



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXXIII – The Adventure of Black Peter

Publishing History

33 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, March, 1904

In the US *Collier's Weekly*, February 27, 1904

Part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* collection by

George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1905

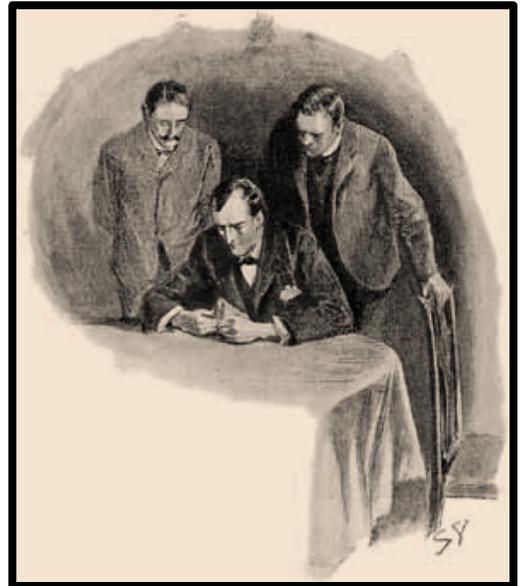
McClure Phillip & Co., New York, 1905

British illustrator – Sidney Paget

American illustrator – Frederick Dorr Steele

Chronology

Baring-Gould placed the dating of the story as Wednesday, July 3 to Friday, July 5, 1895 making it 36th of the 60. This means that Holmes is 41 and Watson 43.



Christopher Morley Says

“The adventure began with Holmes practicing driving a harpoon into the body of a pig hung up at Allardyce’s butcher shop, where Mrs. Hudson bought her meats. This has a bearing on the murder of the whaling skipper Pete Carey. The case introduces for the first time a young detective-inspector from Scotland Yard, Stanley Hopkins (born 1865), who Holmes considered very promising.”

Dummies Short Summary

“The solution to one of the grisliest murders in the canon (the victim is pinned to the wall with a harpoon) hinges on the location of a blood drop.”

How Many Words

At 8,181 words BLAC has the 32ND 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

- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 21st of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 28th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1895)

- Anglo-French interests begin to conflict in Nile Valley.
- U.S. intervenes in Anglo-Venezuelan border dispute, arbitration in Britain's favor.
- Construction of Uganda railway commenced.
- British East Africa Company surrenders Kenya as British protectorate.
- Liberals defeated at general election, Salisbury again becomes prime minister.
- First automobile exhibition in London.
- Electrification of first mainline railway.
- Japan takes Formosa (Taiwan).
- Germany, France, and Russia unite to compel Japan to return Liaotung peninsula to China.
- Treaty of Simonoseki, end of Sino-Japanese war.
- Cuban rebellions begin, U.S. protests brutal suppression.
- Dreyfus refused new trial by French President Faure.
- Armenian demonstration in Constantinople leads to massacre of 50,000 Armenians.
- Introduction of diphtheria antitoxin.
- Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* debuts. Later that year, Wilde is imprisoned.

- H.G. Wells publishes *The Time Machine*.
- Wilhelm Konrad, German physicist, experiments with Crooke's tubes and discovers X-rays.
- Ramsey obtains helium, first identified by its spectrum in the sun, in 1868.
- Thomas Armat, of Washington, develops modern cinema projection.
- King Gillette (U.S.) invents safety razor.
- Wireless telegraphy is demonstrated.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Holmes and Watson are sharing bachelor quarters at 221B

Dramatis Personae

- **Capt. Peter Carey**, a vicious retired sea captain who was a drunkard and made life miserable for his wife and daughter.
- **Neligan Sr.**, rescued from a ship wreck by Carey, robbed of securities he was carrying and subsequently murdered by Carey.
- **Patrick Cairns**, a harpooner on *The Sea Unicorn* who witnessed the murder of Neligan, Sr.
- **John Hopley Neligan**, son of Neligan Sr. He burgled Carey's cabin in an attempt to regain the stolen securities and clear his father's name.
- **Inspector Stanley Hopkins**
- **Peter's Wife**, a gaunt haggard gray-haired woman.
- **Peter's Daughter**, a defiant blonde young lady who was glad her father was dead.
- **Allardyce**, a butcher where Holmes attempted to transfix a hog with a harpoon.
- **Slater**, a stonemason.
- **Hugh Pattins**, a harpooner
- **James Lancaster**, a harpooner

