



**The Hounds of the Internet**

"A singular set of people, Watson."

**An Inquiry into:  
"A Study in Scarlet"**

Vol. XIV No. 1 • September 28, 2023

*A Study in Scarlet* first appeared in November 1887's *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. It was never published in *The Strand Magazine*. It is the first of the four Canonical novels.

Uncharacteristically, the overwhelming majority of our chronologists agree regarding the year in which these happenings took place, with most even concurring on a specific date!

If the case took place in 1881, as the majority of these Canon chronologists state, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 27 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 29.

**Main Characters:**

Stamford, Watson's former dresser at Bart's. Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson, two of Scotland Yard's best detectives. Enoch J. Drebber, an Elder of the Mormon Church in Salt Lake. Joseph Stangerson, Mormon Elder and Drebber's secretary. Jefferson Hope, the man wronged by Drebber and Stangerson. Constable John Rance, a beat policeman. Wiggins, leader of the Baker Street Irregulars, a gang of street Arabs. Madame Charpentier, Drebber's landlady. Arthur Charpentier, a naval officer, son of Madame Charpentier. Alice Charpentier, Madame Charpentier's young daughter. John Ferrier, wanderer rescued by the Mormons. Lucy Ferrier, John Ferrier's adopted daughter. Brigham Young, leader of the Mormon Church.

<i>A Study in Scarlet</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>March 4, 1881</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Friday, March 4, 1881</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Friday, March 4, 1881</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1881</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>March 1881</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Friday, March 3, 1882</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Friday, March 4, 1881</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Friday, March 4, 1885</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>March 4, 1881</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Tuesday March 4, 1884</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1881</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Friday, March 4, 1881</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

**Notable Quotes:**

I served at the fatal battle of Maiwand. There I was struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery. I should have fallen into the hands of the

murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly, who threw me across a pack-horse, and succeeded in bringing me safely to the British lines.

I had neither kith nor kin in England, and was therefore as free as air—or as free as an income of eleven shillings and sixpence a day will permit a man to be. Under such circumstances, I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained.

“You don’t know Sherlock Holmes yet, perhaps you would not care for him as a constant companion.”

“Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” said Stamford, introducing us.

“How are you?” he said cordially, gripping my hand with a strength for which I should hardly have given him credit. “You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive.”

*Sherlock Holmes*—his limits.

1. Knowledge of Literature.—Nil.
2. Philosophy.—Nil.
3. Astronomy.—Nil.
4. Politics.—Feeble.
5. Botany.—Variable. Well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally. Knows nothing of practical gardening.
6. Geology.—Practical, but limited. Tells at a glance different soils from each other. After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers, and told me by their colour and consistence in what part of London he had received them.
7. Chemistry.—Profound.
8. Anatomy.—Accurate, but unsystematic.
9. Sensational Literature.—Immense. He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.
10. Plays the violin well.
11. Is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman.
12. Has a good practical knowledge of British law.

“Well, I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I’m a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of Government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at fault they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent. They lay all the evidence before me, and I am generally able, by the help of my knowledge of the history of crime, to set them straight. There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds, and if you have all the details of a thousand at your finger ends, it is odd if you can’t unravel the thousand and first.”

“It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence. It biases the judgment.”

I had already observed that he was as sensitive to flattery on the score of his art as any girl could be of her beauty.

“There’s the scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it.”



## *In Praise of Sir Arthur*

We once more raise sail on our journey around the Great Cycle to once more take on the profound and scholarly study of The Canon of Sherlock Holmes.



Undoubtedly, in Sherlock Holmes Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave us one of the most enduring characters in the history of fiction. As we all know, surveys regularly state that he is more readily recognizable across the globe than Superman, Mickey Mouse or any ephemeral world leader. Detective fiction *aficionados* may unhesitatingly be able to tell you who Mrs. Marple, Nick Charles, or even Raffles are; yet even someone who has never encountered a detective story will immediately recognize the aquiline profile in the deerstalker with the Meerschaum pipe.

There are those today who believe that Sir Winston Churchill was a fictional character, while many more believe (as *we* all do!) that Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street was real. This includes England's Royal Mint, which honored him by issuing a 50-pence piece with his likeness on the reverse, and that of the Queen of England on the obverse.

