



## An Inquiry into: “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches”

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“The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in June 1892. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

This case completes *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, the first volume of Canonical cases.

Although our chronologists do not agree unanimously on the year in which this case took place, as the table shows there is a majority.

If the majority is correct regarding which year this adventure took place in, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 36 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 38.

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### **Main Characters:**

Violet Hunter, a young governess who appeals to Holmes for advice and protection when offered a position with unusual requirements. Jethro Rucastle, middle-aged landowner who ostensibly wants Violet as governess for his only son, but asks her to perform duties beyond those of a governess. Mrs. Rucastle, Jethro’s submissive second wife. Alice Rucastle, Jethro’s daughter by his first wife. Mr. and Mrs. Toller, the Rucastles’ servants. Little Edward, the disgusting young son of Mr. Rucastle. Mr. Fowler, Alice’s fiancé. Carlo the mastiff.

### **Notable Quotes:**

“To the man who loves art for its own sake it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived.”

“Crime is common. Logic is rare.”

### *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*

<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Early Spring</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Friday, April 5, 1889</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late April 1890</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>Early Spring 1896 to 1903</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>March 1890</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Sunday, April 19, 1891</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>April 1885</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Late March 1890</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Early Spring 1890</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Tuesday, March 18, 1890</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1890</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Monday, April 7, 1890</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist’s results for their research framework.

“You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales.”

“What do the public, the great unobservant public, who could hardly tell a weaver by his tooth or a compositor by his left thumb, care about the finer shades of analysis and deduction?”

“Data! data! data! I can’t make bricks without clay.”

“It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful country-side.”

“I have frequently gained my first real insight into the character of parents by studying their children.”

### *Miss Violet Hunter*

Regardless of her name, our heroine most definitely does not qualify as a shrinking Violet. While some might possibly correctly argue that she might have been a little short in the common sense region, it cannot be said that she was lacking in courage and determination.

There are those who have criticized the lady’s decision to accept a peculiar position which imposed some very unusual requirements. Aside from being required to wear a certain dress and sit at a certain

designated place, the condition that she cut her luxuriant tresses—especially for the time and place—goes beyond the unusual into the bizarre. During the High Victorian Era (and well into the 20th century) women tended to wear their hair long, with the exceptions being those created by disease or accident. Bar-



Courtesy of ITV Granada

ring a wig, Violet would have been precluded from showing herself in society until her hair grew back to an acceptable length.

Added to the fact that she would be working at a fairly isolated estate, the situation she is willing to get herself into did not exactly inspire confidence.

Like the hapless engineer, Victor Hatherley, her precarious economic situation moved her to accept, albeit reluctantly, a position she would have otherwise refused. It should be remembered that in her previous position, Violet’s yearly earnings were £48 (≈\$18,000), which had been rather high for a profession that averaged £35 (≈\$13,000). Now, however, she was being offered £120 (≈\$45,000), a munificent sum that was more than three times the usual salary! As an old Spanish saying puts it, “When the offering is too large, even the saints become suspicious.” Holmes himself, although no saint he, was doubtful: “Why should they give you £120 a year, when they could have their pick for £40? There must be some strong reason behind.”

Even so, considering her circumstances, it is hardly surprising that she decided to accept the position regardless of the unusual requirements.

That the lady was no fool is proven by her consultation with Sherlock Holmes before proceeding.

Unquestionably, there is more to Miss Violet Hunter than meets the eye. One would assume that, desperately needing a position, she would not have been too modest about her abilities; yet she tells Rucastle that, “My accomplishments, sir, may be less than you imagine. A little French, a little German, music and drawing.” However, we later learn from Watson that shortly after she became “the head of a private school at Walsall, where I believe she

has met with considerable success.”



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Considering the times, the school referred to must have been one for young ladies. Although it would have been less educationally demanding than one for males, in order to be qualified to fill such a position the head of such a school would have had to offer a far more ample educational background than the one she described to Rucastle.

This leads one to conclude that either the lady was far more accomplished than she let on, or she somehow managed to access sufficient funds to open such a school.

Like so many inhabitants of the Canon, Miss Violet Hunter seems to have been far more than what she appeared to be.

### *The Contradictory Sleuth and Client*



Courtesy of ITV Granada

When Violet first consulted Holmes on the wisdom of her accepting the position of governess with the Rucastles, very sensibly the Great Detective revealed his misgivings, telling her, “I confess that it is not a situation which I should like to see a sister of mine apply for.” He then gallantly offered his support: “But at any time, day or night, a telegram would bring me down to your help.”

Then there appears to be a departure from reality on both their parts. She later tells Holmes that after having been threatened with serious (or even fatal) bodily harm, she decided to remain in the power of the man who threatened her with a vicious mastiff: “Of course I might have fled from the house, but my curiosity was almost as strong

as my fears.” This bespeaks not of courage but potentially deadly foolishness!

