

## Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

### The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes Adventure XVII -- The Adventure of Yellow Face

#### SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Holmes and Watson are sharing quarters at Baker St. Holmes still uses cocaine occasionally. A page is on duty.

Effie emigrated to Atlanta and married John Hebron, a black lawyer. They had Lucy. Soon after Lucy's birth, John died in a yellow fever epidemic. Effie returned to England and left Lucy in the charge of a Scotch nurse who was a former servant.

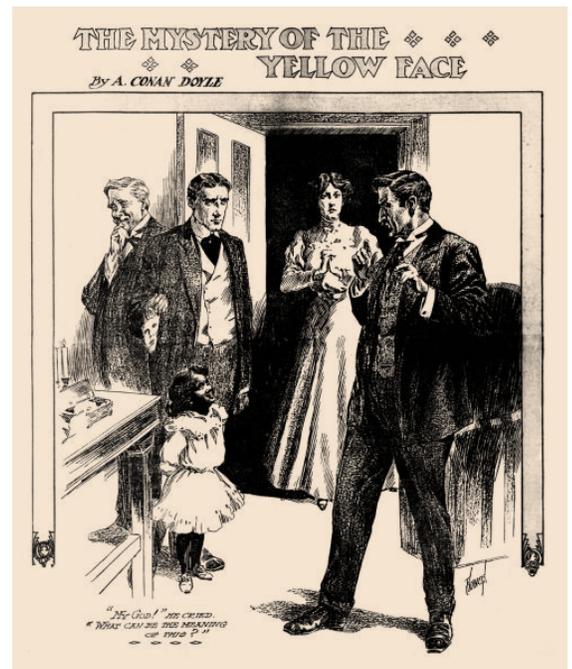
Effie met and married Jack. She sent for Lucy and the nurse but was ashamed to tell Jack that her daughter was a mulatto. Therefore she kept her existence a secret from him and forced Lucy to completely cover herself, including wearing a mask, to hide her Negroid features.

Jack consulted Holmes because of the peculiar changes in Effie's behavior caused by her concealing of Lucy and the Nurse.

Jack forced a disclosure and accepted Lucy as his daughter. Holmes did nothing. No crime was committed.

#### SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)

Grant Munro asks Holmes for advice about his wife's strange behaviour, Effie. They live in the countryside near Norbury. Effie recently asked her husband for a large sum of money and refuses to explain the need for it.



A few days later, during a walk, Munro saw a mysterious little livid yellow figure at the window of the neighbouring cottage. Then he surprises his wife leaving this cottage in the middle of the night. When she returns, she refuses to give him any explanation. The following days were strange as well.

As he passed by the neighbouring cottage, he saw his wife coming out. There again, he had no explanation. Two days later, returning home early, he did not find his wife and decided to go to the cottage where he found no one but discovered a picture of his wife on the fireplace.

Holmes suspects a blackmail case and decides to go inspect the cottage with Mr. Munro. They find Mrs. Munro there with the livid face child. Holmes takes off a wax mask and discovers the face of a little black girl from Effie's first marriage to Mr. Hebron.

Effie had been afraid of Mr. Munro's reaction and had hidden his daughter's existence near her home. Grant Munro accepts the child as his own and the whole family returns home more united than ever. Holmes was wrong.

### **SUMMARY (Wikipedia)**

Sherlock Holmes, was bored due to a want of cases, returns home from a walk with Dr. Watson early in spring to find he has missed a visitor but that the caller has left his pipe behind. From it, Holmes deduces that he was disturbed of mind (because he forgot the pipe); that he valued it highly (because he had repaired with silver bands which costs more than the pipe cost, rather than replacing it, when it was broken); that he was muscular, left-handed, had excellent teeth, was careless in his habits and was not needed to practice economy.

None of these deductions is particularly germane to the story: they are merely Holmesian logical exercises. When the visitor, Mr. Grant Munro (whose name Holmes observed from his hatband) returns, Holmes and Watson hear the story of Munro's deception by his wife Effie. She had been previously married in America, but her husband and child had died of yellow fever, whereupon she returned to England and met and married Munro. Their marriage had been blissful says Grant Munro until she asked for a hundred pounds and begged him not to ask why. Two months later, Effie Munro was caught conducting secret liaisons with the occupants of a cottage near the Munro house in Norbury. Grant Munro has seen a mysterious yellow-faced person in this cottage. Overcome with jealousy, he breaks in and finds the place empty. However, the room where he saw the mysterious figure is very comfortable and well furnished, with a portrait of his wife on the mantelpiece.

Holmes, after sending Munro home with instructions to wire for him if the cottage was reoccupied, confides in Watson his belief that the mysterious figure is Effie Munro's first husband. He postulates that the husband, having been left in America, has come to England to blackmail her.

After Munro summons Holmes and Watson, the three enter the cottage, brushing aside the entreaties of Effie Munro. They find the strange yellow-faced character, and Holmes peels the face away, showing it to be a mask, and revealing a young girl who is half-black. It is then revealed that Effie Munro's first husband was John Hebron, an African-American lawyer; he did die in America, but their daughter, Lucy, survived. At the time Effie came to England, she could not bring Lucy with her, as the child was still ill enough that the transition might have exacerbated her state. But later, after she and Grant were married, Effie got word that Lucy was alive and well. Upon hearing of this, Effie became overcome with desire to see her child again, so she asked for the hundred pounds and used it to bring Lucy and her nurse to England, and installed them in the cottage near the Munro house. She feared, however, that Grant might stop loving her if he found out that she was the mother of a mixed race child, so all the while, she had made every endeavour to keep Lucy's existence a secret.

Both Watson and Holmes are touched by Munro's response. Watson observes:

...when [Munro's] answer came it was one of which I love to think. He lifted the little child, kissed her, and then, still carrying her, he held his other hand out to his wife and turned towards the door. "We can talk about it more comfortably at home," said he. "I am not a very good man, Effie, but I think I am a better one than you have given me credit for being."

Holmes excuses himself and Watson, and, that evening, after they have returned to Baker Street, says:

"Watson, if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little overconfident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."