Holmes came into being at a time when it was rapidly becoming obvi-

ous to everyone that science was destined to play an increasingly important part in life—by the time the events in STUD took place, everyone 30 years old or older remembered the disconcerting impact that

Darwin's *Origin of the Species* had upon the Victorian *zeitgeist*. Early science-fiction writers like Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Rice Burroughs also contributed their share when they wrote about the bright promises

and dystopian possibilities brought by the advancement of science and technology. Sir Arthur himself played a significant part in extending the genre with the adventures of Professor Challenger.

Into this brave new era appeared Sherlock Holmes full-grown from ACD's mind, much like Athena emerging from Zeus' forehead. He was the first (and it may be genuinely argued the only) of his kind. A consulting detective, whose

activities were based upon applied science and observation and who, for the sake of his calling, forced himself to be as detached as possible from the mainstream of human society, while being unerringly guided by logic and a personal sense of ethics.



We would not see his like until the coming of Mister Spock who (with uncharacteristic Vulcan pride) once boasted from the very bridge of the USS *Enterprise* of being a direct descendant of the Great Detective.

Although every generation (and we are on the seventh now!) has attempted to transplant Holmes to their own time, the efforts have met with limited success because he is a product of his era. He forev-



er lives in 1895; he is the archetypal Victorian gentleman: a type of paladin that no other culture or time has been able to match. He was the first to apply what would become known as forensic methods to the detection of crime—an able chemist who knew the use of a microscope and understood that crimes are solved by the observation of small details such as the ash of a cigar or a faint footprint.

Small wonder that until relatively recently, Scotland Yard presented its new recruits with a copy of Watson's complete works.

It speaks to the genius of his creator that Holmes was imperfect. His self-pride sometimes bordered on arrogance, he sometimes behaved in a self-destructive fashion, he suffered with great difficulty the existence of those who like so many of us failed to follow his agile mind's lightning conclusions, and as poor Watson well knew, he had a propensity to indulge in acerbic comments.

Holmes continues to call us across the years because we would all like to be like him: wise, observant, and logical. More than ever, we would like to inhabit his orderly world in which everyone and everything had its place and purpose, and where with our help justice always prevailed. Of course, this being impossible, we all content ourselves by emulating Watson.

Thank you very much, Sir Arthur.

And so once more, Hounds, the game is afoot!

### *The Question of the Doctor's Health*

Even though Watson informs us that he returned from the battlefield in Afghanistan with his health "irretrievably ruined," this could not have been the case; otherwise, his physical shortcomings would

have prevented him from being the stouthearted and oftentimes energetic (he had no problem jumping over a six-foot wall in CHAS) participant in so many of Holmes' adventures. Unquestionably, his war wounds must have reminded him of their existence on certain occasions, but these appear to have been mostly weather related, rather than actual constant handicaps.

Some Canon scholars have suggested that the apparent weakness that he suffered from stemmed from what today we call post-traumatic stress syndrome. While this would not have been unusual, I think it unlikely. One should not under-



state the seriousness of his condition. In those pre-antibiotic days any wound could be serious and Jezail ammunition was particularly deadly, being composed of bits and pieces of various metals—including old nails—almost always resulting in infections in those it wounded.

In Watson's case, things appeared to progress from bad to worse. He was at

his weakest during the beginning of his recovery after having been very seriously wounded, when he came down with enteric (i.e., typhoid) fever. On top of all this he finds that after everything that he had to endure he was being invalidated out of the Army—possibly wrecking a medical/military career he may have intended to follow. It is not difficult to understand why upon his return he would have found himself deep in the doldrums, without a sense of direction in life and the additional burden of having scant monetary resources.

I have found that it is not at all strange for someone recovering from serious wounds and a life-threatening disease to undergo a period of depression. However, what strikes me as being closer to the real reason is what the Good Doctor himself tells us, "Under such circumstances, I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained. There I stayed for some time at a private hotel in the Strand, leading a comfortless, meaningless existence. . . ." Notice the word *lounger*, and "leading a comfortless, meaningless existence."

This strongly indicates that what Watson needed was not so much rest, as a new purpose for his life. On one hand he claims that his nerves are shattered and he needs to stay away from noise or excitement. On the other hand, he is quite prepared to share digs with someone described to him as a would-be poisoner who is following a peculiar and mysterious course of studies—when he is at the university at all and not avoiding the place for weeks. He is someone who nobody dares ask questions of a personal nature, and who beats up cadavers in the dissection room. Logically, one



would assume that somebody with such shattered nerves as Watson claimed to have would have avoided like the plague entering into a situation in which he must share his daily life with someone who has such a seemingly unbalanced personality!

