



## An Inquiry into: "The Man with the Twisted Lip"

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"The Man with the Twisted Lip" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in February 1892. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

As is almost always the case, the chronology for this adventure is varied, depending on which Canon expert

one consults. Their estimates appear in the table.

If the case took place in 1889, as the majority states, at the time Holmes was 36 years old and Watson 38.

### Main Characters:

Neville St. Clair, well-to-do businessman. "Hugh Boone," Neville's alter ego, a filthy, disfigured beggar. Mrs. Neville St. Clair, Neville's concerned wife. Isa Whitney, hopeless opium addict and Watson's patient. Kate Whitney, Isa's wife and old friend of Mary Watson. Mary Watson, Doctor John H. Watson's wife. Inspector Bradstreet, a Scotland Yarder.

### Notable Quotes:

It was difficult to refuse any of Sherlock Holmes' requests, for they were always so exceedingly definite, and put forward with such a quiet air of mastery. I felt, however, that when Whitney was once confined in the cab my mission was practically accomplished; and for the rest, I could not wish

anything better than to be associated with my friend in one of those singular adventures which were the normal condition of his existence.

"A trusty comrade is always of use. And a chronicler still more so."

"You have a grand gift of silence, Watson."

"There is nothing so important as trifles."

"I have seen too much not to know that the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoner."

### The Man with the Twisted Lip

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	June 19, 1889
Baring-Gould	Saturday, June 18, 1887
Bell	Friday, June 14, 1889
Blakeney	Friday, June 21, 1889
Brend	Late June 1889
Christ	Wednesday, June 19, 1889
Dakin	Friday, June 21, 1889
Folsom	Tuesday, probably June 18, 1889
Hall	June 17, 1889
Keefauver	Friday June 21st 1889
Klinger	1889
Zeisler	Friday, June 21, 1889

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.

“It is better to learn wisdom late than never to learn it at all.”

### *The Doctor and the Opium Den*

Although the Pharmacy Act of 1868 restricted the sale of opium products to pharmacists, we know that a good percentage of London's addicts were not the stereotypical immigrant men smoking in a hazy cellar.



Prince Albert Victor.

While it is true that in 1889, the use of cocaine and other narcotics was frowned upon by polite society these were not strictly illegal and there was no punishment for the user. The use of drugs and the establishments that catered to this trade were considered a societal, not criminal, problem as long as they did not proliferate to the more posh areas of town.

From the writings of the time, one tends to think that opium dens clustered around Limehouse. There were some that were very pleasant—luxurious even—that often also offered intimate female companionship. Victorians being good merchants, some of these establishments catered to those who preferred intimate male companionship with their drugs.

The higher class establishments prided themselves in their discretion; however, a touch of blackmail here and there was not unheard of. In the year of our story, the Cleveland Street scandal occurred, when a homosexual male brothel on Cleveland Street, London, was discovered by police. The government was (not unfairly) accused of covering up the scandal to protect the names of aristocratic and other prominent patrons.

Back then, sexual acts between men were illegal in Britain and viewed as a vice. The brothel's clients faced possible prosecution and certain social ostracism if discovered. It appears fairly certain that one of these important clients was none other than the heir presumptive, Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale, the eldest child of the Prince and Princess of Wales and grandson of Queen Victoria. Officials were involved in a cover-up to keep the prince's name and others out of the scandal. The scandal fueled the attitude that male homosexuality was an aristocratic vice that corrupted lower-class youths. In 1895 Oscar Wilde dearly paid for this.

Opium dens like the Bar of Gold were usually run by criminals and were suspicious of anyone who was not a customer, even if the person was obviously just looking for someone. This is why I am perennially surprised that Watson's wife was so willing to get him to go and rescue Isa Whitney without even suggesting that he request a constable accompany him. She did not even urge him to arm himself.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Holmes later confirmed the peril that Watson risked, when he revealed that it was an extremely dangerous place run by criminals who did not hesitate to cut a throat if they deemed it necessary. The address of the place alone should have made Mary realize the kind of hellhole her husband was preparing to go into in pursuit of Isa Whitney.

It might have been a result of innocence on her part, but she put Watson's safety in serious danger.

### *The Irritating Patient*



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Although he was too much of a gentleman and loving husband to say anything, as a doctor and a friend Watson had to have been fed up of Isa and his periodic downfalls. While his eagerness to join Holmes was understandable, the truth is that he needed very little convincing to drop Isa like a hot potato, and send him off to his wife under a cabman's care. Regardless of whether Whitney was, as Holmes observed, "too limp to get into any mischief," it seems quite obvious that Watson was not exactly brimming over with concern over his patient and decided he had fulfilled the mission he was volunteered for.

### *Neville St. Clair's Double Life*

The origin of this case was the result of an unfortunate coincidence, when, as Mrs. St. Clair, walked about Swandam Lane searching for a cab, a loud "ejaculation or cry" caused her to glance up to see her husband looking down at her from a second-floor window.

