

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle



On the 27th of December, Watson stopped by to wish Holmes the Compliments of the Season.

He found the Master Detective studying a very disreputable hat, which had belonged to an unknown gentleman who lost it while defending himself from a gang of toughs in the Tottenham Road.

The unfortunate man had also lost a goose which he had intended for his Christmas supper.

Holmes had given the goose to Peterson, a commissionaire who found the hat and bird, and had kept the hat to try to learn more about its owner.

Holmes was about to say something to Watson, in the course of giving his findings about the hat's owner, when Peterson burst in at the door, wild with excitement.

In his hand, he held a brilliant blue jewel, which his wife had found in the crop of the goose.

Holmes immediately identified it as the Blue Carbuncle, stolen from the Countess of Morcar, who had offered a £1,000 reward for its return.



“The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” has the distinction of being one of the most analyzed and written-about stories in the Canon.

Indeed, only two other stories have had more written on them, according to De Waal.

This makes “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” a particularly difficult adventure from which to draw questions that have not already been investigated in previous examinations by the Hounds.

Nevertheless, I have pored over the story and derived a few questions; not too many, for I know that today must hold other

investigations for our Members.

But I note that Holmes refers to two other adventures that were ostensibly crime-free: the “Irene Adler **papers**” and “the **singular** case of Miss Mary Sutherland.”

What “papers” were there connected with Irene Adler, and what was so singular about the case of Miss Mary Sutherland to which Holmes compared two “parallel cases” in “A Case of Identity”?

Holmes infers that Henry Baker probably had not had gas laid at his home from the presence of five tallow-stains upon Mr. Baker's battered billycock.

Yet Holmes says that Baker “walks upstairs at night probably with his hat in one hand and a guttering candle in the other.”

Under those conditions, how did the tallow-stains get on the hat?

Although Holmes describes the Blue Carbuncle as a “forty-grain weight of crystallized charcoal,” he does not come right out and call it a “diamond.”

Peterson's question, “A diamond, sir?” goes unanswered, and his observation that the stone cut into glass is similarly disregarded.

I note also that Holmes states that the normal color of carbuncles is “ruby red.”

Are there red gemstones of sufficient hardness to cut into glass?

Could our resident gemologists advise whether there is such a thing as a “ruby red” diamond?

Watson tells us that when he and Holmes visited the Alpha Inn, “Holmes pushed open the door of the private bar...”

Would some person better acquainted with such matters kindly explain why the Alpha Inn was alluded to as a “private bar?”

Lastly, why would Breckenridge keep separate lists of his “country” and “town” suppliers, and what would be the geographic distinction between them?