



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXII -- The Adventure of the Crooked Man

I doubt that you will find this story on the top ten list of most Sherlockians. There are not enough thrills, for one thing. Did you ever wonder why Watson selected it for publication? There must have been dozens of cases among his notes that posed more difficulties in their solutions, or contained even more bizarre features. Perhaps he was proud of the fact that Holmes called on him in person to enlist his aid in the case. Perhaps the story appealed to him because of his own military background. Or perhaps he published it because Holmes liked it. The Master certainly solved this one very logically and completely. It is almost a textbook illustration of Holmes's methods of gathering evidence. Perhaps this was one of the cases Holmes might have included in the "course of lectures" that he preferred to Watson's "series of tales."

The Investigation: From the first, Holmes viewed the Barclay case as a "supposed murder," and he correctly singled out the clue of the missing door key as the most significant point to resolve. But there is one feature of the crime scene which troubles me, and which I do not think Holmes considered with sufficient care: the position of Colonel Barclay's body. He was found "with his feet tilted over the side of an armchair, and his head upon the ground near the corner of the fender...dead in a pool of his own blood." I don't have any problem with the head on the fender, but how did his feet end up over the side of an armchair? Was he standing up or sitting down during the altercation with his wife? Either way, can the Hounds explain how he ended up with his head on the ground and his feet over the chair?



Were the police aware that there had been a third person in the room when Colonel Barclay died? If not, should Holmes have told them? Should Holmes have gone to the police after he talked to Miss Morrison? Should he have told the police about Henry Wood? Why was Holmes so determined to keep the police out of this case?

A few other questions: If Watson had never formally practiced medicine while living in Baker Street with Holmes, how did Holmes know what his friend's habits were on a busy day versus a light day?

Was Major Murphy romantically inclined towards Nancy Barclay? Did he request Holmes's help in order to clear her of murder, or was he worried that he might eventually be seen as a suspect?

Leaving aside Barclay's wrongdoing, would Nancy have had a happier life if she had married the "harum-scarum" Henry Wood?

If Wood only partially understood the language of his captors outside Bhurtee, is it possible that he made a mistake as to Barclay's duplicity? Was Barclay responsible for Wood's capture without being guilty of intentional betrayal? Did he simply make a bad map, or let slip some casual conversation about Wood's mission that was overheard by the native servant? Was the servant the true culprit?

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