



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XX -- The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual

First published in:

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Time frame of story (known/surmised):

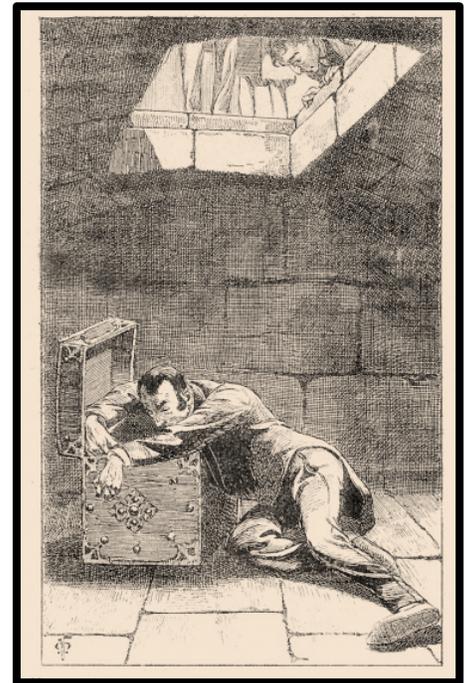
October 2, 1879, probable but not given. (The story as related by Holmes, not the telling of it to Watson)

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Sharing quarters at 221B at beginning, Holmes in Montague St. during Musgrave action.

Opening scene:

Holmes & Watson sat together by the fire one winter's night. Watson laments Holmes' general messiness in their shared quarters. Holmes agrees to straighten up, then diverts Watson's attention by digging up records of old cases, and telling Watson the story of The Musgrave Ritual, Holmes' third case. About the first 20% of the story is taken up by the opening scene, and the remainder is Watson quoting Holmes telling the rest of it. Holmes says the story "really is something a little recherche" (exquisite, choice).



Client:

Reginald Musgrave, a scion of one of the very oldest families in the kingdom, who knew Holmes in college four years earlier. Musgrave called upon Holmes in his rooms at Montague Street just round the corner from the British Museum.

Crime or concern:

Brunton the butler found snooping in the Musgrave family papers. He suspected the words of a family ritual, not understood for generations, could lead to a hidden treasure, the crown of Charles I. Brunton disappears, then is found dead in a hidden cellar.

Villain:

The butler did it. He was a well-grown, handsome man with a splendid forehead. But then maybe his girlfriend, the second housemaid, double-crossed him and trapped him to die.

Motive:

Brunton wanted the treasure.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes figured out the meaning of the words in the ritual and found the hiding spot, but the butler had beaten them to it. Musgrave recognized coins found in the chest as those of Charles I. Spelling in the ritual fixed the date as mid-1600's, verifying the relationship to the royal Stuarts of the era.

Policemen:

None mentioned except the county police who were able to throw no light upon the matter. They were also summoned by Holmes and Musgrave to help raise the stone leading to the hidden cellar.

Holmes' fees:

No direct mention, but Holmes was young and just starting out, and viewed the consultation by Musgrave as the very chance for which he had been panting during months of inaction.

Transport:

Holmes and client take the first train down to Sussex and then a dog-cart to the Manor House of Hurlstone, the venerable wreckage of a feudal keep, the modern wing of which was the home of Reginald Musgrave.

Food/Drink:

None mentioned

Vices:

Here we learn that Holmes kept his cigars in the coal-scuttle, and his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper. In the story we see that Reginald Musgrave sat down opposite to Holmes and lit the cigarette which had been pushed towards him.

Other cases mentioned:

The Tarleton murders. The case of Vamberry, the wine merchant, and the adventure of the old Russian woman, as well as the singular affair of the aluminum crutch, and Ricoletti of the club-foot and his abominable wife. Also mention of GLOR and STUD.

Notable Quotables:

A collection of my trifling achievements would certainly be incomplete which contained no account of this very singular business. (Holmes)

I am generally recognized both by the public and by the official force as being a final court of appeal in doubtful cases. (Holmes)

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. (Holmes)

Other interestings:

This case, plus STUD and GLOR, tells us a little about Holmes' early life and beginnings as a detective. GLOR and MUSG both took place before Watson came along.

Twice while in college, Musgrave had expressed a keen interest in Holmes' methods of observation and inference.

One of the jewels, once cleaned, glowed afterwards like a spark in the dark hollow of Holmes' hand, much like the blue carbuncle which twinkled like an electric point in the dark hollow of the hand of Peterson, the Commissionaire.

None of this would have happened had not Musgrave been struggling against a strong cafe' noir after his dinner.

When all is said and done:

The maid, Rachel Howells, threw the treasure into the lake and was never heard from again.

The Musgrave family got to keep the crown, after some legal bother and a considerable sum to pay. A Musgrave ancestor had been a prominent cavalier and the right-hand man of Charles II in his wanderings, but apparently they never returned after the war to retrieve the crown. Holmes speculates that whoever knew the secret may have died.

McMurdo's Camp