the job myself. It's good to see you back in London, sir."

"I think you want a little unofficial help. Three undetected murders in one year won't do, Lestrade. But you handled the Molesey mystery with less than your usual—that's to say, you handled it fairly well."

We had all risen to our feet, our prisoner breathing hard, with a stalwart constable on each side of him. Already a few letters had begun to collect in the street. Holmes stepped up to the window, closed it and dropped the blinds. Lestrade had produced two candles, and the policemen had uncovered their lanterns. I was able at last to have a good look at our prisoner.

It was a tremendously virile and yet sinister face which was turned toward us. With the brow of a philosopher above and the jaw of a sensualist below, the man must have started with great capacities for good or for evil. But one could not look upon his cruel blue eyes, with their drooping, cynical lids, or upon the fierce, aggressive nose and the threatening, deep lined brow without reading nature's plainest danger signals. He took no heed of any of us, but his eyes were fixed upon Holmes' face with an expression in which hatred and amazement were equally blended. "You send," he kept on muttering—"you clever, clever fiend!"

"Ah, colonel," said Holmes, arranging his rumpled collar. "Journers end in lovers' meetings," as the old play says. I don't think I have had the pleasure of seeing you since you favored us with those attentions as I lay on the ledge above the Reichenbach fall."

The colonel still stared at my friend like a man in a trance. "You cunning, cunning fiend!" was all that he could say.

"I have not introduced you yet," said Holmes. "This gentleman is Colonel Sebastian Moran, once of her majesty's Indian army and the best heavy game shot that our eastern empire has ever produced. I believe I am correct, colonel, in saying that your bag of tigers still remains unrivaled?"

The fierce old man said nothing, but still glared at my companion. With his savage eyes and bristling mustache he was wonderfully like a tiger himself.

"I wonder that my very simple stratagem could deceive so old a shikari," said Holmes. "It must be very familiar to you. Have you not tethered a young kid under a tree, lain above it with your rifle and waited for the bait to bring up your tiger? This empty house is my tree, and you are my tiger. You have possibly had other guns in reserve in case there should be several tigers or in the unlikely supposition of your own aim falling low. These"—he pointed around—"are my other guns. The parallel is exact."

Colonel Moran sprang forward with a snarl of rage, but the constables dragged him back. The fury upon his face was terrible to look at.

"I confess that you had one small surprise for me," said Holmes. "I did not anticipate that you would yourself make use of this empty house and this convenient front window. I had imagined you as operating from the street, where my friend Lestrade and his merry men were waiting you. With that exception all has gone as I expected."

Colonel Moran turned to the official detective.

"You may or may not have just cause for arresting me," said he, "but at least there can be no reason why I should submit to the gibes of this person. If I am in the hands of the law let things be done in a legal way."

"Well, that's reasonable enough," said Lestrade. "Nothing further you have to say, Mr. Holmes, before we go?"

Holmes had picked up the powerful air gun from the floor and was examining its mechanism.

"An admirable and unique weapon," he said, "noiseless and of tremendous power. I knew Von Herder, the blind German mechanic, who constructed it to the order of the late Professor Moriarty. For years I have been aware of its existence, though I have never before had the opportunity of handling it. I commend it very specially to your attention, Lestrade, and also the bullets which it fits."

"You can trust us to look after that, Mr. Holmes," said Lestrade as the whole party moved toward the door. "Anything further to say?"

"Only to ask what charge you intend to prefer?"

"What charge, sir? Why, of course the attempted murder of Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

"Not so, Lestrade. I do not propose to appear in the matter at all. To you and to you only belong the credit of the remarkable arrest which you have effected. Yes, Lestrade, I congratulate you! With your usual happy mixture of cunning and audacity, you have got him."

"Got him! Got whom, Mr. Holmes?"

"The man that the whole force has been seeking in vain—Colonel Sebastian Moran, who shot the Hon. Ronald Adair with an expanding bullet from an air gun through the open window of the second floor front of 427 Park lane upon the 30th of last month. That's the charge, Lestrade. And now, Watson, if you can endure the draft from a broken window I think that half an hour in my study over a cigar may afford you some profitable amusement."

Our old chambers had been left unchanged through the supervision of Mycroft Holmes and the immediate care of Mrs. Hudson. As I entered I saw, it is true, an unwonted tidiness, but the old landmarks were all in their place. There was the chemical corner and the acid stained, dead topped table. There upon a shelf was the row of formidable scrapbooks and books of reference which many of our fellow citizens would have been so glad to burn. The diagrams, the violin case and the pipe rack—even the Persian slipper which contained the tobacco—all met my eyes as I glanced round me. There were two occupants of the room—one, Mrs. Hudson, who beamed upon me both as we entered; the other the strange dummy which had played so important a part in the evening's adventures. It was a wax colored model of my friend so admirably done that it was a perfect facsimile. It stood on a small pedestal table with an old dressing gown of Holmes' so draped round it that the illusion from the street was absolutely perfect.

"I hope you preserved all precautions, Mrs. Hudson?" said Holmes.

"I went to it on my knees, sir, just as you told me."

"Excellent. You carried the thing out well. Did you observe where the bullet went?"

"Yes, sir. I'm afraid it has spoiled your beautiful bust, for it passed right through the head and fattened itself on the wall. I picked it out with my own hand, and day the shadow would have been over me and sooner or later his chance must have come. What could I do? I could not shoot him at sight or I should myself be in the dock. There was no use appealing to a magistrate. They cannot interfere with the strength of what would appear to them to be a wild suspicion. So I could do nothing. But I watched the criminal news, knowing that sooner or later I should get him. Then came the death of this Ronald Adair. My chance had come at last. Knowing what I did, was it not certain that Colonel Moran had done it? He had played cards with the lad; he had followed him home from the club; he had shot him through the open window. There was not a doubt of it. The bullets alone are enough to put his head in a noose."

