



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XV -- The Adventure of Silver Blaze

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, December 1892

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

Not given. Autumn, in the late 1880's likely.

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Sharing bachelor quarters at 221B.

Opening scene:

Brief discussion as Holmes & Watson sat down to breakfast one morning about a case which was the topic of conversation through the length and breadth of England, involving the disappearance of a race horse, Silver Blaze, which was the favorite for the Wessex Cup. The horse's trainer had apparently been tragically murdered.

Client:

On Tuesday evening, Holmes received telegrams from both Colonel Ross, the owner of the horse, and from Inspector Gregory, who was looking after the case, inviting his cooperation.



Crime or concern:

Disappearance of a race horse and apparent murder of the trainer.

Villain:

Straker the trainer had attempted to injure the horse's tendon. Horse kicked the trainer in the head, killing him.

Motive:

Alter the outcome of the race, make money by laying against his own horse, to support his illicit girl-friend.

Logic used to solve:

Clue of bill found on Straker from London milliner Madame Lesurier led Holmes to suspect a girl-friend with expensive tastes.

Curried Mutton used to drug stable-guard made it an "inside job". It is beyond reason that an outsider could have made someone at the Straker household come up with the idea of serving a highly spiced meal that evening for his purposes. Therefore, someone in the household must have conceived the idea

Another indicator of an inside job was the dog in the stable that did not bark, as he would have if a stranger had approached.

Lame sheep gave Holmes the idea of nicking a tendon to cause lameness. Someone had practiced on the sheep, using the small surgical knife found on Straker.

Policemen:

Inspector Gregory, an extremely competent officer, but not gifted with imagination.

Holmes' fees:

No mention, although Col. Ross did acknowledge he was under obligation to Holmes. Holmes had also made a bet on the next race and stood to win a little. It is possible he was helped with a little inside information.

Transport:

Holmes & Watson took train that morning from Paddington to Exeter, and on to Tavistock, which lies in the middle of Dartmoor. Upon arriving in the evening they were picked up by Col. Ross and Inspector Gregory and were all seated in a comfortable landau, and rattled on to King's Pyland, Col. Ross' residence.

Food:

Curried mutton served by Strakers that night, and carried down to the lad guarding the stables. We believe this is the only Holmes case where the food played an important part in the mystery beyond providing nourishment.

Drink:

No mention

Vices:

The day before leaving for Dartmoor, Holmes smoked heavily, charging and recharging his pipe with the strongest black tobacco, and was absolutely deaf to any of Watson's questions or remarks.

During the train ride to Dartmoor, Watson lay back against the cushions, puffing at his cigar.

At the end, Holmes invited Col Ross to 221B to smoke a cigar.

Other cases mentioned:

None

Notable Quotables:

Gregory (detective): "Is there any other point to which you would wish to draw my attention?" Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time." Gregory: "The dog did nothing in the night-time." Holmes: "That was the curious incident."

"I made a blunder, my dear Watson — which is, I am afraid, a more common occurrence than anyone would think"

Other interestings:

Colonel Ross did not seem to have a high opinion of Holmes and his methods, and made a few remarks along those lines. Holmes reacted to this as he has been known to do, by being less than candid, or trying to make the uppity person look foolish.

About two miles distant across the moor from King's Pyland lay the larger training establishment of Mapleton, which belonged to Lord Backwater. It is not known if there was more than one lord Backwater in Britain at the time, but this Lord Backwater was probably the friend of Lord St. Simon who recommended Holmes to him in NOBL.

McMurdo's Camp