According to Watson, the eerie and narrow Upper Swandam Lane was "a vile alley lurking behind the high wharves which line the north side of the river to the east of London Bridge." There can be no doubt that St. Clair chose his lair well. There could be no chance of any of his acquaintances—let alone his wife—would wonder into the "vile alley." And even if they did, the possibility that they would do so when he was there bordered on the astronomical.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Unquestionably, he had to have been surprised almost to the level of shock when he discovered his wife sauntering below his window. Even so, it seems difficult to understand why he would have such little presence of mind as to, utter a cry from his second-storey window loud enough to be heard over the noisy street sounds.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Logically, his reaction should have been to mutter something like "Crikey!" under his breath and disappear into the darkness of Boone's room. It seems, however, that it was more along the lines of crying out at the top of his lungs, "Aaargh! It's the missus!" while frantically doing a demonstration of jazz hands.

When one considers why Neville took up his peculiar secret identity, even minor research in some of the newspapers of the time shows that some reporters tried begging to research articles on the matter. Surprisingly enough the amounts of his daily winnings are not at all off the mark.

According to St. Clair, “it was a very bad day in which I failed to take £2.” Assuming, then, that he averaged about £3 per day, his yearly take would amount to some £720 (≈\$270,000). It is therefore hardly astonishing that he had interests in several businesses and a balance of £220 (≈\$83,000) in his bank account. Small wonder the man was able to buy a house, marry, and have children!



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Regardless of how concerned Neville may have been over being discovered, and the shame that this would bring upon his family, it is obvious that he was quite at ease with his occupation. Aside from the fact that it was outrageously profitable, it was free of stress: he was not subject to schedules, business cycles, or the boss’ “insolence of office.” All that was required was for him to sit at his

corner, banter, and accumulate small change while pretending to sell matches to keep the police from bothering him.

Although he seemed to have learned his lesson—and because no crime was committed—he got away with his beggary. In exchange for Bradstreet’s guarantee of non-disclosure, he promised to never again invoke Hugh Boone.

But one must wonder—£720 a year! Did he ever yield to temptation?

### *And, Speaking of Profits*

At the cost of an ounce of shag studiously burned in his pipe, Holmes brilliantly solved the problem. He managed to finesse things in such a way that both Mr. and Mrs. Neville St. Clair must have felt eminently pleased with the results, only altogether for different reasons.

It would seem only fair that Mr. St. Clair would have been very willing to add to the cost of that ounce of shag a very sizeable fee for the man who saved him from disgrace in front of his wife and children.

We know that he would have been able to afford it.

### *What else happened in 1889:*

#### *Empire*

Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

Transvaal claimed to be “encircled” by Rhodes’ concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

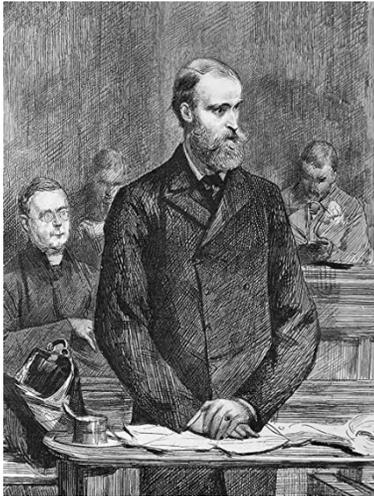
At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. He is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.

## ***Britain***

Great London Dockers' Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers' unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers' favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.



◀ Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.

Establishment of the telephone company.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

Early used of photographs in newspaper: *Illustrated London News* runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

## ***World***

Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

*Wall Street Journal* begins publishing.

Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.

Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.

President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolf refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.



Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.

End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

◀ U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.

King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic "Land Captains" replace elected JPs in Russia.

sia.

Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to life imprisonment.

Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.

Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.

Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.

The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.

Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General Hippolyte, who becomes president.

Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

### *Art*

Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.

Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

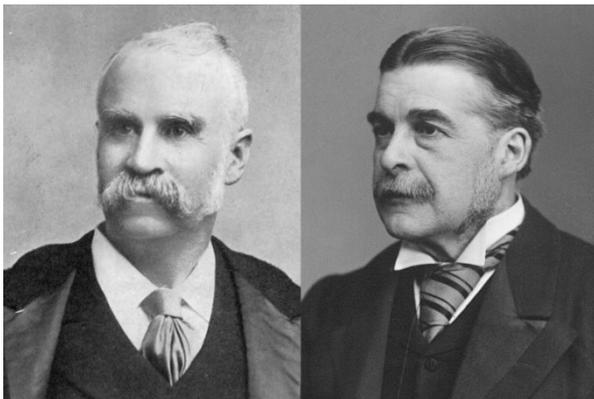
Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisin*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.



Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.

Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

◀ Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

### *Science and Technology*

Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.

Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting in San Francisco, California.

Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his "Navigable Balloon."

The first jukebox makes its debut at the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.

The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.



THE KODAK CAMERA.

"You press the button, -  
- - - we do the rest."

The only camera that anybody can use  
without instructions. Send for the Primer,  
free.

The Kodak is for sale by all Photo stock dealers.

**The Eastman Dry Plate and Film Co.,**  
Price \$25.00—Loaded for 100 Pictures. ROCHESTER, N. Y.

A full line Eastman's goods always in stock at LOEBER BROS., 111 Nassau  
Street, New York.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

◀ Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.

William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

First linotype machine in use.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

*Next week's case: SPEC.*

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](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

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