



## Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

### The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes Adventure XV -- The Adventure of Silver Blaze

#### SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

John Straker had a mistress in London with expensive tastes. Consequently he was head over heels in debt. Silver Blaze was the favorite in an upcoming race. Silver blaze disappeared and Straker was found on the moor with his skull crushed and a cataract knife in his hand.

Holmes solved the case. Straker planned to nick Silver Blaze's tendon with the cataract knife thereby slowing him enough to make him lose the race but not enough that he would be withdrawn. He then planned to bet against him and win enough to pay off his debts. He put powdered opium in Ned's curried mutton (the curry masked the taste) and when all was quiet led Silver Blaze onto the moor to do the nicking. The horse however, kicked him in the head, killing him. As he fell, he cut his thigh with the cataract knife.



Silver Blaze wandered across the moor and was found early next morning by Silas Brown who recognized him and dyed the identifying blaze and foreleg to conceal his identity. Holmes saw through his scheme and forced Silas to care for the horse until race time and produce him.

Brown kept his part of the bargain. Silver Blaze won the race and Holmes protected Silas from legal prosecution.

## **SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)**

Inspector Gregory asks Sherlock Holmes to accompany him at the stables of Colonel Ross in Dartmoor. A stable boy, Ned Hunter, was drugged after chasing a parasite tipster, Fitzroy Simpson. Soon after, Silver Blaze, the Wessex Cup champion has disappeared.

Moreover, John Straker, the coach, was found dead, his skull smashed on the moor. After examining the crime scene, Holmes follows the footprint of the horse to the neighbor stables. There, he speaks privately with the coach Silas Brown, which allowed him to ensure to Colonel Ross that Silver Flame will be ready for the next Wessex Cup. By deductions, Holmes understood that John Straker had drugged the lad out to get Silver Blaze out and carry it into the countryside where he wanted to mutilate her tendon. But the horse hit Straker with a deadly kick to the head.

Silas Brown found the horse wandering on the moor and did some make up on it and hid it in the Capleton stables so that it couldn't run in the Wessex Cup. Straker needed money to support his mistress and hoped to earn a lot of money by eliminating the favorite horse.

## **SUMMARY (Wikipedia)**

Sherlock Holmes and his partner Dr. Watson travel by train to Dartmoor to investigate a crime of disappearance of the great race horse Silver Blaze and the murder of the horse's trainer, John Straker. Holmes and Watson arrive at King's Pyland, from which Silver Blaze is missing. Bookmaker Fitzroy Simpson had come to Dartmoor (and specifically to King's Pyland) to gather information about Silver Blaze and his stablemate Bayard. He had approached both Straker's maid and a stable boy the night of the horse's disappearance and has been arrested for the murder. However, to Holmes, there seem to be a number of facts that do not fit the case against Simpson, damning as it looks. It seems odd, for instance, that he would lead the horse out on to the moor simply to injure or kill him, which could be done right in his stall. He could not have stolen the animal. What good would such a famous thoroughbred be to him? Why has an exhaustive search of the neighbourhood not turned up Silver Blaze? What has Simpson done with him?

Sherlock Holmes soon tracks down Silver Blaze, literally: his tracks (along with a man's) are clearly visible in the soil, albeit intermittently. Holmes also deduces why the police could not find the horse, despite having looked right at him. Holmes ensures Silver Blaze's safety, and turns his mind to other aspects of the case.

John Straker, Silver Blaze's late trainer, has been killed by a blow to the skull, assumed to have been administered by Simpson with his "Penang lawyer", a clublike walking stick. Simpson's cravat is also found in

Straker's hand, and the latter's coat is found draped over a furze bush. A knife is found at the crime scene—a peculiarly delicate-looking one, with a small blade. Dr. Watson, from his medical experience, identifies it as a cataract knife used for the most delicate surgery—useful as it is for that purpose, it would be unsuitable as a weapon. In addition, Straker also seems to have gashed himself in the hip with it.

One of the stable lads, Ned Hunter, was on guard duty the night of the crime, but he proves to have been drugged with powdered opium placed in his supper. No one else who ate the curried mutton made at the Strakers' house that evening suffered any ill effects, but Hunter was in a profound stupor well into the next day. Straker's pockets contained two interesting items: a tallow candle and a milliner's bill for (among other things) a 22-guinea dress, made out to one William Derbyshire. There is the curious incident with the dog, and a problem with the sheep kept at the stable: a shepherd tells Holmes that three of his animals have recently become suddenly lame.

Holmes's powers unravel the mystery, and lay bare what villainies there are to be exposed. He visits the milliner's shop in London and determines, using Straker's photograph, that Straker posed as Derbyshire. This establishes his motive: he had a mistress with expensive tastes, and tried to influence the race's outcome to earn himself a large sum of money. The curried mutton was a clue, also; only such a spicy dish could have masked the taste of powdered opium, and it was impossible for Simpson to arrange a highly seasoned meal that evening for his purposes. Therefore, someone in the household must have conceived the idea—namely, Straker himself.

The "curious incident of the dog in the night-time" is easily explained: the dog made no noise, because no stranger was there. As Holmes explains: "I had grasped the significance of the silence of the dog, for one true inference invariably suggests others.... Obviously the midnight visitor was someone whom the dog knew well." It was Straker who removed Silver Blaze from his stall and led him out on to the moor. Straker's purpose in doing this was to use the cataract knife to inflict a slight injury upon one of the horse's legs, rendering him temporarily lame in a way that would be undetectable on examination and thus likely put down to strain. He had thought to use Simpson's cravat (which the latter dropped when he was expelled from King's Pyland) as a sling to hold the horse's leg to cut it. But instead, Straker was killed when the horse, sensing that something was wrong, panicked and kicked the trainer in the head. The lame sheep had been used by Straker for practice.

Colonel Ross's main concern, of course, is getting his horse back safely. Holmes chooses not to tell Ross where his horse has been (although he has known all along) until after the Wessex Cup, which is won by Silver Blaze. At first the Colonel does not recognize his own horse, since the animal's distinguishing white markings have been covered with dye.

The horse had been looked after by one of the Colonel's neighbours, Silas Brown, who had found him wandering the moor and hidden him in his barn. Holmes then explains the details of the case step-by-step to the satisfaction of the Colonel, Watson, and Inspector Gregory.

Gregory is one of the more competent police detectives Holmes works with in the course of his career. He conducts a thorough investigation of the crime before Holmes's arrival, and gathers all the evidence Holmes needs to solve the case. Holmes notes that Gregory is "an extremely good officer", and observes that the only quality he lacks is imagination—the ability to imagine what might have happened on a given occasion, and act on this intuition.