



## An Inquiry into: "The Crooked Man"

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"The Crooked Man" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in July 1893. It is part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

As the table shows, most of our chronologists are almost in agreement regarding the year of this case.

If the majority is correct about 1889 as the year of this adventure, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 35 years old and Dr. John H. Watson 37.

### Main Characters:

Colonel James Barclay, commander of the Royal Mallows. Nancy Barclay, (*née* Nancy Devoy), Colonel Barclay's queenly wife. Miss Morrison, young friend of Nancy Barclay. Corporal Henry Wood, formerly of the Mallows, ex-comrade of Colonel Barclay and suitor of Nancy Devoy.

### Notable Quotes

"Excellent!" I cried.  
"Elementary," said he.

For an instant the veil had lifted upon his keen, intense nature, but for an instant only. When I glanced again his face had resumed that red-Indian composure which had made so many regard him as a machine rather than a man.

### A non-Canonical Quote pertaining to the Case:

2Sa 11:14 *And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.*

2Sa 11:15 *And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.*

### The Crooked Man

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	<i>A Wednesday in summer</i>
Baring-Gould	<i>Wednesday, September 11, 1889</i>
Bell	<i>August 1888</i>
Blakeney	<i>July 1889</i>
Brend	<i>August 1888</i>
Christ	<i>Wednesday, August 28, 1889</i>
Dakin	<i>August 1889</i>
Folsom	<i>A Tuesday in the late summer of 1889</i>
Hall	<i>Spring 1889</i>
Keefauver	<i>Tuesday, August 30, 1887</i>
Klinger	<i>No date given</i>
Zeisler	<i>Wednesday, June 26, 1889</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

2Sa 11:16 *And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were.*

2Sa 11:17 *And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also.*

### *Watson, the Military Man*

Holmes observes to Watson that, “It’s easy to tell that you’ve been accustomed to wear a uniform, Watson; you’ll never pass as a pure-bred civilian as long as you keep that habit of carrying your handkerchief in your sleeve.” An astute observation, based on the fact that at the time, uniform tunics lacked a handkerchief pocket; the question is why?

Some Canon students have argued that except for affectation there could have been no other reason for Watson to continue carrying his handkerchief in this military fashion. Because his service at Maiwand was brief, the habit of using his sleeve for the handkerchief could not have become so in-

grained, they argue—he would have immediately reverted to using the conventional pocket upon returning to civilian life.

For the most part, the origin of habits lies firmly hidden in the subconscious, beyond external examination. Watson’s thoughts about war—revealed to us by Holmes through observation of his friend’s silent musings about the American Civil War in CARD are most



revealing: “But then, again, your face grew sadder, you shook your head. You were dwelling upon the sadness and horror and useless waste of life. Your hand stole towards your own old wound and a smile quivered on your lips, which showed me that the ridiculous side of this method of settling international questions had forced itself upon your mind.”

It may have been perhaps, that regardless of it all, Watson was subconsciously proud of his ill-starred service and that is why he still carried his handkerchief that way. We must remember that at the time war still exerted a romantic attraction. Today, war has been deprived of the golden patina of glory that it seems to have had held throughout most of humanity’s history. Modern warfare, starting with the War to End All Wars (now we simply assign them consecutive numbers) took care of that with the wide-scale application of technology to the dark art of massacre and destruction. As Churchill once put it, “War, which used to be cruel and magnificent, has now become cruel and squalid. Disgustedly, he then complained that war had “ceased to be a gentleman’s game.”

Sometimes, not often, things *do* change for the best.

## *The Puzzle of the Footprints*

Although our sleuth is not only an expert in reading footprints (see, for example, his seminal monograph, *Upon the Tracings of Footsteps, with Some Remarks upon the Uses of Plaster of Paris as a Preserver of Impresses*, his performance here was not first rate.

Although Holmes noted that he had obtained good clear impressions of Wood's footmarks, he seems to have missed the obvious. His deduction about the toe prints showing that he had rushed across the lawn did not appear to go far enough.

We know that as a result of the hideous tortures he had endured Wood walked crouched over and with his knees very bent. It is impossible to believe that his footprints would not have revealed this. Surely, the fact that he could not walk normally would have been evident to as keen an observer as our detective; a fact that would have considerably narrowed down the field of suspects. Incredibly, Holmes had to learn about Wood's crippling condition from Miss Morrison!

