



An Inquiry into: "The Resident Patient"

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"The Resident Patient" was first published in August 1893 in *The Strand Magazine*. It is part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

Although our chronologists do not fully agree, as the table shows, the majority of them believe that this case took place in 1887, as the majority seems to think, then

took place in 1887. If the case did indeed take place in 1887, as the majority seems to think, then Sherlock Holmes was 33 and Doctor John H. Watson was 35.

Main Characters:

Dr. Percy Trevelyan, young successful doctor specializing in nervous diseases. Sutton, alias Mr. Blessington, Dr. Trevelyan's resident patient, who set him in a medical practice. A "Russian count and son" and another, posing as a page at the house, all of them members of the gang trying to get revenge on Blessington. Inspector Lanner of Scotland Yard.

Notable Quotes:

[N]either the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to [Holmes]. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country.

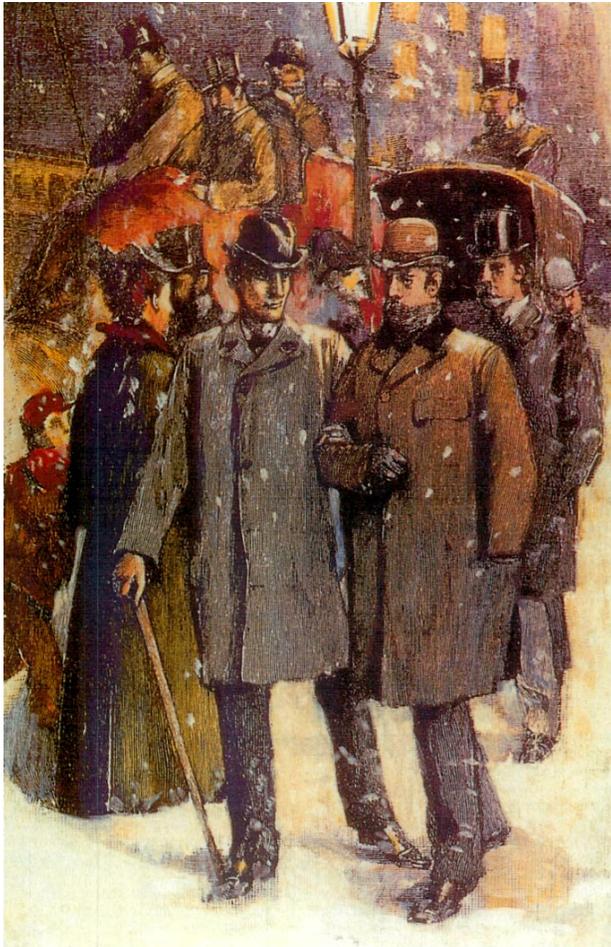
For three hours we strolled about together, watching the ever-changing kaleidoscope of life as it ebbs and flows through Fleet Street and the Strand. His characteristic talk, with its keen observance of detail and subtle power of inference held me amused and enthralled.

<i>The Resident Patient</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>October (or before) 1889</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Wednesday, October 6, 1886</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late October 1887</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>October 1886 or 1887</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>Late October 1887</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Thursday, October 26, 1882</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>October 1881</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>October 1887</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>October 1887</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Saturday, October 2, 1886</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1887</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Saturday, October 29, 1887</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.

An Understandable Case of Cabin Fever

In these days of enforced seclusion, it becomes very easy to understand Watson's feeling of being entrapped; as he put it, "I was weary of our little sitting-room," and broke. Then again, had this not been the case, he would not have fallen into what he so correctly defined as "a brown study" and shown us how sensitive Holmes had become to his friend's moods: "What do you say to a ramble



through London?" He then proceeds to distract him during their walk with his "characteristic talk, with its keen observance of detail and subtle power of inference, [which kept our medico] amused and enthralled," as well as taking his mind away from what he felt was his "shaken health."

In this particular case, the temptation to ponder about Watson's finances is quite irresistible. Why was the Good Doctor so down in the chips? One may hazard the guess that at least during that time, Watson had not gotten back in harness and thus, without a practice, he was forced to depend upon his war wound pension as his principal (and perhaps sole) income.

In *STUD*, Watson writes that this stipend came to a daily 11s 6d or, by today's standards to \approx \$1,500 per week. Although this is far from being a fortune, the fact remains that it is more than what a wide swath of Londoners (particularly East Enders) earned.