Yet when he asks Stamford how it was that Holmes knew he came from Afghanistan and the other

I fell unconscious and would surely have been taken prisoner of war if my orderly had not thrown me over a horse and quickly brought me back.



tells him that many would like to know how he concludes these things, our medico reacts by enthusiastically rubbing his hands together and saying, “Oh! a mystery is it? This is very piquant. I am much obliged to you for bringing us together. ‘The proper study of mankind is man,’ you know.”

Watson may have unwittingly exaggerated his condition, but he was not too far from reality. When he witnessed the goings-on at Lauriston Gardens, he observed that, “I ought to be more case-hardened after my Afghan experiences. I saw my own comrades hacked to pieces at Maiwand without losing my nerve.” Being deeply affected by a corpse that showed no wounds or signs of violence seems to confirm his fragile emotional state at the time.

Fortunately he fully regained his strength and became fully and energetically willing and able to participate in the various adventures and cases of Sherlock Holmes.

It therefore becomes quite obvious that his friendship with Holmes went far in providing him with a North for his life compass when he needed it the most. This allowed him to develop new interests, once again become active in his profession, become a man of letters, and even embark upon marriage.

### *The Uneducated Sleuth*

I have always agreed with the majority opinion among Sherlockians and Holmesians that Holmes was having fun at Watson’s expense when it came to the extent of his education. As someone who uncannily seemed to read thoughts from someone who fell into a brown study, he had to have realized from his new companion’s sidelong glances and unexpressed curiosity over the clients who visited at 221B when he had to abandon the sitting room to Holmes, that he had to be burning with curiosity about his enterprise.

Realizing, as he must have (to great amusement), that Watson was ineffectually attempting to gauge his abilities, it is not too extreme to conclude that he decided to have fun regarding supposedly how little he knew of common-knowledge things such as the Copernican Theory. The truly remarkable thing in all of this is that Watson did not realize that he was being had!

Regardless of how focused Holmes’ studies as an adult were, as a schoolboy he could not have escaped learning the reality of the workings of the Solar System. Watson then he tells us that he, “Prattled away about Cremona fiddles, and the difference



between a Stradivarius and an Amati,” quoted Darwin, and bought a book printed in Latin, *De Jure inter Gentes*, which from the title one may suppose dealt with the beginnings of international law. In this first adventure with Watson, Holmes also gave him proof of having knowledge of German, French, and Latin. Although he not only enjoyed classical music, he was no mean violinist himself. In short, he was well educated.

The Good Doctor should have realized that he was not dealing with an ignoramus. Sadly, however, Watson was also in error by concluding that had not been for “the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life,” he might have suspected Holmes of using narcotics.

Although his incipient admiration for the man clouded his medical judgment, we can still celebrate the fact that the Good Doctor eventually weaned him away from the use of drugs.

### *The Destitute Detective*

According to Watson, as soon as they were settled in at Baker Street, Holmes began receiving a long line of “visitors” (a.k.a. “clients”). If they started coming—supposedly—as soon as learning about his new address, the question then arises how could it be that he was so lacking in funds that the only way he could afford adequate living quarters was by taking in a roommate? He must have had some sort of reputation even before his biographer glorified him; otherwise, the Scotland Yarders would not have consulted him. Even if most of his clients could only pay from a few shillings to a few pounds, it seems unlikely that Holmes would have been so hard up.

Although at the beginning of their friendship in 1881, both Holmes and Watson’s finances appeared to be at a nadir there is a great deal of uncertainty in the matter. While we know exactly what Watson’s economic resources were—£17 5s per month, or roughly \$7,000—we are quite unsure about Holmes’ resources.

I tend to think that, as strapped for cash as he was, he would not have been able to play the game just for its sake. The time when he could declare, “My professional charges are upon a fixed scale I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether,” was yet to come. It may be assumed that at the beginning of the Great Friendship Holmes, like Watson, had to carefully use every available pence. However, although of necessity his fees may have been lower, he did have a large clientele and enough of a reputation to be regularly consulted by members of the official police.

Watson tells us that the Great Detective was looking for someone with whom to share expenses. Just how great were those expenses?

Like every great capital city, now or in 1881, Imperial London was not an inexpensive place to live in, particularly for someone whose class urged him to maintain surroundings that were above the level of the working class. While it



was not impossible to live very economically, it would not have been possible to sustain the social rank that both our friends were accustomed to. Thus, the Baker Street *pied-à-terre* was ideal. It was situated within walking distance of the center of the great city and in view of what prices were then, it is not

unlikely that our friends shared a yearly rent of £200 (≈\$75,000) per year, which probably included laundry and food. It made their wish to decently get along considerably simpler.