## *Marked for (or Purchaser of) the Sword-Belt?*

Henry Wood told our friends that Barclay was educated and "marked for the sword-belt," meaning that he was destined to become an officer whereas he could not aspire to it due to his limited education and unruly behavior. Regardless of all this, it is a fact that education and merit did not fuel promotions in the British Army. Barclay's extraordinary—if any—courage in battle does not seem to have been the reason behind his meteoric advancement.



Until 1871, the purchase of commissions was a common Army practice. Barclay may have profited from this practice before it ended, by buying his lieutenantcy—the necessary first rung in the climb to his colonelcy. This was by no means an inexpensive practice. Commissions were costly, because high prices preserved the social exclusivity of the officer class. Barclay would have had to pay £450 (about \$170,000) for his lieutenantcy.

This in turn leads one to the presumption that Barclay was better educated than Wood because he belonged to a higher class. His education and social standing might have been additional reasons for Nancy's father's preference for him. This would explain why Barclay, although apparently rising through the ranks, came to be socially accepted by his fellow officers and their wives: he was, as Kipling once picturesquely put it, "a gentleman ranker."

It should be noted that although the Army's requirements for officers were not exactly demanding, some commissions could not be bought. Although commissions up to the rank of colonel could be purchased, this was not the case with the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery. The only way a commission could be had in these services was by graduation from the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Subsequent promotions came through seniority.

The Royal Navy never sold its commissions. Commanding a man-of-war required somewhat more expertise than being able to stay on the horse, hold a saber, and shout "Charge!" For the most part, promotion in naval officer ranks was solely based on merit or seniority. On the downside, an aspiring midshipman had to start early and practically devote his entire life to the service. When he began his naval career, Nelson was 12 years old.

## *The Wreckage of Hatred and Obsession*

Socrates almost certainly knew much about the darker corners into which often human nature hides. He commented that “From the deepest desires often comes the deadliest hate.” Small wonder those he routinely made uncomfortable by his musings slipped him a hemlock cocktail!



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Henry Wood to the enemy as he undertook a desperate mission to seek aid for their sieged outpost was clearly the action of an unbalanced mind, especially considering that nobody, including himself, expected that relief would arrive the following day.

Had the relief column been delayed, things would have taken a fatal turn for everyone. Barclay had to have realized that, yet he was so ob-

In Barclay's case there is little doubt that his desire for Nancy quickly slid into obsession. His irrationality reached Shakespearean proportions. Not only did he coldly planned the destruction of his hated rival, but to attain it he was willing to risk now only his life, but hers and those of all the other unfortunates trapped by the mutineers. His betrayal of



Courtesy of ITV Granada

essed by his hatred and desire that he evidently did not care as long as he knew that his rival was dead.

Ironically, he profited mightily from his wrongdoing. He married a brokenhearted Nancy Devoy, and as one of the heroic defenders of Bhurtee, his career prospered and he progressed to finally command the regiment in which he served as an enlisted man.

As a boy, I remember watching a cartoon in which a good and loyal dog is framed by an evil cat to appear guilty of very bad things. Towards the end, the discouraged mutt having lost everything drags himself to the feet of a statue of Justitia, and



Courtesy of ITV Granada

pounds on its base, tears rolling down his face over the unfairness of everything that happened to him. In the final scene, one of the balances comes loose from the scale the Goddess of Justice holds and hits him on the head. Different story, same result.

In this case there are two victims. Henry Wood is, of course, the obvious one. His future was taken from him leaving him destined to wander harsh lands dragging a shattered body. He spent what should have been the best years of his life as a crippled nomad barely able to keep body and soul to-

gether, a bare step away from beggary. But there was not only the physical agony to torture him; he daily had to suffer the consequences of his deformities, but the mental agony of memory as well. Had he really killed Barclay, it would not be too farfetched to say that he avenged his own murder.

Unquestionably, Nancy Barclay is the second victim. After having lost the man she loved, eventually—perhaps even encouraged by her own father—she came to accept what must have been Barclay’s insistent attentions. She embarked with him on a loveless and childless marriage. Regardless of the love and affection that Barclay may have lavished upon her she was unable to fully reciprocate. Her heart was permanently broken, and at times she may have even felt that she was somehow being unfaithful to Wood, resenting her husband for having survived. Eventually, similarly to what happens

with so many arranged marriages, she came to develop a modicum of acceptance, if not affection, towards Barclay, consoling the lifeless part of her feelings with religion and good works.

