

Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes Adventure XXIV -- The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter

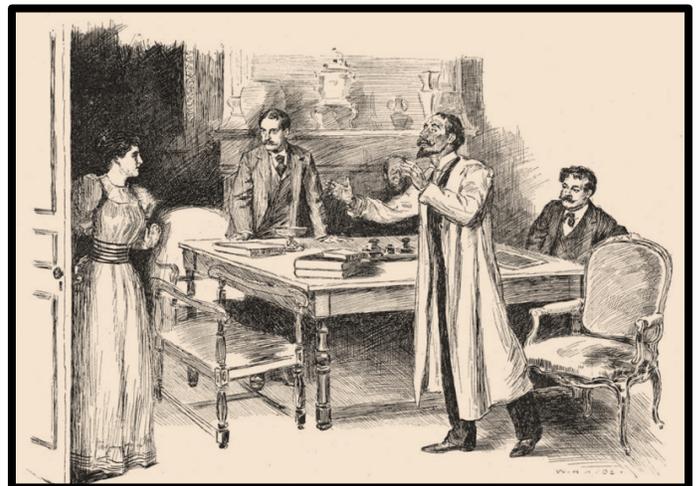
SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Sophy is on an extended visit with friends in London. She met Lattimer who “gained an ascendancy over her” and convinced her to elope with him. She wrote to Paul of her plans and he came to London to stop the wedding. Lattimer and Kemp captured Paul and tried to get him to sign over his and Sophy’s considerable estate to them. He refused to do so.

The conspirators kidnapped Meles to better communicate with Paul and further coerce him into signing away his fortune. After he had interrogated Paul, they turned Meles loose. He communicated the matter to Mycroft (his neighbor) who relayed the matter to Sherlock and Watson. Mycroft placed an ad in the Times offering a reward to anyone who supplied information as to the whereabouts of Paul Kratides.

Davenport answered the ad and the house was known. Holmes, Watson, Mycroft and Inspector Gregson went there to rescue the Kratides and punish their captors. They arrived to find Paul and Meles (whom the conspirators had re-kidnapped) in a room which was shut tightly and in which a charcoal brazier was lit, and generating noxious fumes, consuming the Oxygen and emitting Carbon Monoxide. Paul died. Meles recovered.

Lattimer and Kemp escaped, taking Sophy with them. Several months later a report appeared in the Times from Budapest that two Englishmen traveling with a Greek lady had argued, fought and stabbed each other fatally. Holmes was sure that Sophy had murdered them and staged the whole thing.



SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

On a summer evening, while engaged in an aimless conversation that has come round to the topic of hereditary attributes, Doctor Watson learns that Sherlock Holmes, far from being a one-off in terms of his powers of observation and deductive reasoning, in fact has an elder brother whose skills, or so Holmes claims, outstrip even his own. As a consequence of this, Watson becomes acquainted with the Diogenes Club and his friend's brother, Mycroft.

Mycroft, as Watson learns, does not have the energy of his younger brother and as a consequence is incapable of using his great skills for detective work:

“If the art of the detective began and ended in reasoning from an arm-chair, my brother would be the greatest criminal agent that ever lived. But he has no ambition and no energy. He will not even go out of his way to verify his own solution, and would rather be considered wrong than take the trouble to prove himself right.”

In spite of his inertia, the elder Holmes has often delivered the correct answer to a problem that Sherlock has brought to him. On this occasion, however, it is Mycroft who has need to consult Sherlock. Mr. Melas, a Greek interpreter and neighbour of Mycroft, tells of a rather unnerving experience he has recently gone through.

Melas was called upon one evening by a man named Harold Latimer to go to a house, supposedly in Kensington, to translate on a business matter. On the way there in Latimer's coach, Melas noticed that the windows were papered over so that he could not see where he was. Latimer also produced a bludgeon, laying it beside him as an implied threat. Melas protested, saying that what Latimer was doing was unlawful. The kidnapper replied that he would make it up to Melas, but also threatened him with unspecified retribution should the evening's business ever be made public.

For approximately two hours they drove, at last arriving at a house. It was dark, and Melas only got a general impression of a large property as he was hustled out of the coach and into the house. The house itself was poorly lit, but Melas made out that it was quite big. In the room into which he was led by Latimer and another, nervous, giggling gentleman—whose name is later discovered to be Wilson Kemp—Melas noticed a deep-pile carpet, a high marble mantel, and a suit of Japanese armour.

Another man was brought into the room. He was thin and emaciated and had sticking plaster all over his face, and a bandage sealing his mouth. Melas knew then that things were not right. Melas was sly enough to observe that his kidnappers were utterly ignorant of Greek, and used this to find out some information. While Latimer and his giggling companion had Melas translate demands that this man sign some papers, Melas added his own short questions to the dialogue. The man not only answered Latimer that he would

never sign these papers, but he also answered Melas that his name was Kratides, that he had been in London for three weeks, that he had no idea what house he was in, and that his captors at the house were starving him. He wrote all his answers, unable as he was to speak through the sticking plaster.

Much could be inferred from Kratides's answers to Latimer, too. Evidently, Latimer was trying to coerce Kratides into signing over property to him, and a woman was also involved. Latimer had warned Kratides that his obstinacy would do her no good.

Melas would have extracted the whole story from this stranger had the woman herself not burst in unexpectedly, but even that event furnished new information. She recognised Kratides as "Paul", whereupon he managed to get the bandage off his mouth and he called her "Sophy". They both behaved as though neither had expected to see the other.

Melas was ushered back into the coach for another interminable ride and was deposited far from his home on Wandsworth Common. He made it to Clapham Junction just in time for the last train to Victoria. He has now presented his story at the Diogenes Club to Mycroft, who asks his brother Sherlock to look into it.

An advertisement has already been placed begging the public for information. It yields a result. A Mr. Davenport knows the woman in question, and she is currently residing at The Myrtles, a house in Beckenham. Sherlock Holmes and his brother Mycroft, who received the message from Davenport, decide that they must go to Beckenham to see about this. Watson comes, too, and they decide to pick up Inspector Gregson, and Melas as well in case some translating needs to be done. They find, however, that he has already been picked up, by a nervous, giggling man brandishing a bludgeon. Holmes knows that this means trouble. Obviously the thugs know that Melas has betrayed them.

After the necessary legal procedures for securing a search warrant have been completed, the group proceeds to Beckenham only to discover that the house, which indeed turns out to be as Melas has described, has been abandoned. Tracks indicate that a fully loaded coach has recently pulled out of the drive. Breaking in, they discover Melas and Kratides bound in a closed room where some charcoal has been lit to gas the two of them: Melas recovers thanks to Watson's timely intervention, but Kratides is already dead.

Apparently, Kratides never signed any papers. It turns out that Sophy's friends contacted Kratides, who was Sophy's brother, in Greece to tell of what they thought was a bad situation for her with Latimer. He then came to England and wound up in Latimer's power. Latimer tried to force Kratides to sign over his sister's property, but he refused absolutely.

All that is ever again heard of the thugs Latimer and Kemp is a news story from Hungary describing the deaths of "two Englishmen who had been travelling with a woman". The official report attributes their deaths to a fight between the two of them; however, Watson notes in closing that Holmes believes Sophy to have avenged the abuse of Kratides and herself by stabbing both Latimer and Kemp.