



*An Inquiry into:
"The Five Orange Pips"*

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"The Five Orange Pips" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in November 1891. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

Not unusually so, our chronologists are far from being in sync on this one, this time with good reason. Watson

specifically mentions 1887 as the year in which the case took place. However, Canon scholars rightly point to an anachronism in the given year: Holmes states that he had once been defeated by a woman. Because there can be little doubt that the lady he refers to is Irene Adler then the present case had to have taken place *after* SCAN. This seems reason enough for several Canon chronologists to cite 1889 as a more likely year.

In this case, however, the Canon's dating of 1887 takes precedence. In 1887 Sherlock Holmes was 33 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 35.

Main Characters:

John Openshaw, young landowner from Horsham, West Sussex, client of Sherlock Holmes. Joseph Openshaw, John's late father,

developer of the Openshaw unbreakable tire. Elias Openshaw, John's late uncle, ex-member of the Ku-Klux-Klan, who immigrated to America before returning to Sussex.

Notable Quotes:

All day the wind had screamed and the rain had beaten against the windows, so that even here in the heart of great, hand-made London we were forced to raise our minds for the instant from the routine of life and to recognise the presence of those great elemental forces which shriek at mankind through the bars of his civilisation, like untamed beasts in a cage.

"I have been beaten four times—three times by men, and once by a woman."

<i>The Five Orange Pips</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Late September 1887</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Thursday, September 29, 1887</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late September 1888</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>September 1889</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>September 1888</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Tuesday, September 24, 1889</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Tuesday, September 24, 1889</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Late September 1889</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>On or about September 21, 1887</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Friday September 16, 1887</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1889</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Tuesday, September 24, 1889</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.

“I am the last court of appeal.”

The Modest Sleuth

Holmes—whether out of modesty or out of a zeal for accuracy—corrects John Openshaw’s belief that he has never been defeated. Instead, the Great Detective points out that he has met defeat at the hands of one woman and four men.

While it may be safely assumed that the one woman referred to was Irene Adler, the men pose an interesting problem for Canon students.

Some have argued that to a great extent Irene Adler’s success was due Holmes grossly underestimating her, which leaves us with the conundrum of who were these four men; because it is very unlikely that he would have underestimated them they must have been truly formidable. After all, even



the terrifying Professor Moriarty (the *very* Napoleon of Crime) could not triumph over Holmes, forfeiting his own life in the effort. One cannot but wonder who these anonymous fearsome opponents were!

It seems extremely unlikely that these would have been minor cases, and it would be interesting to speculate exactly to what Holmes refers to as besting.

Unfortunately, if the good Watson kept any notes about these cases, for whatever reason—whether out of discretion or due to Holmes’ direct instructions—they were never published.

Which, in the present case, makes our biographer’s selection especially galling.

Watson opens by presenting us with a list of Sherlock Holmes’ triumphs during that year. None of these ever saw the light of day. One cannot help but wonder what could have prompted the Good Doctor’s decision to select the present one out of all these successes: the Paradol Chamber, the Amateur Mendicant Society, the loss of the barque *Sophy Anderson*, the adventures of the Grice Patersons in the island of Uffa, and the Camberwell poisoning case.

His reasons for ignoring these other cases have a hollow ring: some had already been revealed and publicized in newspapers, and the rest failed to showcase those “peculiar qualities which my friend possessed in so high a degree.” Others were still unsolved, while others had been partially cleared up without a firm solution.

Regardless of all of these obstacles Watson tells us that these may be sketched “at some future date,” then informs us that, “none of them present such singular features as the strange train of circumstances which I have now taken up my pen to describe.” Is that so? While it is true that we do not know any of the details of how Holmes solved cases through the observation of the foundering of parsley aboard a bit of butter or determined guilt by winding a dead man’s watch, these certainly ap-

pear far more interesting and intriguing than a lackluster investigation in which inconceivable negligence on Sherlock Holmes' part led to his client's murder.

An Unexplainable Parental Decision

Joseph Openshaw's decision to send his young son to live with his brother Elias does not show him to have been a particularly caring, dutiful father. What parent would be so readily prepared to send his only son go live with a man notorious as a drunkard, blasphemer, fighter, and hermit? While it is true that during our much more decomposed times this might simply be viewed as a life-style choice, society back then was considerably more inflexible.

