



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure IX -- The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, January 1892 (This is the Sherlock Holmes Christmas Story)

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

December 27 given. Reference to other cases makes the likely year 1889.

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Holmes at 221B. Watson was living separately; no mention of wife.

Opening scene:

Classic. Watson called on Holmes upon the second day after Christmas to wish him the compliments of the season. Holmes was analyzing a hat left by Peterson the Commissionaire. Significant deductions were made from examination of the hat. Peterson rushed back with a valuable jewel his wife found in the crop of a goose.

Client:

No client. Case of stolen gem fell to Holmes pretty much by accident. Peterson's wife recovered the gem from the crop of a goose found by Peterson on the street after the goose and the hat were dropped by a stranger.



Crime or Concern:

Theft of gem (the Blue Carbuncle) from the hotel room of the Countess of Morcar and attempt to pin the blame on innocent plumber, John Horner.

Villain:

James Ryder, upper-attendant at the hotel Cosmopolitan.

Motive:

Money to be made fencing the stolen gem.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes used the hat and goose to trace owner, traces the goose to poultry market, encounters Ryder there, who was also trying to trace the origin of the goose that swallowed the gem. Got Ryder to confess.

Policemen:

None

Holmes' fees:

None. It is likely Holmes received a big reward for returning the Blue Carbuncle to the Countess, although that is not stated in the story. Holmes may have shared the reward with Peterson the commissioner. (In our view, he should have.)

Transport:

Holmes & Watson walked from Baker St. through the doctors' quarter, Wimpole Street, Harley Street, and so through Wigmore Street into Oxford Street. In a quarter of an hour they were in Bloomsbury. From there they made a quick march South, passing across Holborn, down Endell Street, and so through a zigzag of slums to Covent Garden Market.

Holmes hailed a four-wheeler, and in it Holmes & Watson took Ryder back to 221B.

Food:

For the evening in which Henry Baker was to claim his hat, Holmes invited Watson to dinner. "I dine at seven. There is a woodcock, I believe." That meal was postponed to investigate the case, but after releasing Ryder, Holmes & Watson began another investigation, in which, also a bird was to be the chief feature.

Drink:

Holmes & Watson had a beer at the Alpha Inn at Bloomsbury.

Holmes gave Ryder a dash of brandy at 221B.

Vices:

Ryder smoked a pipe in his sister's back yard while pondering what to do.

Holmes reached up his hand for his clay pipe after letting Ryder go free.

Other cases mentioned:

Reference to the last six cases, three of which were entirely free of any legal crime. They were Holmes' attempt to recover the Irene Adler papers, the singular case of Miss Mary Sutherland, and to the adventure of the man with the twisted lip. (SCAN, IDEN and TWIS)

Notable Quotables:

". . . he never got tallow-stains from a gasjet."

"Eh? What of it, then? Has it returned to life and flapped off through the kitchen window?"

"What a shrimp it is, to be sure!"

"I am not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies."

"My name is Sherlock Holmes. It is my business to know what other people don't know."

Other interestings:

We don't think there is another story in which Holmes did not have a client. (This assumes he had an arrangement to serve Scotland Yard when called upon by the detective force.) Readers are asked if they can think of one.

(Sometime later: No astute readers replied, but we thought of a few. No client in LION. Nor in either of the Reichenbach bookends FINA and EMPT Any more, anybody?)

McMurdo's Camp