



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXI -- The Adventure of Reigate Squire (Puzzle)

Does anyone know why none of the stories in the Memoirs are called 'The Adventure Of' as so many are in the other compilations? writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

This point has just occurred to me as I typed up the title and I'm sure there is a Holmesian scholar out there who knows the answer. So if that's you, please write your thoughts in the comments section below and satisfy my curiosity.

It's off to the countryside again for another adventure amongst lovely old houses and country squires.

Watson tells us that Holmes has been made ill by his exertions during a difficult case. He is laid up in a hotel room in Lyon and as soon as Watson hears of this, he sets off at once and is at his friend's bedside within twenty-four hours. How did he get there so fast? In this day and age we would just jump on a plane but surely you couldn't get all the way from London to Lyon in twenty-four hours with only a moment's notice all those years ago?



Upon returning to London together, Watson takes Holmes off to stay with an old friend at his country house. Watson tells us that poor Holmes has been working fifteen hours a day, sometimes for five days straight in order to solve an international case and this brought about his sudden illness. Well, not wishing to belittle Holmes' efforts but I worked nights for many years on top of a full-time day job doing those sorts

of hours and I didn't fall ill nor get rushed off for a stay in a lovely old country house to recuperate. Do I sound bitter? Surely not...

Watson describes Holmes as being in the 'Blackest depression' reminding us again of Holmes' propensity for extreme mood swings and mental instability.

Once in the countryside, Reigate in Surrey, Holmes gets drawn in to the mystery of a spate of local burglaries, one of which ended in the death of a coachman. A fragment of a note is left in the dead man's hand and Holmes uses this to unravel the whole mystery and uncover that it was actually the two gentlemen (father and son) for whom the coachman worked. They had broken in to their neighbour's house to steal an important document relating to land rights and conspired to murder the coachman who knew of this and was blackmailing them.

There's something about this one that just doesn't add up for me. Can't explain it really but everything from Holmes' analysis of the note to the fact that the rest of it is still in the dressing gown pocket of the murderer just seems unrealistic. Surely if you had bothered to snatch the note, you would destroy it straight away? You would also notice some was left behind – wouldn't you? And then there's the way the murdering pair turn on Holmes while Watson, the Colonel and police sergeant are in the room next door – I can understand wanting to silence him but let's face it, they were never going to get away with that one. How could they explain it anyway? He slipped and strangled himself?

This is an interesting little story that reminds us of the genuine affection and concern Watson had for Holmes but left more questions than answers for me.

6 out of 10.

Charlotte Anne Walters

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