We are told that Elias was very wealthy, giving one reason to think that this perhaps was the motive: to have his son benefit from it and eventually even inherit. However, this still seems contradictory because as the inventor of the unbreakable tire Joseph amassed a considerable fortune, enabling him to retire "upon a handsome competence."

The Visit That Did Not Take Place

Some aspects of Elias' relationship with the KKK—as well as the absence of such a dark connection on the part of Joseph and John—are unclear. One must assume that the missing papers would have been fatally compromising to Klan members, which would explain their desperation to get them back. While it might be logical for these desperate men to send a warning letter with five orange pips

and terse instructions to one of their own, a repetition of this action with the man's relatives was obviously ineffectual.

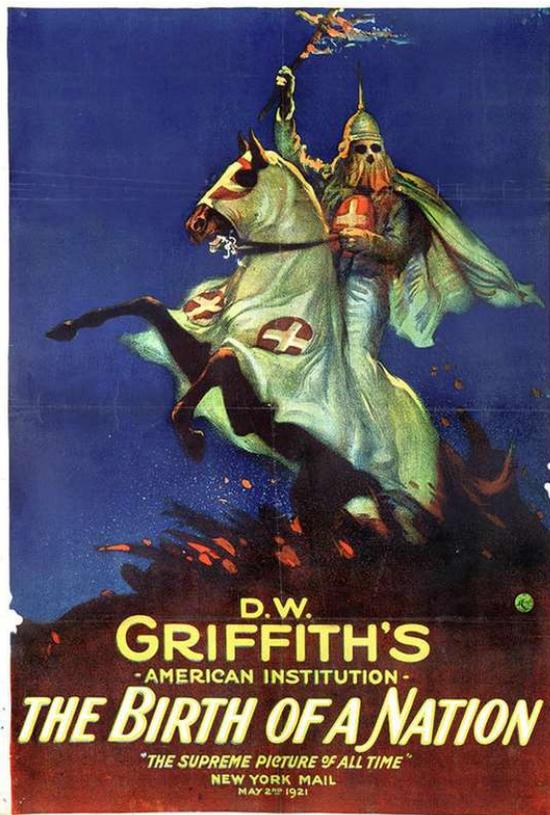
At that time the KKK was a deeply secret society. Members protected each other and there was no hesitation to deal very severely a betrayer of the society. So secret were their activities that often not even their wives knew about their affiliation. While some may have suspected what was going on, all they *knew* was that their husbands sometimes attended some kind of political meeting, not that they were out galloping in the night, attired in flour sacks, engaged in pandemonium.

The point to all this is that the murderers could not have been certain that Elias had revealed his connection with the KKK to his brother and nephew. Short of that they should have realized that there was no way those two could guess the full import of the pips.

Had one of them bothered to visit any of the Openshaws to ascertain the status of the sought-after papers, two unnecessary deaths would have been averted, and they would not have had to run the risks involved in murder. Even if they decided that such contact would have been useless

with Elias and dealt with him accordingly, they would have found out that Joseph and John were completed unconnected to any of Elias' KKK doings.

With their threats and violence they ran the risk that Joseph or John (neither of whom feared prosecution, not being connected to the Klan) might turn over the papers to the authorities who, in turn, would most likely have passed them on to their American counterparts; after all, they did not know that Elias had destroyed them.



Dubious Forensics

According to John Openshaw, his uncle was found dead face down in a green-scummed pond two feet deep. He then added that because there did not seem to be any signs of violence, the authorities brought in a verdict of suicide.



This is very disconcerting. Regardless of Elias' state of sobriety when the KKK minions finally caught up to him, he would not have peacefully allowed himself to be drowned in mucky water. Because this would not have been an instantaneous death such as a bullet through the brain, the result would have been throes of desperation, a violent struggle of the kind that would have required some force to overcome, leaving obvious defensive injuries on the body. Even if the murderers had found him passed-out drunk, they would have had to carry him to the pond, force him into it, and this would still have resulted in some reflex reaction requiring force.

Another major objection to the verdict lies in the incident having been adjudicated a suicide rather than, for example, death by mishap which would have seemed more possible. While it is true that drowning is a common enough means of suicide, doing it in a two-foot-deep scummy pool becomes somewhat of a stretch. Males tend to choose more

violent (and effective) means of suicide. Let us not forget that Elias had had extensive military service and doubtless owned more than just a single firearm. A bullet through the head is a far more efficient and quick method to end things than voluntarily drowning oneself in a scummy pond.