Some have posited that our medico had a gambling habit. This appears to be mostly based upon an exchange with Holmes that takes place in *SHOS*, when the Great Detective asks him whether he knows anything about the turf and Watson unhesitatingly replies, "I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension." The fact that our sleuth kept his friend's checkbook locked in his desk has also been brought forth (most likely unfairly)

as proof of a gambling weakness. Were all that to be true, this indulgence would have cost him slightly over \$39,000 per year.

I tend to think that the remark about his war pension was an exaggeration on Watson's part. Whatever gambling he did was more of an indulgence than a habit. By the time of *SHOS*, he was well-settled and had a considerably more comfortable income; his writing alone, which what *The Strand* paid for any story dealing with Holmes, would have given him a sufficiently comfortable living for him to reasonably regard his pension as disposable income.

So, if he was not an inveterate gambler, why was Watson so broke? It could have been any number of other things. In *STUD* he confesses that he had fallen into leading "a comfortless, meaningless existence, and spending such money as I had, considerably more freely than I ought." With very rare exceptions (and I am *not* one of them) we have all at some time in our lives found ourselves in such a condition.

The Puzzling Dr. Trevelyan

Whenever I consider the peculiar Dr. Trevelyan I must wonder whether Watson was not being extra discreet in this case. We know what our biographer very often disguised—or left out—facts in his ac-

counts of Holmes' cases. Here, this inclination might have been more pronounced than ever, considering that the case involved a colleague.

The first impression one receives of Trevelyan is that he is a young, talented physician who has made a brilliant career out of delving into the mysteries of the human mind. In fact, he had been so successful at his profession, that Watson, whose



Courtesy of ITV Granada



Courtesy of ITV Granada

practice was not specialized, had heard of him and read some of his works.

To begin with, it seems unusual that someone who showed so much promise and had even earned a prestigious award would not have been sought after by a university or hospital dealing with those kinds of cases. In fact, he was in what could fairly be described as a penurious situation when Blessington first sought him. Why would that have been? Then, when he seeks our friends' help he tells Watson that "My own hobby has always

been nervous disease." Hobby? Not specialization? True, he remarks that "I should wish to make it an absolute specialty, but, of course, a man must take what he can get at first."

"At first" perhaps, but by that time he was well established; hospitals referred patients to him.

Also, his way of discussing a patient's condition, particularly to a colleague, is somewhat vague. He says of Blessington, "His heart was weak, *it appears*, [my italics] and he needed constant medical supervision." It is almost as if he was uncertain as to whether Blessington even had a heart condition. Talking to Watson, I would have expected him to be more definitive and use more words of the art: arrhythmia, coronary artery disease, dilated cardiomyopathy, myocardial infarction, mitral regurgitation—anything but "it appears"!

What can one deduce from all this? The first assumption would have to be that either Trevelyan was not keeping as close an eye on Blessington as he claimed, or he did not believe that his resident patient really had heart problems.

For someone as dedicated as Trevelyan appears to have been—he had, after all pursued and seemingly succeeded in a difficult career and made his name in a very difficult specialization—he was singularly unambitious. According to him, from the very beginning of their relationship Blessington received a good return on his investment. As he put it, "A few good cases and

the reputation which I had won in the hospital brought me rapidly to the front, and during the last year or two I have made him a rich man."

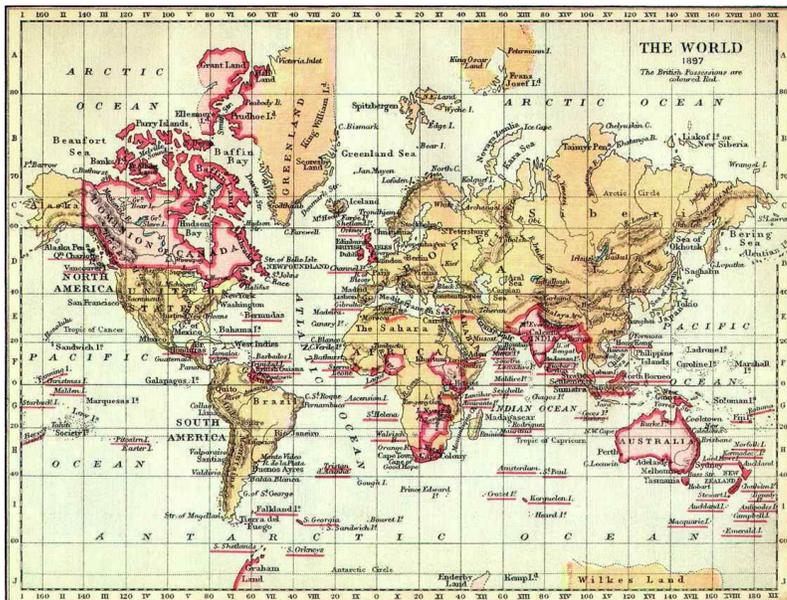
If Blessington profited enormously "during the last year or two," their relationship must have lasted at least some three years. By the time Trevelyan consulted Holmes, his patient had been able to get considerably more than just a fair return on his investment; so why the willingness by this well-established physician to continue a relationship in which he did all the work for a mere 25% of the



