



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XII -- The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor

A joyous story of Holmes at his best and featuring strong female characters, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Miss Hatty Doran, the feisty American tomboy is a great character together with her loyal maid Alice; and so too is Flora Millar, the former danseuse at the Allegro who is clearly the woman for whom Lord St Simon feels the most genuine affection.

The story starts off with Watson lounging around on a rainy autumn day feeling a bit sorry for himself and nursing his war-wound – the Jezail bullet stuck in a limb – though the exact location of it is not specified. As Holmes admires know, there is confusion about this as it is described as being in both the shoulder and the leg in two different stories. As I refer to it in my own novel, it was strange to be reminded of Watson’s injury in the original text as the scene in which the wound is mentioned in Barefoot is so pivotal and brings about a shocking epiphany in my protagonist.



But back to Lord St Simon and his vanishing bride. Gosh he is an awful snob isn't he? And isn't it fun watching Holmes bring him down a rung or two; –

St Simon – ‘I understand that you have already managed several delicate cases of this sort, sir, though I presume that they were hardly from the same class of society.’

Holmes – ‘No, I am descending.’

St Simon – ‘I beg pardon.’

Holmes – ‘My last client of the sort was a king.’

I do love the way that Holmes is unaffected by personages of class and is generally so unmaterialistic and unpretentious. While most of the middle classes at that time, which I guess is what Holmes was, were trying so desperately to climb higher, all he wanted was interest and stimulation regardless of who brought it to him.

Watching Lestrade blundering around coming to all the wrong conclusions and missing the most significant of details is always fun and this story is a prime example of it. He hits upon the simplest explanation for the lady’s disappearance and for a time we almost go along with it, but keen readers know from Holmes’ overly congratulatory response heavy with sarcasm, that the hapless official had got it wrong yet again. He baits Holmes and we excitedly wait for Holmes to have his moment.

I love this story, a feel-good tale of the ordinary man getting the girl and true love winning through. The official and the toff are put in their place by a gutsy American woman and a clever, eccentric amateur.

A well-deserved 8 out of 10.

Charlotte Anne Walters

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