Un-Holmesian Behavior

Knowing what he did, Holmes' attitude towards the safety of young Openshaw drifts well into the realm of criminal negligence.

He listens to John Openshaw's story, unerringly concluding that the young man is in life-threatening danger. In fact, he comments about it more than once:

He first warns John Openshaw: *"You must act, man, or you are lost. Nothing but energy can save you. This is no time for despair."*

When Openshaw informs him that the police did not take the matter seriously according to Watson, *Holmes shook his clenched hands in the air. "Incredible imbecility!"*

Watson yet again tells us that when Holmes learns that the policeman assigned to John is only supposed to guard him at his home, *Again Holmes raved in the air.*

Then when he unexplainably sends Openshaw into the dark and stormy night where death awaits, he warns: *"And, above all, take care of yourself in the meanwhile, for I do not think that there can be a doubt that you are threatened by a very real and imminent danger."* He reassuringly adds that, *"The streets will be crowded, so I trust that you may be in safety. And yet you cannot guard yourself too closely."*



After his client leaves, he remarks to Watson: “*And yet this John Openshaw seems to me to be walking amid even greater perils than did the Sholtos.*”

What could the Great Detectives have been thinking! From what Watson tells us there can be no doubt that he understood the full extent of his young client’s peril. How, then, could he send him away with only a warning to be careful? Why did he not take him to some large, grand hotel where he would have been safe, perhaps leaving him with Watson and his trusty service revolver, much as he did with Sir Henry Baskerville?

How could he have so casually let his client venture out in the storm all alone? At least he might have insisted that he remain at 221B.

For shame, Mr. Holmes!

The Battling Encyclopedias

A fascinating side pursuit of many Canon students and scholars has led them to attempt putting together a list of reference sources readily at hand at 221B. Aside from the classics and such, what other volumes were to be found? While the lodgings may have been comfortable for our two friends,



available bookshelf space was limited. In view of this, it seems likely that Holmes would have had only one set of encyclopedias. The question then arises, why did he choose the *American Encyclopædia* over *Encyclopædia Britannica*? Whether 1887 or 1889, this was the zenith of the British Empire, so what would have made a scholarly English gentleman such as Sherlock Holmes, select *Americana* over *Britannica*? After all, the latter was a far more encompassing work.

Holmes’ selection becomes even more intriguing when one recalls that back then the United States had begun to widely compete commercially with Britain, which caused it to be viewed with tepid

warmth by the English. Because neither set of encyclopedias would have been inexpensive, this would tend to indicate that Holmes was particularly interested in the land of *e pluribus unum*.

Some view this as pointing to the possibility that his practice in the United States was more extensive than what we have been led to believe.

What else happened in 1887:

Empire

British East Africa Company charter awarded.

Zululand becomes protectorate.

First colonial conference opens in London.

Anglo-Russian treaty fixes Russo-Persian frontier along the Oxus River.

Failure of former Prime Minister Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill brings Irish affairs into prominence, Charles Parnell proposes bill for diminution of Irish rents, which is rejected. Arthur Balfour, Prime Minister Salisbury’s nephew, introduces new coercion bill, which passes as a result of fabricated charges against Parnell, accusing him of complicity in the Phoenix Park Murders.

British Baluchistan, including Quetta, established.

Britain

Coal Mines Regulation Act, boys under 13 not to work underground, and under 12 at the surface.



Britain annexes Zululand.

Independent Labour Party is founded.

“People’s Palace” first stage, the Queen’s Hall, opens in East End.

Earls Court opens at entertainments ground.

◀ Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, 50th year as Queen, is celebrated throughout the Empire. The Queen drives in state from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, where a Special Jubilee Service is held. This event marks the end of the Windsor Retirement.

Irish Coercion Act; Irish Land Act.

Charing Cross Road opens.

Allotments Act, Local authorities empowered to acquire land compulsorily for allotments.

Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith, opens after being bought by Metropolitan Board of Works.

Kilburn Park opens after being acquired by the City of London.

World

United States begins free mail delivery to homes of any community with a population of 10,000 or more.

China recognizes Portugal’s right to the island of Macao.

Franco-German crisis over actions of Boulanger in Schnaebelle case. Boulanger fails to gain office.

