



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXIII -- The Adventure of the Resident Patient

Now here's a funny coincidence. Just after I finished looking over this week's story, I picked up something from the Wodehouse collection and happened to come across this passage: "Sir Roderick Glossop... is always called a nerve specialist, because it sounds better, but everybody knows that he's really a sort of janitor to the looneybin. I mean to say, when your uncle the Duke begins to feel the strain a bit and you find him in the blue drawing-room sticking straws in his hair, old Glossop is the first person you send for." Well, Percy Trevelyan happened to be a nerve specialist, and there were certainly some crazy goings-on at 403 Brook Street, where the Hounds will now gather to pursue the case of "The Resident Patient."

Obscure Nervous Lesions: Watson leads us right to the mental question when he describes the "somewhat incoherent series of Memoirs with which I have endeavoured to illustrate the mental peculiarities of my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes." Mental peculiarities, eh? The story begins with a mind-reading sequence, of all things, and although this incident was lifted from the previously-written but censored story of "The Cardboard Box," there is something appropriate



about putting it at the front of a story about a nerve-disease doctor – "janitor to the looneybin?" Isn't it interesting that Watson, a former army surgeon, had actually read Dr. Trevelyan's monograph on "obscure nervous lesions?" Was it a coincidence, or was there a reason why Watson was well-versed in the literature of nervous complaints? Did he have any worries about his own or Holmes's sanity? Is there any Canonical evidence that either Holmes or Watson was not "Quite Right?" If Blessington hadn't been a criminal, his arrangement with Dr. Percy Trevelyan would have been a pretty good one. Was this sort of thing more common in Holmes's day, or was the idea of investing in a young doctor (or lawyer, artist or musician) every bit as unusual as we would consider such a set-up today?

More learned Hounds will correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that "Lady Day," the day Dr. Trevelyan moved into Brook Street, is March 25, and is the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. Beyond the fact that Lady Day was one of the usual "quarter days" when a term of tenancy would logically begin, can we attach any significance to the fact that Trevelyan mentioned that particular day even though it made no difference to his subsequent story? Is there a religious connotation? A mathematical symmetry?

The doctor is innocent: At first reading, the obvious suspect in this case is Dr. Trevelyan himself – Watson even says so. Holmes assured him that the doctor was not the culprit, but was the evidence of those oversized footprints really sufficient to put the doctor in the clear? After all, Trevelyan was supposed to be a clever man, and it might easily occur to him to trespass into Blessington's room with disguised footprints.

And even if there had been someone else in Blessington's room, isn't it still possible that Dr. Trevelyan might have been their accomplice? Had he grown tired of doling out three-quarters of his income to Blessington? Had Hayward, Biddle, and Moffat won the doctor's sympathy for their cause, or simply made him a tempting offer on top of his increased profit? If the doctor was not in league with them, is there any logical way to explain how the gang of bank robbers managed to fool him with their phony cataleptic Russian act? In fact, if the gang eventually arrived in the middle of the night to kill Blessington while the household was asleep, why would they have made an appointment with the doctor at all?

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