

A Case of Identity



- First published in: September 1891 The Strand Magazine
- Time frame of story (known/surmised): Reference to SCAN places this story after March 1888, and not long after.
- HOLMES & WATSON living arrangements: Watson on his own. “We sat on either side of the fire in his lodgings at Baker Street” as stated in the first sentence sounds as if they were Holmes’ lodgings, not OUR lodgings as Watson would have said were they still roomies.



- Opening scene: At 221B. Client came to consult Holmes in a hurry.
- Client: Miss Mary Sutherland, a large woman with vacuous face, but having fair personal advantages.
- Crime or concern: Disappearance of Mr. Hosmer Angel, client’s fiancée, on the wedding day.
- Villain: Stepfather, Mr. James Windibank, who masqueraded as Hosmer Angel. He was aided by his wife, who was 15 years older.
- Motive: Prevent stepdaughter and her £112 10s./yr income from leaving the household. Not stated but many readers believe there were more intimate relations involved.
- Logic used to solve: Windibank and Angel were never together. Angel’s manner and appearance were odd, like a disguise. His living arrangements and employment status were unusual and vague. Notes and signature from Angel were always typewritten.
- Policemen: none involved
- Holmes’ fees: Windibank refers to the expense of hiring Holmes. Mary Sutherland’s expenses would have come out of the household income, to which she was a significant contributor.
- Transport: Bride and mother took a hansom to the church. Groom followed in a 4-wheeler, but had exited the other side without being observed.
- Food: A wedding breakfast was planned after the morning wedding. (Similar to NOBL)
- Drink: no mention
- Vices: Holmes smoked the old and oily clay pipe, with thick blue cloud-wreaths spinning up from him.
- Other cases mentioned:

- The Dundas separation case, in which Holmes had been engaged in clearing up some small points. The husband was a teetotaler, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife.
 - One rather intricate matter which had been referred to Holmes from Marseilles.
 - The case of Mrs. Etherege, whose husband Holmes found so easily when the police and everyone had given him up for dead.
 - A matter of great delicacy in which Holmes served the reigning family of Holland. He was rewarded with a ring which contained a brilliant gem (but not a Blue Carbuncle).
 - SCAN, in which Holmes was rewarded with a snuffbox of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid.
 - Ten or twelve other cases which were important but uninteresting.
 - Reference to SIGN and STUD.
 - A parallel case in Andover in '77, and something of the sort at The Hague the year prior to this case.
- Notable Quotables: “. . . it is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook. If not, why should you come to consult me?”
 - “You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important.”
 - “You may remember the old Persian saying, ‘There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for who so snatches a delusion from a woman.’ There is as much sense in Hafiz as in Horace, and as much knowledge of the world.”
 - Other interestings: In this story, HOLMES & WATSON have a page-boy, referred to by Watson as “the boy in buttons”.
 - Client’s deceased father had a tidy business as a plumber in the neighborhood where Henry Baker lost his hat and goose.
-