German Reichstag dissolved; alliance of Imperialists, Conservatives, some National Liberals—the Kartel—give Bismarck majority in the new Reichstag; military grants renewed.

President Grévy resigns the Presidency of the French Republic and quits the Elysées the same evening. Riots break out in Paris when his resignation becomes public.

Renewal of Russo-German “Reinsurance” Treaty; and Triple Alliance.

Expiry of Dreikaiserbund.

Bismarck refuses permission for Russia to raise loans in Berlin.

Slave revolt in Brazil takes place near São Paulo. Troops are called out but slaves take refuge in the jungle and hold their ground. This accelerates the emancipation of slaves across that empire.

France advances Russia 350 million francs.

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher dies in the United States.

Italian force annihilated by Ethiopians at Dongola; designs on Tripoli conditionally supported by Britain and Germany.

Union of Indo-China formed by France.



◀ New attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Moscow is placed under martial law.

General Boulanger fails in a *coup d'état* in Paris.

Macao recognized as Portuguese by China.

Bulgarian parliament elects Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg as Prince. Russia, Germany, and France withhold recognition of the Prince. By the end of the year, Russia's attitude has grown so menacing that war appears inevitable.

Yellow River floods in China, killing nearly a million people.

Four of the eight anarchists involved in the Chicago Haymarket riot are executed; two are sentenced to life imprisonment, another for 15 years, the eighth commits suicide.



Peaceful revolution in Hawaii. American and native residents, indignant at King Kalakaua's corruption, assemble in force and proceed to the palace, where the king consents to dismiss his Ministry and submit to a constitution, by which his own power becomes nominal.

◀ The Comte de Paris, from England, issues manifesto "to the representatives of the Monarchical party in France," urging his followers in the Chambers to defend Conservative interests to show France how desirable is the re-establishment of the monarchy.

The *Opéra Comique* at Paris is totally destroyed by fire. Loss of lives is never correctly ascertained.

U.S. Interstate Commerce Act, federal control of interstate railways.

Work begins on Kiel Canal.

General Chiang Kai-shek born.

L.L. Zamenhof devises Esperanto.

Sir Thomas Moore beatified by Pope Leo XIII. (Canonized, 1935.)

Art

Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, first Sherlock Holmes story, published.

Sir Hall Caine publishes *The Deemster*, a novel about the Isle of Man.

Thomas Hardy publishes *The Woodlanders*, a novel.

I. Donnelly publishes "The Great Cryptogram, Francis Bacon's Cypher in the So-called Shakespeare Play."

Mallarmé publishes *Poésies*.

August Strindberg debuts *The Father*, a play.

H. Rider Haggard publishes *She* and *Allan Quatermain*.

Gilbert and Sullivan debut *Ruddigore*.

Singer Jenny Lind dies at her home in the Malvern Hills, England.

Hermann Sudermann publishes *Frau Sorge*, a novel.

Emile Zola publishes *La Terre*, a bitter novel about peasant life.



L.L. Zamenhof publishes first book in Esperanto.

◀ Cézanne paints *The Blue Vase*.

Claude A. Debussy debuts *Le Printemps*.

Monet paints *Fields in Spring*.

Sir John Stainer debuts *The Crucifixion*, an oratorio.

Van Gogh paints *Le Moulin de la Galette* and *Boulevard de Clichy*.

Verdi debuts *Othello*.

Richard Strauss debuts *Aus Italien* and *Macbeth*, tone poems.

Chabrier debuts his opera, *Le Roi malgré lui*.

Science and Technology

Radio waves discovered by Hertz.

Bauxite, source of aluminum, is discovered in Georgia.

Edison and Swan combine to produce “Ediswan” electric lamps for domestic use.

Ernst Mach defines the Mach Number, now used in supersonic flight.

Michelson and Morley experiment on the relative velocity of light in perpendicular directions; no speed difference found, results later lead to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity.

Daimler four-wheeled motor car produced.

Emil Berliner improves the phonograph’s sound quality.

Joseph Lockyer publishes *The Chemistry of the Sun*.

H.W. Goodwin invents celluloid film.

Cyanide process used for the extraction of gold and silver proposed, ridiculed.

Svante A. Arrhenius proposes ion theory of electrolysis.

Phenacetin, an analgesic drug, discovered.

C.A. von Welsbach demonstrates practical incandescent gas mantle.

Construction of first British torpedo cruiser.

Next week’s case: TWIS.

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...”

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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