



## The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure IV -- The Red-Headed League

#### First published in:

The Strand Magazine, August 1891

#### Time frame of story (known/surmised):

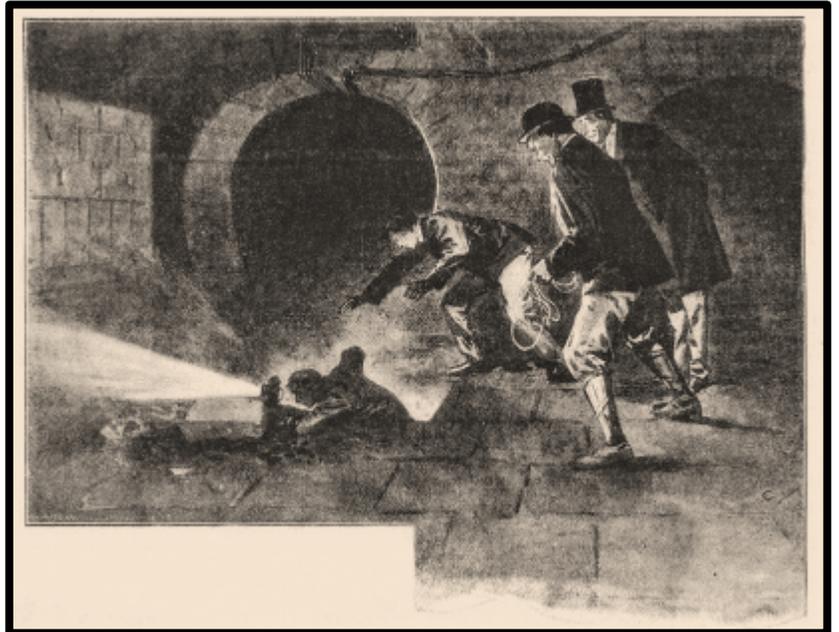
October, 1890. Note: there are inconsistencies among dates stated by characters in this story that make it impossible to pin down an exact date, or even year.

#### Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Watson not living with Holmes at 221B, instead residing at his house in Kensington.

#### Opening scene:

Watson calls upon Holmes and finds Holmes with a client, Jabez Wilson. Holmes invites Watson's involvement. Client interview in Baker St. takes up the first half of the story.



#### Client:

Jabez Wilson, a red-haired pawn broker.

**Crime or concern:**

Loss of well-paying job doing clerical make-work leads Wilson to contact Holmes. Real crime was attempt by Wilson's employee to break into a bank vault.

**Villains:**

Wilson's recently-hired and low-paid helper, Vincent Spaulding, and his confederate, Duncan Ross. Spaulding's true identity was John Clay, a brilliant criminal, who had attended Eaton and Oxford and whose grandfather was a Royal Duke. The red-headed Ross posed as director of the Red-Headed League, and was a murderer, thief, smasher, and forger.

**Motive:**

Burgle a bank vault. Trick pawn-broker into vacating his shop so tunnel can be dug from basement into neighbouring bank vault.

**Logic used to solve:**

Holmes saw through the ploy, and determined Wilson's pawn-shop backed up against bank on a main thoroughfare. Description of pierced ears and acid-scar on employee's forehead suggested Clay's involvement to Holmes. Dirty trouser-knees verified tunneling operation.

**Policemen:** Peter Jones, the official police agent, who was brave as a bulldog and as tenacious as a lobster, but an absolute imbecile in his profession.

**Holmes' fees:**

Remarkably, Holmes prevented the loss of £30,000, but when the bank-director offered to pay Holmes, the reply was, "I have been at some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to refund, but beyond that I am amply repaid by having had an experience which is in many ways unique, and by hearing the very remarkable narrative of the Red-headed League."

**Transport:**

Holmes & Watson travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; then took a short walk to Saxe-Coburg Square.

Holmes & Watson, the policeman, and the bank-director took two hansoms and rattled through an endless labyrinth of gas-lit streets, finally emerging into Farrington Street near the scene of the anticipated crime.

**Food:**

Mention of an orange coster's barrow. A coster is a street vendor of fruits and vegetables, often selling goods from a cart or barrow.

Holmes & Watson went through the city on a Saturday afternoon to hear Sarasate, a violinist, play at the St. James's Hall, and stopped for lunch of a sandwich and a cup of coffee, on the way.

Near the bank for which the burglary was planned, was the Vegetarian Restaurant.

**Drink:**

Following the midnight capture of the criminals, Holmes & Watson sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker Street.

**Vices:**

Holmes smoked three (black clay) pipes of tobacco in 50 minutes, pondering the case.

**Other cases mentioned:**

IDEN and SIGN

**Notable Quotables:**

"Omne ignotum pro magnifico" (everything unknown is grand) – Holmes

"There may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket. If they fire, Watson, have no compunction about shooting them down." – Holmes

"I miss my rubber. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber." – Bank Director Merryweather

**Other interestings:**

This story shares a plot element with 3GAR and STOC, which is tricking someone to go elsewhere whilst the criminal takes advantage of the absence to commit the crime.

**When all is said and done:**

“The man is nothing, the work is everything. (L’homme c’est rien — l’oeuvre c’est tout) It saved me from ennui.” This was Holmes’ modest reply to Watson’s praise for solving the mystery. That explains the low fees charged in this case.

**McMurdo’s Camp**