



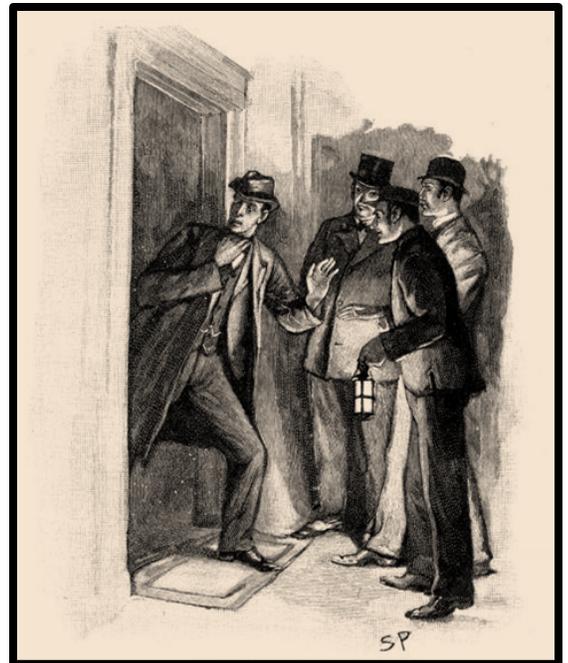
The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXIV – The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter

The Diogenes Club is an odd sort of place and an even odder place to begin an adventure that involves in kidnapping, assault, and murder. The opening includes a tour de force in the fine arts of deduction and inference as practiced by the Master Brothers, Sherlock and Mycroft Holmes. Then Mr. Melas, a well-known interpreter for foreign guests in London hotels, is asked to “step across” and the story takes a bizarre turn.

Mr. Melas relates how he is lured into a carriage for a professional interpreting engagement that quickly turns into his abduction. He is taken to a destination he does not know and asked to translate the Greek writings of an emaciated prisoner whose face is mottled all over with sticking-plaster to make it difficult for anyone to recognize who he is. By a clever trick of adding a question in Greek to those he is told to ask the prisoner, Melas is able to extract some information from the hapless captive, but his efforts are interrupted by a tall, dark woman who somehow recognizes the prisoner as her brother Paul Kratides.

The “interview” comes to an abrupt halt and Melas is warned to say nothing on pain of severe punishment and dumped on a desolate stretch of heath outside London. The next day Melas goes to the police, who do not believe his story, and so he confides in Mycroft, who asks his more active brother Sherlock to investigate. Through an advertisement, they learn of the whereabouts of the house where Kratides is being held, but by the time they get a search warrant and arrive, the ruffians — for there are two of them — have fled, leaving Paul Kratides dead and Melas, whom they had abducted again, nearly dead from suffocation.



In this adventure we meet Sherlock Holmes' older (and smarter) brother Mycroft. Mycroft is a sedentary creature who spends his spare time at the Diogenes Club, a place for "the most unclubbable men in London" where talking is absolutely forbidden. Diogenes was a Greek Cynic philosopher (412?-323 B.C.E.) and an exponent of asceticism, but he was cynical, not necessarily misanthropic. Why did the founders of the Diogenes Club name it after him? And why would an interpreter, whose business entails interacting with other people, belong to such a club?

Paul Kratides must have presented quite a spectacle with sticking-plaster all over his face and his mouth firmly shut with the same material. Why did Kemp and Latimer keep his mouth taped and force him to write his answers to their questions if neither of the former understood written or verbal Greek?

Said Wilson Kemp to Melas, "'We shall know if you speak of this...We have our own means of information.'" How would he and Latimer know if Melas spoke of the matter to anyone unless they learned of it in the media, as Mycroft so kindly "arranged" with his agony column inquiry as to Paul's and Sophy's whereabouts? Kemp and Latimer couldn't hope to have informants within the Diogenes Club, where speech was taboo. And apparently, their "means" didn't include the ability to learn that Melas first went to the police before consulting Mycroft.

It's quite evident that Kemp and Latimer wanted a lot of privacy in their choice of residences. Although Sophy was apparently free to move about the residence, and perhaps about the property, it's a good bet that she wasn't allowed to be alone for long or to interact with the neighbors. How did middle-aged Mr. J. Davenport come to know her – indeed, to know her "very well" — and her whereabouts?

When Melas and Paul Kratides were discovered shut up in a room with a charcoal brazier, Sherlock Holmes first noted that a match wouldn't burn in that poisonous atmosphere. Why, then, did he first call for a candle? Did he think a candle would stay lit when a match wouldn't? And had he forgotten temporarily that Lestrade had his lamp which could provide sufficient illumination from the doorway? After they got Melas and Kratides out of the room, why was Watson content with "one glance" at the latter? Wasn't CPR known in those days? Couldn't he have even felt for a pulse? And he used ammonia and brandy, hopefully not admixed, to revive Melas. Brandy is a stimulant, if you can get it down the throat of an unconscious person, but would ammonia be indicated for reviving a victim of carbon monoxide poisoning? (Or would it have been carbon dioxide?) Further, while someone may well have had a pocket flask of brandy available, where did Watson get the ammonia? Did he travel everywhere with his little black bag?

I wonder who clipped the “curious newspaper cutting” in Buda-Pesth, and how he or she knew to send it to Sherlock Holmes? And how do we know that the killings described in that cutting were of Kemp and Latimer? If Holmes was correct that Sophy had wreaked her vengeance, how could one woman accomplish that against two such ruffians?

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October 09, 1998