



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure VIII – The Man with the Twisted Lip

Publication History

8 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, December, 1891

Part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* collection

By George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1892

In the US by Harper Bros., New York, 1892

The British Illustrator was Sidney Paget

Chronology

Baring-Gould place the date of the story at Saturday, June 18 to Sunday, June 19, 1887 which makes it the 10th of the 60 stories. This means that Holmes is 33 and Watson 35.



Christopher Morley Says

“Dr. Watson gallantly left his evening armchair to rescue one of his patients from an opium den in the slums of East London. There he unexpectedly met Sherlock Holmes who was investigating the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Neville St. Clair. The gentleman had apparently been drowned in four and a half feet of water, his pockets weighted down with 691 copper coins.”

Dummies Short Summary

“Holmes uses one of his greatest tools – his pipe – to work out the solution to this case. It’s a real “three pipe problem”!”

How Many Words

At 9,271 words TWIS has the 41st most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 is NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 7 classified as fear of physical harm or public scandal. The others are COPP, CREE, GLOR, SUSS, SCAN, and 3STU.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

This story is always popular because it has a “twist.”

- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars ranked it 10th of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 13th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1887)

It’s 1887 we have already learned about many events in SCAN, REDH, IDEN, and FIVE. Let us look at the four pictures and match them with an event from 1887. There will NOT be a test.



Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Holmes is at 221B, as always. Watson is practicing medicine and living with wife, who calls him “James”.

Dramatis Personae

- **Elias Whitney, D.D.**, principle of the theological college, St. George.
- **Isa Whitney**, his brother. Addicted to opium.
- **Kate Whitney**, Isa's wife. College friend of Mrs. Watson.
- **Neville St. Clair**, the man with the twisted lip.
- **Hugh Boone**, alias of Neville
- **Mrs. St. Clair**, Neville's wife.
- **A Lascar**, confidant of St. Clair/Boone.
- **Inspector Barton**, in charge of the investigation.
- **Inspector Bradstreet**, showed Holmes to Boone's cell and helped wash his face.
- **John**, a groom who held Holmes' horses

Quotable Sherlock

- "I suppose, Watson, that you imagine that I have added opium-smoking to cocaine injections, and all other little weaknesses on which you have favored me with your medical views."
- "Oh, a trusty comrade is always of use; and a chronicler still more so."
- "You have a grand gift of silence, Watson," said he. "It makes you quite invaluable as a companion."
- "It is, of course, a trifle, but 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."
- "I reached this one by sitting upon five pillows and consuming an ounce of shag."

Holmes' Fee

No mention in the story. Sherlockians argue if Holmes would even ask for one.

Disguises

And here we have one of the Canon's most renowned disguises but it was not Holmes. Neville St. Clair posed as an opium smoker and successful beggar whose disguise was so good that it wasn't noticed when he was arrested and put in a jail cell.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

It is surprising that this story hasn't been on the screen more often.

- 1921 *The Man With the Twisted Lip* by Eille Norwood as the 8th entry in his series of 47 canonical films.
- 1951 *The Man Who Disappeared* with John Longden which was a TV pilot for a series that was not done.
- 1965 *The Man With the Twisted Lip* with Douglas as an episode in his *Sherlock Holmes* TV series.
- 2000 *The Man With the Twisted Lip* as an episode of *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (Animated TV series)

Fainting In The Canon

Mrs. St. Claire faints.

Annotated Sherlock

- **"James"** Watson's wife called him "James." Watson's middle name was "Hamish" (really?), which is Scottish for "James." This has led to many, many supposition by Sherlockians.
- **"a slop shop"** A small store selling clothing and other articles to sailors.
- **"mousseline-de-soie"** A soft thin silk fabric with a weave like that of muslin.
- **"Gravesend"** A ancient busy river port in Kent where vessels on way up the Thames changed their sea pilots for rive pilots. Pocahontas is buried at Gravesend.
- **"Gladstone Bag"** A long, light, narrow leather traveling bag opening very wide, name for Britain's celebrated Prime Minister.
- **"laudanum"** an alcoholic preparation of opium in liquid form, commonly administered as a pain reliever in Victorian times.
- **"Lascar"** an Anglo-Persian term which formerly meant non-combatant but later came to mean any extra personal on shipboard and, especially, "native" sailors who supplemented the crews on European vessels.
- **"a dog-cart"** is an open one-horse vehicle with two transverse seats back-to-back, possibly with the rearmost seats made to close to for a box for dogs.
- **"a box of bricks"** a box of wooden blocks for a child to build with.
- **"wax vestas"** short matches with shanks of thin wax tapers. In ancient Rome, Vesta was goddess of the hearth.

- **“octavo size”** printer’s term for page size by folding a printer’s sheet into eight leaves. In contrast “folio” size is the result of folding the printer’s sheet once to make two leaves (4 pages); “quato” is folding the sheet twice, making four leaves (8 pages)
- **“dollar”** British slang for the crown, or 5-shilling piece

WEAPONS

Only one thing can be loosely called a weapon and it is:

- **Mudbanks** - Of the Thames, below Swandam Lane, which were frequently used by the proprietors of *The Bar of Gold*, an opium den, to rid themselves of unwanted customers, and which was thought by police to have been used by Hugh Boone to dispose of the body of Neville St. Clair.

Frank Mentzel