Our rational and logical detective does not come off any better. His reaction to Violet's tale of potential mayhem incredibly is, "You seem to me to have acted all through this matter like a brave and sensible girl, Miss Hunter." Then he proceeds to urge her to go back into harm's way!

### *A Few Loose Legal Ends*

We are not told too much about Alice Rucastle. For example, was she of age? If she was not, legally her father might have been entitled to forbid her to marry and keep her in the house against her will for whatever reason. Even if she had she signed over to him control of her money it would not have mattered much unless she was later able to establish before a court that she had done so under duress. Before we preen our 21<sup>st</sup> century feathers are call this extreme, we have very similar situations these days. The conservatism battle between Britney Spears and her father is a good example. It therefore appears that Jephro Rucastle committed no crime.

However, Holmes, Watson, and Violet Hunter conceivably might have found themselves in a far more tenuous position.

The argument could be made that the three were guilty of conspiracy, assault and battery, breaking and entering, attempted burglary, and kidnapping (locking up Mrs. Toller). A practicing prosecutor could possibly come up with a few others. Possibly, an argument could also be made that their actions resulted in Rucastle's injuries because he released the mastiff in an attempt to protect his property from trespassers.

Most certainly, a civil court would not have been too understanding towards our friends.

### *What else happened in 1890:*

#### *Empire*

Helgoland ceded to Germans.

Work of Rhodes Pioneers begun in Southern Rhodesia.

Britain annexes Uganda.

Britain recognizes French Protectorate over Madagascar.

Treaty of Busah: improved Franco-British relations in West Africa.

Zanzibar Settlement: Tanganyika becomes Imperial Germany Colony; Germany excluded from Upper Nile; British Protectorate over Zanzibar.

#### *Britain*

Parnell vindicated of Phoenix Park murder charges; ruined by O'Shea divorce petition; rejected as leader of Irish Nationalists in Commons, resigns.

Omnibus strike in London settled on basis of 12-hour day.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

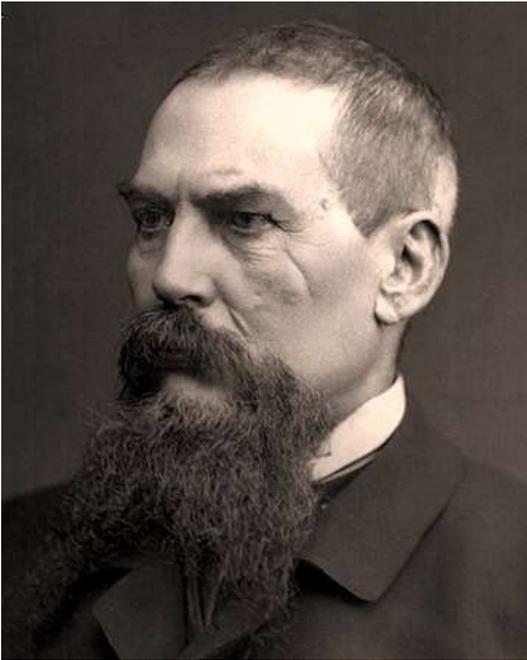
Cardinal John Henry Newman dies. He was one of the founders of the Oxford movement, leading the propaganda effort for High Church doctrines.

January 4, *Daily Graphic* launched, first daily illustrated paper. Merged with *Daily Sketch* in 1926.

Horniman Museum opens.

First part of Rosebery Avenue opened.

Dulwich Park, gifted by Dulwich College, opens.



Vauxhall Park opens.

City and South London Railway from Stockwell to William Street, first deep level tube railway.

London-Paris telephone line opened.

◀ Sir Richard Burton dies at Trieste. Famous for his visits to Mecca and Medina disguised as a Muslim pilgrim, the explorer served in the Crimean War and, with Captain Speke, discovered Lake Tanganyika. Renowned also for his books of travel and magnificent *History of the Sword*. He is best remembered as the translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

Financial panic in London and in Paris.

Lunacy Act gives management of asylums to visiting committees.

Housing of Working Classes Act.

Sir B. Baker and Sir J. Fowler complete cantilever Forth Bridge (for railway) at Queensferry, near Edinburgh; length 1.3 miles.

Charles Booth writes, *In Darkest England*.

Caine writes, *Bondman*, a novel.

Sir James George Frazer writes, *The Golden Bough*.

Morris writes *News from Nowhere*.

Sir William Watson writes, *Wordsworth's Grave*.

## *World*

Africa is repartitioned among the European powers. England receives the sultanate of Zanzibar and an extensive strip of territory to the north of the German West Africa possessions. France is placated by dominion over all the oases of the Sahara and the northwest portion of the Sudan extending as far as Lake Tschad. In return for German concessions, Heligoland is ceded to that country.

Wounded Knee Massacre in South Dakota. Last battle in the American Indian Wars. This event represents the end of the American Old West.

