



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXVIII – The Adventure of the Empty House

Publication History

28 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, October, 1903

In the US *Collier's Weekly*, September 26, 1903

Part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* collection by

George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1905

McClure Phillip & Co., New York, 1905

British illustrator – Sidney Paget

American illustrator - Frederick Dorr Steele

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story as Thursday, April 5, 1894 making it 32nd of the 60. The means that Holmes was 40 and Watson 42

Christopher Morley Says

“This story first appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in London, and *Colliers Weekly* in New York, in October 1903. The American publication included the drawings by the most devoted of all Holmes’s illustrators, Mr. Frederic Dorr Steele. Those who were schoolboys in 1903 can well remember how we waited for the issues of *Collier’s* and families squabbled and cried “Dibbies on it first!”



Dummies Short Summary

“Holmes has been dead for three years when a lonely Watson becomes interested in the mysterious death of young Ronald Adair. But then this classic locked-room mystery becomes a shocking revelation: Sherlock Holmes lives!”

How Many Words

At 8,761 words EMPT has the 38th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 23 classified as a MURDER and one of 14 where the perpetrator was either killed, arrested, or otherwise satisfactorily handled.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle made it 6th on his list of 12 favorites.
- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #9 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1954 - The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #8 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1959 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #10 on list of 10.
- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #11 of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1894)

- Uganda becomes protectorate.
- Gladstone retires; Rosebery becomes prime minister.
- Tower Bridge opens.
- Turbinia, first steam-turbine ship launched.
- Blackpool Tower opens, 518 ft high.
- Sino-Japanese War (1894 - 95).
- Tsar Nicholas II.
- French take Madagascar.
- Alfred Dreyfus found guilty of treason.
- President Carnot of France assassinated by Italian anarchist.
- French under Joffre capture Timbuktu.

- Hawaii becomes a republic.
- Sicilian bread riots lead to martial law and suppression of Italian socialist societies.
- Italians defeat Dervishes at Kassala.
- Kurds massacre Armenians at Sassoun.
- Alexander III of Russia died; Nicholas II (last Romanov tsar) accedes to the Throne.
- War breaks out between Japan and China. Japanese naval victory at Yalu River; Japanese capture of Port Arthur.
- Baron Pierre de Coubertin initiates congress reviving the Olympic Games.
- Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book*.
- Anthony Hope, *The Prisoner of Zenda*.
- Oscar Wilde, *A Woman of No Importance*.
- Escalators introduced (U.S.).
- Halstead (U.S.) details his operation for breast cancer (mastectomy).
- Oliver and Schaefer discover the nature of insulin.
- J.H. Northrop (U.S.A.) invents automatic loom.
- Berliner modifies earlier work on the gramophone by using a horizontal disk instead of a cylinder. Not fully satisfactory until 1897.
- Guaranty Building, Buffalo erected. Metal-framed building

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Watson is in practice and living in Kensington with no mention of a wife. Holmes is presumed to have perished in the falls of Reichenbach three years previously. Then Holmes reveals himself. Turns out he was not killed as presumed, but had been traveling all over the world, to Florence, Lhasa in Tibet, Persia, Mecca, Khartoum, and finally Montpellier, in the south of France. Mycroft was in on it but Watson was not. The old quarters at 221B were preserved and the fire damage repaired.

Dramatis Personae

- **Ronald Adair**, murdered with an air gun by Moran
- **Von Herder**, a blind German mechanic who designed and built the air gun.
- **Edith Woodley**, previously engaged to Adair
- **Mr. Murray**, played cards with Moran and Adair on the afternoon of Adair's murder.

- **Sir John Hardy**, same as Murray
- **Parker**, a garroter and henchman of Moran who witnessed Holmes' return to Baker St.
- **Godfrey Milner And Lord Balmoral**, lost £400 to Moran and Adair a few weeks before Adair's murder.
- **Sigerson**, an alias used by Holmes while he was presumed dead.
- **Monsieur Oscar Meunier**, of Grenoble -- fashioned the mannequin.

Quotable Sherlock

- "It is no joke when a tall man has to take a foot off his stature for several hours on end."
- "Well, then, about the chasm. I had no serious difficulty in getting out of it, for the very simple reason that I was never in it."
- "I have some knowledge, however, of baritsu, or the Japanese system of wrestling, which has more than once been very useful to me."
- "It was not a pleasant business, Watson. The fall roared beneath me. I am not a fanciful person, but I give you my word that I seemed to hear Moriarty's voice screaming at me out of the abyss."
- "I think you want a little unofficial help. Three undetected murders in one year won't do, Lestrade. But you handled the Molesey Mystery with less than your usual -- that's to say, you handled it fairly well."
- "My collection of M's is a fine one."
- "There are some trees, Watson, which grow to a certain height and then suddenly develop some unsightly eccentricity. You will see it often in humans. I have a theory that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his pedigree. The person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family."
- "My dear Watson, there we come into those realms of conjecture where the most logical mind may be at fault."

Holmes' Fee

There is no mention of a fee. If, as most Sherlockians believe, it is likely he was paid by Scotland Yard, because he did turn the murderer of Adair over to Lestrade.

Disguises

Holmes used a costume to help escape in FINA. This time he is an elderly bibliophile to come back to Watson.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

- 1921 *The Empty House* with Eille Norwood had it as the 12th of his 47 movies
- 1931 *Sherlock Holmes' Fatal Hour* (*The Sleeping Cardinal* in Eng) with Arthur Wontner
- 1980 *Hunt For the Tiger* with Vasily Livanov as an episode of the *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson* series
- 1986 *The Empty House* with Jeremy Brett in the BBC *Sherlock Holmes* series
- 1999 *The Adventure of the Empty House* as an episode in *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (Animated TV series)

Fainting In The Canon

Usually it is Watson to administer a sip of brandy to someone. Watson's own words on himself - - "I rose to my feet, stared at him for some seconds in utter amazement, and then appears that I must have fainted for the first and last time in my life."

Annotated Sherlock

- "shikari" Hindu word for a sportsman or hunter.

Weapons

- **Service Revolver** - Dr. Watson's and is mentioned in 13 cases. The but end of which to club Col. Sebastian Moran into submission.
- **Game Rifle** - Which Col. Sebastian Moran used in hunting big game - other than Sherlock Holmes and Ronald Adair.
- **Air-Gun** - Disguised as a cane, made by the blind German mechanic Von Herder expressly for Prof. Moriarty; which Moran used to kill Ronald Adair and attempting to do the same with Holmes.
- **Rocks** - Which were tossed at Sherlock Holmes by Col Sebastian Moran, after Holmes had succeeded in escaping Prof. Moriarty's clutches.
- **Hands** - Of Sherlock Holmes on Professor Moriarty (on whom he had applied his knowledge of Baritsu, which probably entailed other parts of his body, such a shoulders, hips, and/or feet)

- **Hands** - Of Prof. Moriarty, with which he grabbed Holmes on the ledge above Reichenbach Falls.
- **Hands** - OF Col Sebastian Moran, which he used to try to strangle Holmes.
- **Fist** - Of Mathews, which he used to knock out Holmes' left canine at Charing Cross Station. Unfortunately, we are told no more of this incident.

Frank Mentzel