She is one of the Canon’s most tragic characters. Her agonized, bitter cry echoes with pain and anger, “What can be done now? What can be done now? Give me back my life. I will never so much as breathe the same air with you again! You coward! You coward!” However, nothing could be done about those stolen and wasted years. Even worse, the empty years to follow promised to be even bleaker and more loveless than those which preceded them.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

In view of all this, Holmes’ assurance to Wood that, “You have at least the satisfaction of knowing that for thirty years of his life his conscience bitterly reproached him for this wicked deed,” has an asphyxiating leaden ring.

In the end, it must be conceded that Barclay came up the winner. He enjoyed a long and honored career with the woman he loved at his side, and when the reckoning came, the shock and fear that killed him were short-lived.

### *What else happened in 1889:*

#### *Empire*

Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

Transvaal claimed to be “encircled” by Rhodes’ concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

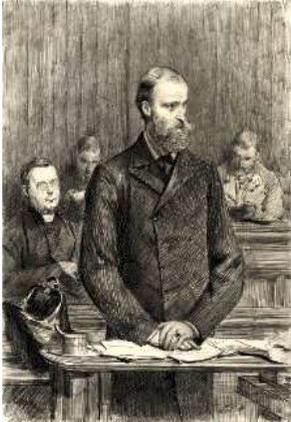
At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. He is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.

## *Britain*

Great London Dockers' Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers' unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers' favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.



◀ Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.

Establishment of the telephone company.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

Early used of photographs in newspaper: *Illustrated London News* runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

## *World*



Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

*Wall Street Journal* begins publishing.

◀ President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.

U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.

Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.

Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.



End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

◀ Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolf refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.



King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic "Land Captains" replace elected JPs in Russia.

◀ Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to

life imprisonment.

Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

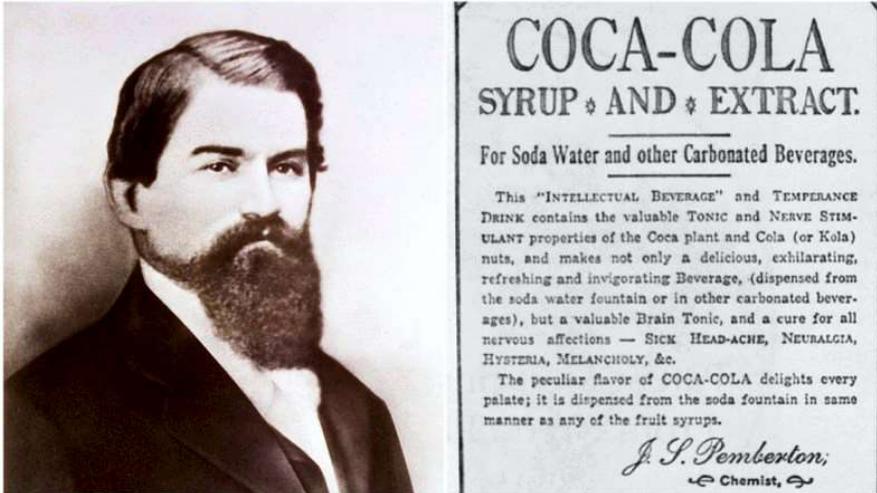
Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.

Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.

Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.



Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

◀ The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.

Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General

Hippolyte, who becomes president.

Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

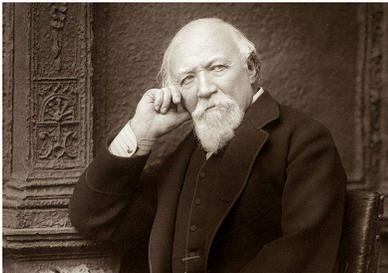
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

### **Art**

Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.



Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

◀ Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.

Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.

Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

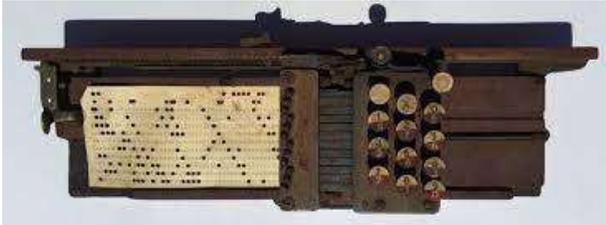
Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

## *Science and Technology*

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.

Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.



Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting in San Francisco, California.

◀ Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his "Navigable Balloon."

The first jukebox makes its debut at the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.



The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

◀ William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

First linotype machine in use.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

*Next week's case: RESI.*

Respectfully submitted,

*Murray, the Courageous Orderly*

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly..."

**If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at [CourageousMurray@aol.com](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

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