



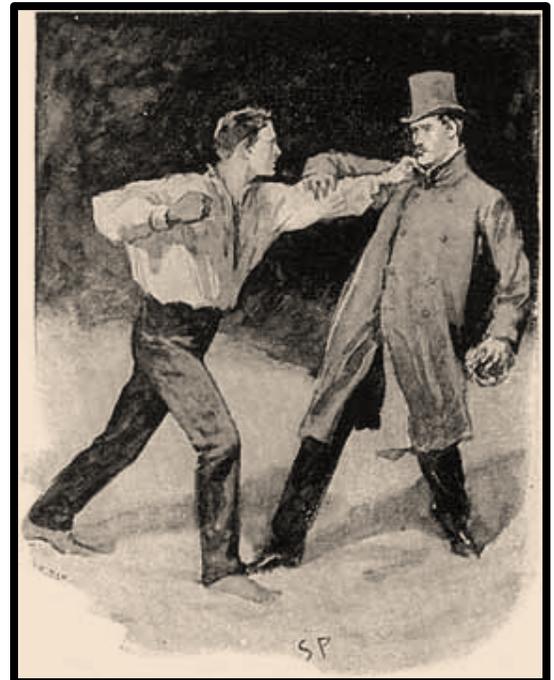
## The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XIII -- The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet

There is a popular saying that “no good deed goes unpunished,” and surely there is proof of this in the life and career of Alexander Holder. A loving and indulgent father, he saw his son growing into a spoiled spendthrift. In giving shelter to his orphaned niece, he laid himself open to betrayal. And in trying to help one of the “most exalted names in England” out of a temporary money problem, Holder risked public and private disgrace. But he wasn’t a complete fool. At least he had the sense to heed the suggestion from the police that he should consult Sherlock Holmes in the case. Next up: The Hounds leave their footprints in the snow as they track the missing fragment of “The Beryl Coronet.” I trust that we won’t find ourselves over a beryl on this one!

Don’t bank on it: It seems to me that Holder didn’t have much choice but to grant that foolish loan to his “illustrious client,” and I blame the client himself for that part of the crazy proceedings. (I see Mr. Holder as having a great resemblance to Mr. Drysdale of “The Beverly Hillbillies.”) But having given out the money and received the coronet as security, whatever possessed Holder to take it home with him and put it in his bureau – and then to tell his whole family what he had and where it was hidden? If this was a typical display of Holder’s judgment and discretion, how on earth did he ever manage to become the senior partner of a banking firm?

Still, I think the ultimate in bone-headedness is the fact that even after the attempted theft and the damage to the coronet, Holder was still keeping the blessed thing in that same bureau drawer! But we can’t entirely blame Holder, can we? Not even Sherlock Holmes, far less the official police, seemed to have a problem with keeping the coronet there until its missing part was found! Didn’t it occur to somebody to lock it up in a safe for a change?



Sherlock Holmes aces the case: We've discussed some adventures in which Holmes either didn't handle the case well, or else didn't have much to do at all, but "The Beryl Coronet" shows off his observation and reasoning talents at their best. His people skills were also in top form. Professional yet kindly, he soothed his hysterical client, solved the case and retrieved the missing jewels. He made it look easy. And yet, there is a point in the story where he told Watson, "I may be on the trail in this matter, or I may be following a will-o'-the-wisp." As matters turned out, he was decidedly on the trail. What do you think it was that caused Holmes to doubt his theories? Would he have been able to solve this case without the lucky chance of the recent snowfall?

Watson's limited involvement is also worthy of note. "My friend insisted that I accompany them in their expedition" to Holder's house, but then he was excluded from Holmes's scouting trip to Sir George Burnwell's house. There's nothing unusual up to a certain point: one man dressed as a common loafer was able to strike up an acquaintance with the valet, but a pair of loafers might not have yielded the pair of boots that Holmes wanted. But why didn't Holmes take Watson along when he confronted the supposedly dangerous Sir George? Was Holmes still unsure of his conclusions? Was he being protective of Watson? Was there something else about the crime which needed hushing up? For example, did Holmes think there might be a connection between Sir George Burnwell and the exalted person who pawned the coronet?

And why did Holmes downplay such danger as there was in this adventure? Normally, Holmes was only too happy to paint a vivid picture of the perils involved in his investigations, but it was not until the case was nearly over that he revealed Sir George Burnwell to be "one of the most dangerous men in England." Why do you suppose he kept the thief's violent nature a secret in this instance? And should there have been a bit more concern over Mary's future with Burnwell, despite her own guilt in the attempted theft?

**Rosemary Michaud**