Courtesy of ITV Granada

earnings that he brought in? Consider that, on top of all this Blessington was offensive and turning peculiar in his behavior.

Blessington's Suicidal Decision



The British Empire

One must wonder why Blessington, with a nest egg of some £7,000 (about \$3,000,000), knowing that eventually his former partners in crime would be released, chose to remain in London, when he could have escaped (and lost himself) in just about any part of the British Empire? Anywhere he went, he could have lived exceedingly well. While it is true that one might successfully lose himself in that capital city, why not considerably widen the search horizon? Surely his former companions would not have had the where-withal to chase him across the world.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

To compound that stupidity, when he realizes that he has been discovered,

he resorts to putting bars of the windows. Did he truly believe that would ensure his safety?

Finally, one must wonder why, after having been double-crossed and left penniless, Blessington's "jurers" did not take the valuable contents of the large box. Surely that would have felt that whatever was in there belonged to them.

The Remarkable Mr. Holmes

It is peculiar to note, that although Watson almost invariably made every effort to showcase Holmes' methods and triumphs, here he comes out as being somewhat low-key, as shown by his comment that "the part that my friend played is not sufficiently accentuated." Good Lord, Doctor! What about the unerring deductions that he derived from the tobacco remnants and, building from there what he stated about the men who smoked them, their intent to sit in judgment of a traitor, and all about the hook and other paraphernalia! "Brilliant" is insufficient.

My dear Doctor Watson, in these matters, insouciance does not become you.

What else happened in 1887:

Empire

British East Africa Company charter awarded.

Zululand becomes protectorate.

First colonial conference opens in London.

Anglo-Russian treaty fixes Russo-Persian frontier along the Oxus River.

British Baluchistan, including Quetta, established.

Failure of former Prime Minister Gladstone's Home Rule Bill brings Irish affairs into prominence, Charles Parnell proposes bill for diminution of Irish rents, which is rejected. Arthur Balfour, Prime

Minister Salisbury's nephew, introduces new coercion bill, which passes as a result of fabricated charges against Parnell, accusing him of complicity in the Phoenix Park Murders.

Britain

Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 50th year as Queen, is celebrated throughout the Empire. The Queen drives in state from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, where a Special Jubilee Service is held. This event marks the end of the Windsor Retirement.



Britain annexes Zululand.

Independent Labour Party is founded.

◀ "People's Palace" first stage, the Queen's Hall, opens in East End.

Earls Court opens at entertainments ground.

Irish Coercion Act; Irish Land Act.

Charing Cross Road opens.

Allotments Act, Local authorities empowered to acquire land compulsorily for allotments.

Coal Mines Regulation Act, boys under 13 not to work underground, and under 12 at the surface.

Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith, opens after being bought by Metropolitan Board of Works.

Kilburn Park opens after being acquired by the City of London.

World

United States begins free mail delivery to homes of any community with a population of 10,000 or more.

China recognizes Portugal's right to the island of Macao.

Franco-German crisis over actions of Boulanger in Schnaebelle case. Boulanger fails to gain office.

German Reichstag dissolved; alliance of Imperialists, Conservatives, some National Liberals—the Kartel—give Bismarck majority in the new Reichstag; military grants renewed.

President Grévy resigns the Presidency of the French Republic and quits the Elysées the same evening. Riots break out in Paris when his resignation becomes public.

Renewal of Russo-German "Reinsurance" Treaty; and Triple Alliance.

Expiry of Dreikaiserbund.

Bismarck refuses permission for Russia to raise loans in Berlin.