German Dowager Empress Augusta dies at the Royal Palace at Berlin. The Queen, later Empress, devoted her time and energies to the reorganization of guilds of women under the Red Cross. Under her guidance, 677 general hospitals, 286 private lazarettos were established.

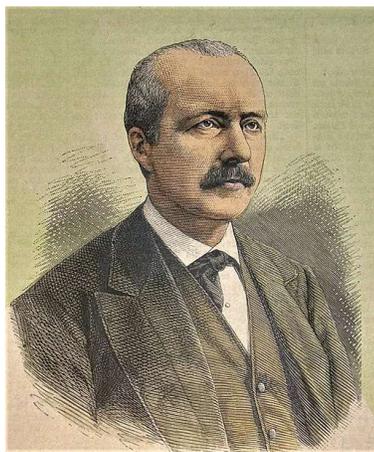
North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Washington are admitted into the Union.

Fall of Bismarck; the Prussian Prime Minister is made to resign. General von Caprivi de Caprera de Montecuculi is appointed as successor to Prince Bismarck. This event marks the beginning of William II's disastrous personal rule.

The five republics of Central America unite under one president with a five-member cabinet and diet of 15.

Workmen in France allowed compensation for contracts broken by employers.

William III of Holland dies; Luxembourg passes to Duke of Nassau.



Zemstva Law in Russia; limited franchise in local government; excluded intellectual professions.

Revolution in Argentina, President Celman ousted.

Russia attempts to limit Finnish Control over customs and money.

◀ Heinrich Schliemann German archaeologist, discoverer of Troy, died at Naples.

First meeting of Japanese Legislature under new Constitution. First great national election to the new Parliament in Japan and the provincial assemblies are held. Nearly 85% of eligible voters cast ballots. Results show that almost all the candidates that received some sort of government employment had been repudiated by the people.

Italy annexes Eritrea.

French miners to elect delegates to supervise safety while working.

Numerous arrests made at Paris in anticipation of expected Socialist demonstrations. Among them, the Marquis de Mores, a French Royalist of American cowboy fame on charge of inciting soldiers to revolt and of furnishing funds to Socialist organs. In May several labor riots occur.

Workers' agitation in London, as result of the goings-on in Paris. More than 20,000 workmen attend a mass meeting in Hyde Park.



In Chicago, the first entirely steel-framed building erected. The city is chosen as the site of the 1892 World's Fair.

U.S. signs extradition treaty with Great Britain.

◀ St. Petersburg University students and the Academy of Agriculture demand the reestablishment of the more liberal regulations of 1863. Five hundred are imprisoned. This results in the police closing

of the University and Technological Institute of St. Petersburg.

Cholera again strikes pilgrims at Mecca.

French Explorer Monteil's journey Niger-Kano-Tchad-Tripoli; completed 1892.

First Chinese cotton mill constructed.

The Tsar issues imperial edicts against the Jews. They are forbidden to hold land, are directed to reside in towns, and are excluded from certain cities where until then they had been unmolested.

Olderbank Clubs in Italy suppressed.

Political revolts in Switzerland over the government's refusal to submit to the people the question of a revision of the constitution.

Turkish outrages reported from Armenia. Atrocities committed by the Kurd against the Armenians, half of Salonica burned down.

## Art

Franck, Belgian organ composer dies.



Cézanne paints *Mme. Cézanne in the Conservatory*.

Degas paints *Dancers in Blue*.

Gilbert writes, *Original Comic Operas*.

Barry writes, *My Lady Nicotine*.

Pietro Mascagni writes *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

◀ Zola writes, *La Bête humaine*.

Van Gogh paints *Portrait of Dr. Gachet*, *Street in Anvers*, dies.

*Prince Igor*, commenced by Borodin (dies 1887), completed by Glazunov and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Tschaikovsky composes *Queen of Spades*.

Whistler writes, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.

Paul Claudel presents *Tête d'Or*.

Stefan George writes, *Hymnen*.

Arno Holtz writes, *Die Familie Selicke*.

Ibsen writes, *Hedda Gabler*.

## Science and Technology

Bertillon publishes *La photographie judiciaire*, in which he explains his anthropometry.

Emil von Behring, German bacteriologist, discovers immunity to tetanus can be given by use of serum; introduces name "antitoxin."



Halstead, at John Hopkins Hospital, first to use rubber gloves in surgery.

Moving-picture films, precursor of cinematography shown in New York.

◀ Discovery of Cleopatra's tomb.

Cyanide process of preparation of gold from crude ore developed in South Africa.

Lockyer's theory of stellar evolution.

Application of pneumatic tires to bicycles makes popular craze of that sport.

P. Rudolph's anastigmatic camera lens.

First use of the electric chair as a method of execution.

The cardboard box is invented.

*Next week's case: SILV.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Murray, the Courageous Orderly*

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands  
of the murderous Ghazis had it not  
been for the devotion and courage  
shown by Murray, my orderly..."

**If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at [CourageousMurray@aol.com](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

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