Obviously, this lamentable situation was not long-lasting. By 1890, Holmes could afford paying “princely” sums for his digs all by himself, to the point at which, according to Watson, “the rooms might have been purchased at the price.”

Generations of Canon students have speculated—yours truly included—that much of Holmes’ financial success at his invented profession partly resulted from the publicity that Watson’s telling of his adventures gave him. Even the man himself conceded the point in FOUR, “[A] good many of the criminal classes begin to know me—especially since our friend here took to publishing some of my cases. . . .”

We know that by the time he and Watson first met, our sleuth was sufficiently well known to be sought after by leading Scotland Yarders. This seems to point to the possibility that in certain circles



beyond those of the official police he already had a good—if not as yet considerable—reputation. Holmes remarked that some of his clients were recommended to him by the police. According to Watson, by the time they first met our sleuth already had a wide and varied clientele who obligingly climbed up those seventeen steps to consult him. In fact, as Holmes examined the rooms at Lauriston Gardens, Watson’s observation that Gregson and Lestrade “watched the maneuvers of their amateur

companion with considerable curiosity and some contempt,” seems off the mark—after all Holmes was there at their request. Had they deemed Holmes so contemptible it is unlikely that they would have called upon him so regularly.

Watson’s observation may have been accurate to a certain extent. The two Scotland Yarders obviously had no idea what it was exactly that he was doing and what people do not understand they tend to mock or distrust. Yet, the results their “amateur” counterpart obtained were far above what either of them or both together could have obtained. He even captured Jefferson Hope for them!

A final question of course is did Holmes do this *pro bono*? The answer is probably yes, because he was unofficially called to help by the detectives on the field, not by Scotland Yard authorities. The yearly earnings of a police inspector back then (≈£80 or ≈\$30,000) were insufficient to afford outside experts.

It should also be noted that his unofficial assistance did nothing to burnish his reputation because even back then the papers would credit the Yard, not Holmes for the results. In truth, had it not been for Watson singing his praises, Holmes might not have experienced the resounding successes that he later obtained.

As all of us who had to work our way through university are aware, even during our antediluvian times, although knowledge was readily available it came at a considerable premium. This was no different in Holmes’ time. Much discussion has been elicited by the question of whether he attended Oxford or Cambridge. Regardless of which institution Canon scholars may favor, the fact remains that Holmes was a well-educated man and this means that the tuition and living money had to come from a source other than clients.

Whether he managed his university education through his *alma mater* aided by a scholarship or a moneyed relative, by the time Watson met him, he was finished with these studies. True, he was taking a number of courses but it is significant that, although completing the education he needed to tackle his invented profession, they led to no degree. We also see that he had access not only to la-



laboratories, but to the dissection rooms as well. None of this could have been free, so he had to have paid for it from his own resources, very likely his detection fees which by that time may have been adequate but not ample.

Because he was taking time off to study instead of working full time during this period, it seems logical that he would have needed someone to share expenses. By the time his economic situation improved, having come to appreciate Watson's friendship he continued this arrangement.

It is gratifying to note how much, through the years, the Yarders' attitude towards Holmes moderated. Witness Lestrade's heartfelt praise of him much later in their relationship, in SIXN: "I've seen you handle a good many cases, Mr. Holmes, but I don't know that I ever knew a more workmanlike one than that. We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

### *Was Justice Done?*

At this time, I suspect that Holmes was not quite on solid ground insofar as his career's progress. It was only later when, dictated by perhaps by harsh experience, he would trust himself to let a felon go free as he did in BLUE, for example: "I suppose that I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul. This fellow will not go wrong again; he is too terribly frightened. Send him to jail now, and you make him a jail-bird for life." In ABBE he tells Watson, "Once or twice in my career I feel that I have done more real harm by my discovery of the criminal than ever he had done by his crime. I have learned caution now, and I had rather play tricks with the law of England than with my own conscience. Let us know a little more before we act."

In Jefferson Hope's case, of course, his case was remitted to the Highest Court, relieving everyone from any twinge of conscience that might have resulted from his being unjustly punished for the wrongs he experienced.



### *What else happened in 1881:*

#### *Empire*



Sudanese Revolt under Mahdi, war in the Sudan (1881-1898).

India reaches 253 million.

◀ Stanley founds Leopoldville in the Congo.

Britain defeated by the Boers at Laing's Neck and Majuba Hill. Prime Minister Gladstone grants Transvaal self-government. Britain reserves right to veto all foreign treaties that might be entered into by the South African Republic.