Slave revolt in Brazil takes place near São Paulo. Troops are called out but slaves take refuge in the jungle and hold their ground. This accelerates the emancipation of slaves across that empire.

France advances Russia 350 million francs.

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher dies in the United States.

Italian force annihilated by Ethiopians at Dongola; designs on Tripoli conditionally supported by Britain and Germany.

Union of Indo-China formed by France.

New attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Moscow put under martial law.



General Boulanger fails in a coup d'état in Paris.

Macao recognized as Portuguese by China.

◀ Bulgarian parliament elects Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg as Prince. Russia, Germany, and France withhold recognition of the Prince. By the end of the year, Russia's attitude has grown so menacing that war appears inevitable.

Yellow River floods in China, killing nearly a million people.

Four of the eight anarchists involved in the Chicago Haymarket riot are executed; two are sentenced to life imprisonment, another for 15 years, the eighth commits suicide.

The Comte de Paris, from England, issues manifesto "to the representatives of the Monarchical party in France," urging his followers in the Chambers to defend Conservative interests to show France how desirable is the re-establishment of the monarchy.

Peaceful revolution in Hawaii. American and native residents, indignant at King Kalakaua's corruption, assemble in force and proceed to the palace, where the king consents to dismiss his Ministry and submit to a constitution, by which his own power becomes nominal.

The *Opéra Comique* at Paris is totally destroyed by fire. Loss of lives is never correctly ascertained.

U.S. Interstate Commerce Act, federal control of interstate railways.

Work begins on Kiel Canal.

General Chiang Kai-shek born.

L.L. Zamenhof devises Esperanto.

Sir Thomas Moore beatified by Pope Leo XIII. (Canonized, 1935.)

Art

Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, first Sherlock Holmes story, published.

Sir Hall Caine publishes *The Deemster*, a novel about the Isle of Man.

H. Rider Haggard publishes *She* and *Allan Quatermain*.



Thomas Hardy publishes *The Woodlanders*, a novel.

◀ Cézanne paints *The Blue Vase*.

Mallarmé publishes *Poésies*.

August Strindberg debuts *The Father*, a play.

Gilbert and Sullivan debut *Ruddigore*.

Singer Jenny Lind dies at her home in the Malvern Hills, England.

Hermann Sudermann publishes *Frau Sorge*, a novel.

Emile Zola publishes *La Terre*, bitter novel about peasant life.

L.L. Zamenhof publishes first book in Esperanto.

Claude A. Debussy débuts *Le Printemps*.

Monet paints *Fields in Spring*.

Sir John Stainer debuts *The Crucifixion*, an oratorio.

Van Gogh paints *Le Moulin de la Gallette* and *Boulevard de Clichy*.

Verdi debuts *Othello*.

Richard Strauss debuts *Aus Italien* and *Macbeth*, tone poems.

I. Donnelly publishes *The Great Cryptogram*, *Francis Bacon's Cypher in the So-called Shakespeare Play*.

Chabrier débuts his opera, *Le Roi malgré lui*.

Science and Technology

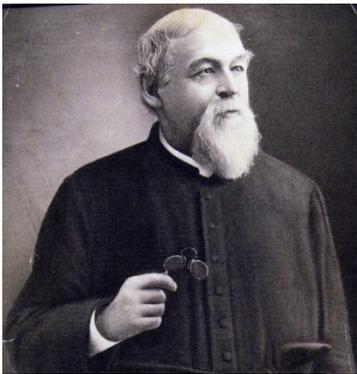
Radio waves discovered by Hertz.

Bauxite, source of aluminum, is discovered in Georgia.

Edison and Swan combine to produce "Ediswan" electric lamps for domestic use.

Mach defines the Mach Number, now used in supersonic flight.

Michelson and Morley experiment on the relative velocity of light in perpendicular directions; no speed difference found, results later lead to Einstein's Theory of Relativity.



Daimler four-wheeled motor car produced.

Emil Berliner improves the phonograph's sound quality.

Joseph Lockyer publishes *The Chemistry of the Sun*.

◀ H.W. Goodwin invents celluloid film.

Cyanide process used for the extraction of gold and silver proposed, ridiculed.

Svante A. Arrhenius proposes ion theory of electrolysis.

Phenacetin, an analgesic drug, discovered.

C.A. von Welsbach demonstrates practical incandescent gas mantle.

Construction of first British torpedo cruiser.

Next week's case: GREE

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.

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