

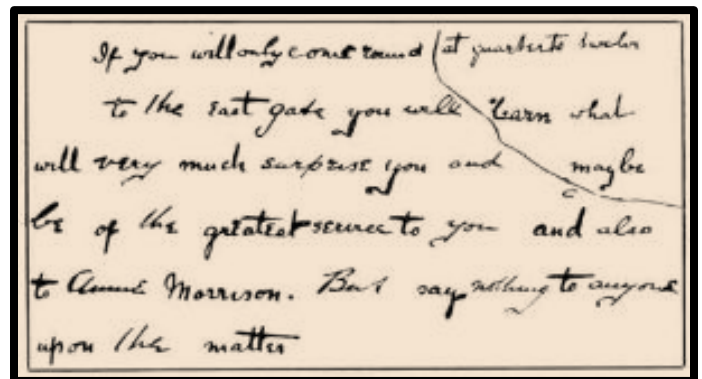


The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXI – The Adventure of the Reigate Squire (Puzzle)

We are all familiar with the manner in which Sherlock Holmes drives himself while on a case, disdaining food and sleep as he focuses his whole being on solving a mystery. Sometimes this catches up to him in the form of a nervous collapse, and REIG is the first such instance in which it happens. While all Europe is ringing with his name for foiling Baron Maupertuis' colossal schemes, Holmes is simply worn out from his triumph and badly needs a rest.

Watson, with some difficulty, persuades Holmes to visit an old army buddy of his, Colonel Hayter. Holmes' rest is short-lived, however, because soon after his arrival at the Colonel's place there's a murder at a neighboring house. Despite Watson's best efforts to restrain him, Holmes is off on a scent once more, even though sometimes he acts a little oddly. The neighbor's coachman, William Kirwan, has been shot to death, apparently by a burglar who has been plaguing the area. But the farther Holmes investigates, the more sure he becomes that it's an entirely different situation.



Colonel Hayter and Watson were looking over Hayter's "small armory of Eastern weapons," which evidently included more than one pistol, when the Colonel announced that he thought he'd take one of the pistols up to his room when he retired for the night, in case of burglars. At this point in the history of firearms, Eastern weapons, particularly pistols, were far inferior to those manufactured in Europe and America and often were cast-off, obsolete pieces of weaponry gained through barter or capture. If the Colonel was so afraid of burglars, why didn't he arm himself with a better pistol than that? And would he have cartridges (presuming the pistols were not muzzle-loaders) to fit the weapon?

The Inspector said he had made inquiries and had learned that William Kirwan had destroyed the envelope which contained the message which led him to his death. Why did he destroy the envelope? Who saw him destroy it? And why did he bring the fatal message with him when he went to the appointed place?

On the night of the supposed burglary, the Cunninghams' dog was chained up on the other side of the house from the point of entry by the "burglar." Was it customary to keep a watchdog chained up at night?

Watson describes the interior of the Cunningham residence as containing "...a stone-flagged passage, with the kitchens branching away from it..." Kitchens? Why did the residence have more than one kitchen? But that wasn't the only odd thing about the house: There was a bowl of oranges in the elder Cunningham's bedchamber. Where did they get oranges in April, in England? And why did Holmes resort to the subterfuge of upsetting the oranges when all he had to do was tell the Inspector where to find the rest of the murder note?

Holmes states that heredity appears in handwriting. He goes so far as to point to the murder note, which contained "traces of heredity shown in the *p*'s and in the tails of the *g*'s." But handwriting is not hereditary; it is learned. Was Holmes' statement valid, or was it merely coincidence that the two handwritings showed similarities?

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