



## The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XX – The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual

#### Publishing History

# 20 of the 60 stories

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British illustrator– Sidney Paget

US illustrator – W. H. Hyde

#### Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Thursday, October 2, 1879 which makes it the 2nd of the 60. This means that Holmes is 25 and Watson 27.



#### Christopher Morley Says

“Watson’s insistence that Holmes clean up his papers brought out this strange story. Like the preceding case, it began with a friendship of Holmes’s college days. The Ritual concerns one of the most precious relics of English history, and one doubts whether even “some legal bother,” as Holmes says, would keep it in the private possession of the Musgraves. – Another problem is whether Watson realized the Ritual would only be correct at a season of the year when the sun’s declination was the same as the date of the original formula.”

## **Dummies Short Summary**

“Holmes must have been in a chatty mood as he follows *Gloria Scott* with yet another tale of college-age mystery solving.”

## **How Many Words**

At 7,632 words MUSG has the 23<sup>rd</sup> most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

## **Classifying This Case**

This case is one of 23 classified as a MURDER where the perpetrator Holmes solved the case but one of 5 where the perpetrator escaped justice. The others were FIVE, GREE, RESI, and WIST.

## **The Best Of Sherlock Holmes**

- 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle named it 11<sup>th</sup> on his list of 12 favorites.
- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #6 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1954 - The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #5 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 6<sup>th</sup> of 56 short stories.

## **What Else Happened That Year (1879)**

- The Zulu War breaks out in South Africa as the Zulus deal England one of her greatest defeats (Isandlwana) but the British claim a victory at Roarke’s Drift. The Zulus agreed to peace terms but not until after the Prince Imperial, son of Napoleon III, is killed there.
- Anglo-French control over Egypt
- Britain occupies the Khyber Pass in Afghanistan but its envoy is massacred in Kabul.
- London installs its first telephone exchange.
- W.L. Blackley develops a national pension program for England.
- New Scotland Yard begins first full year of operations.
- Gilbert and Sullivan’s H.M.S. Pinafore retains its popularity.
- Londoners flock to see Cleopatra’s Needle which was erected the year before.
- German/Austro-Hungarian Dual Alliance.
- U.S. prohibits the influx of Chinese laborers.

- Saccharin, the artificial sweetener, is discovered.
- George Eastman (of Eastman/Kodak) develops dry photographic plates.
- Thomas Edison develops the first practical electric lamp, as does J.W. Swan of England.
- Mary Baker Eddy founds the Christian Scientists.
- F.W. Woolworth opens his first store.
- Dostoevsky writes The Brothers Karamazov.
- First tramways in Berlin

### **Holmes And Watson – Personal Information**

Just as in GLOR, Holmes relates the story to Watson after they began sharing quarters at 221B. At the time of the event, Holmes had quarters elsewhere and Watson was probably vacationing in Afghanistan.

### **Dramatis Personae**

A small but memorable cast.

- **Reginald Musgrave**, owner of Hurlingstone, an ancient estate with a large old manor house and encrusted with history.
- **Brunton**, Musgrave's head butler and major domo. Eminently overqualified for the job.
- **Rachael Howells**, jilted suitor of Brunton. They were formerly engaged.
- **Janet Tregillis**, current suitor of Brunton.

### **Quotable Sherlock**

- Holmes, in one of his queer humours, would sit in an armchair with his hair-trigger and a hundred Boxer cartridges and proceed to adorn the opposite wall with a patriotic V. R. done in bullet-pocks
- "'Yes,' said I, 'I have taken to living by my wits.'"
- The butler of Hurlstone is always a thing that is remembered by all who visit us.
- It is a sort of ceremony peculiar to our family, which each Musgrave for centuries past has gone through on his coming of age -- a thing of private interest, and perhaps of some little importance to the archaeologist, like our own blazonings and charges, but of no practical use whatever.'

- " 'Whose was it?'  
" 'His who is gone.'
  - " 'Who shall have it?'  
" 'He who will come.'
  - " 'Where was the sun?'  
" 'Over the oak.'
  - " 'Where was the shadow?'  
" 'Under the elm.'
  - " 'How was it stepped?'  
" 'North by ten and by ten, east by five and by five, south by two and by two, west by one and by one, and so under.'
  - " 'What shall we give for it?'  
" 'All that is ours.'
  - " 'Why should we give it?'  
" 'For the sake of the trust.'
- "A man always finds it hard to realize that he may have finally lost a woman's love, however badly he may have treated her."
  - "They have the crown down at Hurlstone – though they had some legal bother and a considerable sum to pay before they were allowed to retain it. I am sure that if you mentioned my name they would be happy to show it to you."

### **Holmes' Fee**

The story has no direct mention, as Holmes was young and just starting out in a completely new profession. Musgrave's problem was the very chance which he had wanted during months of inaction.

### **Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen**

MUSG has been on the screen 4 times. It is one of Jeremy Brett's best performances.

- 1922 *The Musgrave Ritual* with Eille Norwood. The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released.

- 1968 *The Musgrave Ritual* with Peter Cushing as an episode in his *Sherlock Holmes* TV series. The episode is lost.
- 1986 *The Musgrave Ritual* with Jeremy Brett in his 43 episode *Sherlock Holmes* TV series.
- 1999 *The Musgrave Ritual* as an episode in the *Sherlock Holmes in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Century* (Animated TV series)

### Annotated Sherlock

- the term **“boxer cartridges”** in England is generic for any center-fired cartridge – perfected by Col. Boxer in 1867
- the term **“recherché”** is French for sought out with care,; choice; of rare quality
- the term **“a cadet one”** indicates the younger branch of the Musgrave family
- **“aluminum crutch”** in 1886 only 15 tons of aluminum were produced world-wide. It was more expensive than gold or silver. The “Bayer” process for smelting was developed in 1888 and by 1900 it had become a common industrial metal.
- **“mullioned windows”** windows with their panes divided by a vertical bar.
- **“our own blazonings and charges”** technical terms for a family coat of arms and its details
- **“assiduous”** constant; unremitting: constant in application or effort; working diligently at a task; persevering; industrious; attentive:

### Weapons

Since Hurlstone Manor had its own little armory, quite a lot on hand. Any none of them were part of the crime.

- **Pistol** - With hair trigger, which Holmes used to practice marksmanship indoors, drilling patriotic VRs on the opposite wall.
- **Guns** - In the gunroom of Hurlstone Manor.
- **Battle Axe** - Hanging on a wall in Hurlstone Manor, which Reginald Musgrave took down for defense against what he thought was a burglar.
- **Old Weapons** - Assorted, which were hanging on the walls of Hurlstone Manor.
- **Large Boulder** - Over the entrance of the hidden chamber underneath Hurlstone Manor, which was dropped back into place by Rachel Howells before Brunton could get back out, thus causing his death.

Frank Mentzel