Quotable Sherlock

- “If you could have looked into Allardyce’s back shop, you would have seen a dead pig swung from a hook on the ceiling, and a gentleman in his shirt sleeves furiously stabbing at it with his spear. I was that energetic person, and I have satisfied myself that by no exertion of my strength can I transfix the pig with a single blow.”

- “I have investigated many crimes, but I have never yet seen one which was committed by a flying creature. As long as the criminal remains upon two legs so long there must be some indentation, some abrasion, some trifling displacement which can be detected by the scientific searcher.”
- “have you tried to drive a harpoon through a body? No? Tut, tut, my dear sir, you must really pay attention to these details.”
- “One must always look for possible alternatives, and provide against it. It is the first rule of criminal investigation.”
- “It was a long and melancholy vigil, and yet brought with it something of the thrill which the hunter feels when he lies beside the water pool and waits for the coming of the thirsty beast of prey. What savage creature was it which might steal upon us out of the darkness? Was it a fierce tiger of crime, which could only be taken fighting hard with flashing fang and claw, or would it prove to be some skulking jackal, dangerous only to the weak and unguarded?”
- “There can be no question, my dear Watson, of the value of exercise before breakfast.”
- “One should always look for a possible alternative, and provide against it. It is the first rule of criminal investigation.”
- "I understand now, what I should never have forgotten, that I am the pupil and you are the master."
- "There, Watson, this infernal case had haunted me for ten days. I hereby banish it completely from my presence."

Holmes' Fee

There is no mention of a fee. Holmes worked for the Yard on many occasions, but there was never an explanation or mention of him being paid for his efforts. Since Holmes, like everyone, needed to buy his bread and cheese and pay other expenses, it is reasonable to believe he had some sort of retainer arrangement. This would also explain the common result of Holmes' not taking credit for his solutions.

(Of the fully recorded cases there are at least nine, REIG, BLAC, SIXN, GOLD, ABBE, CARD, DYIN, STUD, VALL, in which Holmes participated solely in order to assist the police...For Holmes there can have been little reward save the experience, and the privilege of paying his own expenses in following up

Disguises

Holmes disguises as Captain Basil (longer before Rathbone) to help solve the crime.

Unrecorded Cases

We have 2 of the most popular of the untold tales that people turn into pastiches.

- The sudden death of Cardinal Tosca. The Pope himself commissioned Holmes to solve the case.
- Wilson the notorious canary trainer

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

This tale has been on the screen only twice. One is waiting to be restored and one is lost.

- 1922 Black Peter with Eille Norwood as one of his 47 movies. The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released
- 1968 Black Peter with Peter Cushing as an episode in his Sherlock Holmes Series. The episode is lost.

Annotated Sherlock

- **“the House”** Holmes is presumable referring to the London Stock Exchange
- **“ribston- pippen”** A variety of apple.
- **“great brindled beard”** brownish or tawny with streaks of other color
- **“Norfolk jacket”** a loose pleated coat with a waistband
- **“knickerbockers”** knee-length breeches worn by sportsmen

Weapons

- **Service Revolver** - Dr. Watson's and is mentioned in 13 cases.
- **Harpoon** - Which Holmes used to try to impale a pig behind a butcher shop.
- **Large Clasp Knife** - Used by Captain Peter Carey in his attack upon Patrick Cairns.
- **Harpoon** - Of Carey, which Cairns used to run the cutthroat seaman through, impaling his body against the wall.
- **Hands** - Of Sherlock Holmes used on Patrick Cairnes in defending himself.
- **Attempted Blackmail** - Of Peter Carey by Patrick Cairns, resulting in a very unpleasant incident.
- **Instrument** - Probably a whip or scourge, which Peter Carey used to flog his wife and daughter.

Frank Mentzel