"I came over at once. I was seen by the sentinel, who would, I knew, direct the colonel's attention to my presence. He could not fail to connect my sudden return with his crime and to be terribly alarmed. I was sure he would make an attempt to get me out of the way at once and would bring round his murderous weapon for that purpose. I left him an excellent mark in the window, and, having warned the police that they might be needed—by the way, Watson, you spotted their presence in that doorway with unerring accuracy—I took up what seemed to me to be a judicious post for observation, never dreaming that he would choose the same spot for his attack. Now, my dear Watson, does anything remain for me to explain?"

"Yes," said I. "You have not made it quite clear what was Colonel Moran's motive in murdering the Hon. Ronald Adair."

"Ah, my dear Watson, there we come into those realms of conjecture where the most logical mind may be at fault. Each may form his own hypothesis upon the present evidence, and yours is as likely to be correct as mine."

"You have formed one, then?"

"I think that it is not difficult to explain the facts. It came out in evidence that Colonel Moran and young Adair had between them won a considerable amount of money. Now, Moran undoubtedly played foul. Of that I have long been aware. I believe that on the day of the murder Adair had discovered that Moran was cheating. Very likely he had spoken to him privately and had attempted to get him to stop. He had voluntarily resigned his membership of the club and promised not to play cards again. It is unlikely that a youngster like Adair would at once make a hideous scandal by exposing a well known man so much older than himself. Probably he acted as I suggest. The exclusion from his club would mean ruin to Moran, who lived by his ill gotten card gains. He therefore murdered Adair, who at the time was endeavoring to work out how much money he should himself return, since he could not profit by his partner's foul play. He locked the door lest the ladies should surprise him and insist upon knowing what he was doing with these names and coins. Will it pass?"

"I have no doubt that you have hit upon the truth."

"It will be verified or disproved at the trial. Meanwhile, come what may, Colonel Moran will trouble us no more. The famous air gun of Von Herder will embellish the Scotland Yard museum, and once again Mr. Sherlock Holmes is free to devote his life to examining those interesting little problems, which the complex life of London so plentifully presents."

(To be continued.)

Minard's Liniment Cures Garget in Cows

This is a blue-law town now, isn't it? interrogated the drummer in St. Louis.

Yes, sir, replied the barber.

But how is it you keep open after midnight?

Oh, you see my razors have a pull.

With my razor, I cut off the head of the greatest.

WILSON'S FLY PADS

WILL CLEAR THEM OUT

BEWARE OF SUBSTITUTES

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Doctors Urged an Operation

As the only cure for piles, but Mr. Mawer was cured by Dr. Chase's Ointment

Again and again Dr. Chase's Ointment has cured piles after surgical operations have failed. The writer of this letter was fortunate enough to hear about Dr. Chase's Ointment before submitting to the knife, and so escaped the pain, expense and terrible risk of an operation.

Mr. J. Mawer, Rowden, Man., writes: "Dr. Chase's Ointment is a wonderful preparation. I had itching piles for five or six years, and though I tried two doctors' prescriptions, and used many other preparations, could not obtain much benefit. The doctor told me there was no cure for me, and that I would have to undergo an operation. I bought a box of Dr. Chase's Ointment, and was completely cured in one week. As this was six months ago, and there has been no return of the old trouble, I believe that the cure is a permanent one. Dr. Chase's Kidney Liver Pills are the best medicine we have ever used for constipation, stomach troubles and kidney diseases. As a cure for every form of piles, Dr. Chase's Ointment has no rival. 60 cts. at all dealers, or Edmondson, Bates & Co., Toronto."

JUST BREATHE.

When Worn Out Don't Take a Stimulant; Just Breathe.

Don't take a stimulant; just breathe. This is the advice of a doctor who does not believe in the old medical policy of mystery, but who undertakes philosophically to explain to any patient why such and such a remedy should be beneficial, says the Philadelphia Telegraph.

"When you are 'let down,'" continues this physician, "don't take a cocktail; just breathe. Put your finger on your pulse and get its rhythm. During eight beats draw in the breath, breathing deep and low and forcing the diaphragm down first, then filling the upper lungs. Then exhale this breath during four beats of the pulse."

"Now, if you are working with a piece of machinery, say a typewriter, what do you do to make it run more smoothly? You don't put a lot more oil on it and gum and clog it all up. You clean it first. You can best clean the blood by breathing. The blood passes through the lungs, and it needs and expects to find plenty of fresh air with oxygen in it. If it can't find perfectly fresh air it needs more air which is not perfectly fresh. It needs to be cleaned by contact with the air."

"Once in awhile hold the lungs full of breath as long as you can without expulsion. In doing this you are simply cleaning the machine. You are cleaning the blood. At the same time you are giving that little flip to the action of the heart and the nervous system which you thought you were giving when you took the cocktail. In the latter case you didn't clean the machine. You simply ran it a little faster and gummed it up a little more. You can get the same results, the same feeling of exhilaration and of accomplishment, without taking the cocktail, and at the same time the machine will steadily improve in its running quality. Breathe the best air you can get and plenty of it. It is as necessary as food. The heart and lungs act involuntarily. In hurried business life they become too involuntary. In that case don't take a cocktail; just breathe."

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