British North Borneo Company chartered.

Parliament passes Second Irish Land and Coercion Acts, Land Courts to fix fair rents.

## Britain

Bradlaugh reelected; ejected from Commons by ten policemen.

Report of Royal Commission on agricultural depression.

Flogging is banned by the British Army and Navy .

London's population reaches 3.3 million.

The Savoy Theatre is built in London.

Queen's College, Dundee, Founded; becomes part of St. Andrews University in 1953.

◀ Former Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli (Lord of Beaconsfield) dies.

Thomas Carlyle, British historian, dies.

National History Museum at Kensington in London opens.

Leadenhall Market opens.

First electrical power plant and grid in Godalming, Britain.

Leyton Orient football team formed.



## World

Jewish pogroms in East Europe, particularly Russia.

Tsar Alexander II of Russia accepts Melikov's proposal for a Consultative Committee for reform, is assassinated on that same day. Alexander III decides to dismiss the draft for a liberal constitution found in his father's desk after the assassination.



James A. Garfield, 20th U.S. President, shot and wounded after four months' administration; dies two months later.

Japanese promised a constitution and national parliament to meet in 1890. Rights of sovereignty and executive power, are vested in the person of the Mikado, with ministers were accountable to him alone.

◀ The Barnum and Bailey Greatest Show on Earth Circus is created.

Dr. Ogden of Aberdeen publishes account of experiments to ascertain the causes of inflammation and suppuration. He concludes that suppuration is caused by certain bacteria. Results achieved afterward verify this.

Maximilien Littré, French philologist and philosopher, author of the *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* dies.

French Ministry of Agriculture established.

National Society of the Red Cross is established.

Gunfight at the O.K. Corral.

De Lesseps and Gustave Eiffel, French engineers, begin construction of the Panama Canal.

U.S. Supreme Court establishes income tax is constitutional.

France invades Tunis; occupies Bizerta; Treaty of Bardo establishes protectorate over Tunis--Arabs revolt and are put down; Italians hostile.



Franco-British intervention secures most of Thessaly and part of Epirus for Greece.

Serbia and Austria sign secret treaty.

◀ Sitting Bull surrenders.

Liberty of public meeting and press granted in France.

Tidal wave in China kills 300,000 people.

Completion of St. Gotthard Tunnel linking Göschenen and Airolo, Switzerland.

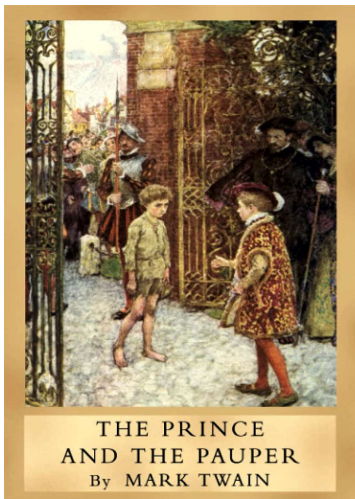
Prince Alexander of Bulgaria Suspends Organic Laws; takes absolute power for seven years.

Jules Ferry laws passed in France, establish free, secular education.

Russian General Skobelev takes Geok Tepe, defeats Turkomans, brings territory under Russian influence.

Nitrate war between Chile and Peru continues after fall of Lima.

## Art



Nietzsche's *Aurora*.

Monet's painting, *Sunshine and Snow* exhibited.

Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience* debuts.

◀ Mark Twain publishes *The Prince and the Pauper*.

*Tales of Hoffmann* completed after Offenbach's death.

Feodor Mikhailovitch Dostoevsky dies.

Revised Version of the New Testament.

Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, published posthumously.

Anatole France's *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* published.

Ibsen's *Ghosts*, a drama dealing with venereal disease debuts.

## Science and Technology

Electricity exhibition in Paris.

Hiram Maxim invents a self-regulating electrical generator.

Michelson invents an instrument to measure distance with light waves.

Carlos Finlay of Cuba develops theory that mosquitoes carry yellow fever.

Koch works on the destruction effect of certain chemicals (disinfectants) on microbes.

Louis Pasteur develops anthrax vaccine.

Billroth successfully operates on the abdomen.

First electrical power plant and grid in Godalming, Britain.

*Next week's case: SIGN.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Murray, the Courageous Orderly*

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands  
of the murderous Ghazis had it not  
been for the devotion and courage  
shown by Murray, my orderly..."

*All Sherlock Holmes photos have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.*

**If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at [CourageousMurray@aol.com](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

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