



## The Return of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XXVIII -- The Adventure of Empty House

(...he's back)

#### First published in:

*Collier's*, September 26, 1903; *The Strand Magazine*, October 1903

#### Time frame of story (known/surmised):

First week of April, 1894, stated.

#### Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Watson in practice and living in Kensington, no mention of wife. Holmes presumed to have perished in the falls of Reichenbach 3 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.



#### Opening scene:

Watson goes for an evening stroll by the house of the Hon. Ronald Adair, recently shot and killed in a closed-room murder which had dismayed the fashionable world and interested all London. Watson observes the house and ponders the mystery, attempting to employ Holmes' methods in its solution, but without success. He does not clear up the problem. While there he mingles with the usual group of loafers and then bumps a

deformed, snarly old bibliophile. Later the snarly old bibliophile comes to see Watson, and turns out to be Holmes in disguise. Watson faints and Holmes revives him with brandy, the universal palliative.

**Client:**

None. Holmes is acting on his desire and the opportunity to finish off Moriarty's charming society.

**Crime or concern:**

Shooting death of the Honourable Ronald Adair, a young nobleman, after an evening at the Bagatelle Card Club. He was shot in the head with an expanding soft-nose revolver bullet, believed to have been fired from within the locked room. Later found to have been a longer range shot from an air-gun using the projectile from a revolver bullet. Shot was fired through an open window by an expert marksman.

**Villain:**

Colonel Sebastian Moran, late of Her Majesty's Indian Army, an old shikari and expert heavy-game shot, whose bag of tigers remained unrivalled. He had once crawled down a drain after a wounded man-eating tiger. Col. Moran had a tremendously virile and yet sinister face, with the brow of a philosopher above and the jaw of a sensualist below. He had cruel blue eyes, with drooping, cynical lids, and a threatening deep-lined brow. Not only that, but he had a fierce, aggressive nose.

**Motive:**

Col. Moran murdered Adair, so Adair could not expose him as a card cheat. Exposure would have cut into the handsome income he made cheating at cards, which he needed, now that Moriarty was not around to pay him.

**Logic used to solve:**

Holmes watched the criminal news, and the chance to get Moran came at last with the death of Ronald Adair. Knowing what he did, it was certain that Colonel Moran had done it. Having played cards with the Adair, he followed him home from the club, and shot him through the open window. There was not a doubt of it. Holmes had been long aware of the air-gun, noiseless and of tremendous power, made by the blind German mechanic Von Herder.

**Policemen:**

Inspector Lestrade and two constables, called in by Holmes. Lestrade welcomed Holmes back to London, and Holmes somewhat ungraciously replied, "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."

**Holmes' fees:**

No mention. It is likely he was paid through whatever arrangement he had with the Yard, because he did turn the murderer of Adair over to Lestrade.

**Transport:**

Holmes & Watson take a hansom to the empty house, by an indirect route. No mention of the diverse transport modes used on the long sojourn, but they must have been interesting.

**Food:**

Holmes & Watson had time for a mouthful of dinner before they needed go to the empty house.

**Drink:**

Brandy used to revive Watson after he fainted.

**Vices:**

After reviving Watson, Holmes lit a cigarette in his old, nonchalant manner, and puffed upon it while relating the story of Moriarty's death.

Following the arrest of Moran, Holmes & Watson returned to Baker St., where despite the draught from a broken window, they planned to spend time over a cigar reviewing the case.

**Other cases mentioned:**

The death of Mrs. Stewart, of Lauder, in 1887. Morgan the poisoner, and Merridew of abominable memory, and Mathews, who knocked out Holmes' left canine in the waiting-room at Charing Cross.

**Notable Quotables:**

“You fiend!” Moran muttered after his capture. “You clever, clever fiend!” You cunning, cunning fiend!”

“I trust that age doth not wither nor custom stale my infinite variety.” – Holmes, paraphrasing *Antony and Cleopatra* (Shakespeare).

**Other interesting:**

Holmes was saved from the precipice at the falls of Reichenbach by his knowledge of baritsu, enabling him to out-wrestle Moriarty in this all-important match.

Holmes refers to the 221B lodgings as “that picturesque pile”.

Back in London, Holmes was watched by Moran’s accomplice; Parker by name, a garroter by trade, and a remarkable performer upon the Jew’s harp.

**When all was said and done:**

“Once again Mr. Sherlock Holmes is free to devote his life to examining those interesting little problems which the complex life of London so plentifully presents.” – Holmes

**McMurdo’s Camp**