



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXV – The Adventure of the Naval Treaty

Publishing History

25 of the 60 stories

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British illustrator – Sidney Paget

American illustrator – W. H. Hyde

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story as Tuesday, July 30 to Thursday, August 1, 1889 making it 24th of the 60. This means that Holmes was 35 and Watson 37.



Christopher Morley Says

“This problem – which Watson laid before Holmes at the appeal of Watson’s former schoolmate “Tadpole” Phelps – involved a document of great import, a secret treaty between England and Italy. Mr. Phelps was entrusted with the responsibility of copying the papers, but he made the mistake of leaving them on his desk while he went for a cup of coffee. – The easy way in which state documents are left about is always an amusing feature of these stories.”

Dummies Short Summary

“A stolen military treaty shakes the British government and afflicts another man with *brain fever*. It also offers a surprising glimpse into the religious views of the Great Detective.”

How Many Words

At 12,701 words NAVL has the 56th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 4 classified as a theft of classified documents. The others were BRUC, LAST, and SECO.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 18th of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 16th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1889)

- British South Africa Company Charter awarded.
- Early use of photographs in newspaper: Illustrated London News runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews.
- Woolwich Ferry starts.
- Act to prevent cruelty to children.
- Establishment of telephone company.
- Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia.
- The Moulin Rouge first opens its doors.
- North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S. states.
- Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.
- End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed.
- Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.
- Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.
- Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.
- Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 stories high.
- Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.
- Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

- Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.
- Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait)
- Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet music.
- Eiffel Tower completed, 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, become highest structure on earth.
- Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.
- Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.
- First linotype machine in use.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Watson is married and living apart from Holmes who is still at 221B.

Dramatis Personae

- **Percy “Tadpole” Phelps**, former schoolmate of Watson and nephew of Holdhurst.
- **Annie Harrison**, engaged to Percy.
- **Joseph Harrison**, Annie's brother
- **Lord Holdhurst**, prominent conservative politician.
- **Charles Gorot**, clerk and fellow employee of Percy.
- **Mr. & Mrs. Tangey**, commissionaire and his wife. He is a retired Coldstream guard.
- **Mr. Forbes**, Scotland Yard agent assigned to the case.
- **A Constable**
- **Dr. Ferrier**, accompanied Percy to his home on the night of the theft.

Quotable Sherlock

- “What a lovely thing a rose is! There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its color are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers.”
- "You are the stormy petrel of crime, Watson."
- “I suspect myself. Of coming to conclusions too rapidly.”

- “The board-schools. Light-houses, my boy! Beacons of the future! Capsules with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, out of which will spring the wiser, better England of the future.”
- “The most difficult crime to track is the one which is purposeless.”
- “Out of my last fifty-three cases my name has appeared in four and the police have had the credit in forty-nine. I don’t blame you for not knowing this, for you are young and experienced, but if you wish to get on in your new duties you will work with me and not against me.”
- “He’s a fine fellow. But he has a struggle to keep up his position. He is far from rich, and has many calls. You noticed, of course, that his boots have been re-soled.”
- “I cudgelled my brains until I fell asleep. . .” – Watson Note: Watson also cudgelled his brains in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (BOSC)
- “Mrs. Hudson has risen to the occasion. Her cuisine is a little limited but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman.”
- “Watson here will tell you that I can never resist a touch of the dramatic.”
- “I have a peculiar taste in these matters.”
- “The principal difficulty lay in the fact of there being too much evidence. What was vital was overlaid and hidden by what was irrelevant.”
- “Of all the facts presented to us we had to pick just those which we deemed to be essential, and then piece them together in their order, so as to reconstruct this very remarkable chain of events.”

Holmes’ Fee

There was no mention. (The Foreign Minister may not have been as wealthy as thought, given his re-soled boots.)

Unrecorded Cases

This one makes you want to know more.

- The tired Captain

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

- 1922 *The Naval Treaty* with Eille Norwood in his series of 47 Sherlock Holmes films, The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released

- 1968 *The Naval Treaty* with Peter Cushing in an episode of his *Sherlock Holmes* series. The episode is lost.
- 1984 *The Naval Treaty* with Jeremy Brett as part of the 43 episode series

Fainting In The Canon

In this story Percy Phelps almost fainted.

Annotated Sherlock

- **“list slippers”** Slippers made of list, a kind of cloth.
- **“the brokers”** Persons licensed to appraise and sell furniture distrained for nonpayment of rent; bailiffs.
- **“to chevy him”** chase
- **“Persian slipper”** a soft slipper with a pointed toe, often embroidered with a leather sole from Persia or Turkey
- **“secret treaty between England and Italy”** there actually was a secret treaty between England and Italy in 1887.
- **“putting on list slippers”** list means strips of cloth
- **“brokers”** modern slang is “repo-men”
- **“the board-schools”** these were red-brick, three-story Queen Anne-style building that stood in the middle of walled asphalt playgrounds. These were England’s first taxpayer-supported schools.
- **“Bertillon system of measurements”** Before fingerprinting, this system aimed to classify criminals through body measurements. Was adopted in France in 1888 and spread world-wide but was denounced in 1903 by an instance where 2 “identical” persons could only be differentiated by fingerprints.

Weapons

We have no real violence here, just greed and stuff.

- **Knife** - Which Joseph Harrison used to pry open Percy Phelps’ bedroom window, and which he later used to attack Holmes.

- **Hands** - Of Sherlock Holmes on Joseph Harrison.

Frank Mentzel