



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XL – The Adventure of the Second Stain

Publishing History

40 of the 60 stories

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

In the US *Collier's Weekly*, January 28, 1905

Part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* collection by

George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1905

McClure Phillip & Co., New York, 1905

British illustrator – Sidney Paget



Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Tuesday, October

12 to Friday, October 15, 1886 making it 7th of the 60. This means that Holmes 42 and Watson 44.

Christopher Morley Says

“The fair sex is your department,” Holmes said to Watson. What was the secret concealed by Lady Hilda Hope, “the most lovely woman in London”? Lestrade is baffled – so much so, indeed, that he now looks like a bulldog, whereas in the early days he was always compared to a ferret. The Story of international intrigue and diplomatic secrets has complete charm in spite of its naïveté. In the introduction Watson tells us that Holmes has retired from London and “betaken himself to study bee-farming on the Sussex Downs.”

Dummies Short Summary

"This is one of the greatest cases in Sherlock's career! It has everything – blackmail, stolen state secrets, a jealous mistress, and murder. It also has one of the strangest crime-scene clues of all time!"

How Many Words

At 9,737 words SECO has the 47th 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 NAVA.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle named it as #8 on his list of 12 favorites.
- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #11 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1959 - The Baker Street Irregulars did not have it on their list of 10 favorites.
- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 20th of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 20th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1886)

- Jameson Raid in South Africa; British negotiations with Boers (to 1899) fail.
- Start of Kitchener's campaign against the Madhi in the Sudan (1896 - 99).
- Anglo-French treaty settles boundaries in Siam.
- Widespread famine in India, to 1897.
- National Portrait Gallery moves to present site in Trafalgar Square.
- First all-steel English building erected at West Hartlepool.
- Locomotives Act: repeal of "Red Flag" restriction; maximum speed raised to 14 mph.
- First modern Olympic Games are held at Athens.
- Utah admitted as state in the U.S.
- France annexes Madagascar.
- Italians are defeated by Menelek of Abyssinia at Adowa, resulting in Treaty of Addis-Ababa and end of Italian protectorate.
- Massacre of Armenians by Kurds and Circassians supported by the Sultan.

- Insurrection in Crete against Turkish rule.
- Beginning of the Klondike Gold Rush.
- First public film exhibition, in U.S.
- Wells publishes *Island of Dr. Moreau*.
- Nobel Prizes started, for physics, physiology or medicine, chemistry, literature, furtherance of the cause of peace.
- Guglielmo Marconi demonstrates on Salisbury Plain the practicability of wireless telegraphy.
- Rehn, of Frankfort, sutures a heart wound; beginning of heart surgery.
- Earliest record of water chlorination, during typhoid outbreak in Italy.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

At the time of the story Holmes and Watson were at 221B. When Watson finally wrote this story, Holmes had retired to bee-keeping upon the Sussex Downs and Watson was living elsewhere with or without a wife.

Dramatis Personae

- **Trelawney Hope**, Secretary for European affairs
- **Mrs. Hilda Hope**, his wife. The most beautiful woman in London.
- **Edwardo Lucas aka Monsieur Henre Fournaye**, international crook and blackmailer.
- **Madame Fournaye**, Lucas' wife, living in Paris.
- **Lestrade**
- **Lord Bellinger**, premier of Britain.
- **Oberstein**, international agent
- **La Rothiere**, international agent.
- **Mrs. Pringle**, housekeeper for Lucas.
- **Mitton**, butler for Lucas.
- **Constable Barrett**, found Lucas' body.
- **Constable Macpherson**, admitted Lady Hope to the murder scene without authorization.
- **Jacobs**, assistant to Mr. Hope.

Quotable Sherlock

- "You are two of the most busy men in the country and in my own small way I have also a good many call upon me. I regret exceedingly that I cannot help you in this matter, and any continuation of this interview would be a waste of time."
- "If it's on the market I'll buy it – If it means another penny on the income-tax."
- "Now, Watson the fair sex is your department."
- "And yet the motives of women are so inscrutable. You remember the woman at Margate whom I suspected for the same reason. No powder on her nose -- that proved to be the correct solution. How can you build on such a quicksand? Their most trivial action may mean volumes, or their most extraordinary conduct may depend upon a hairpin or a curling tongs."
- "It is a capital mistake to theorize in advance of the facts."
- "Only one important thing has happened in the last three days, and that is that nothing has happened."
- "Come, friend Watson, the curtain rings up for the last act."
- "We also have our diplomatic secrets."

Holmes' Fee

Lord Bellinger, Premier of Britain tells Holmes "If by the aid of the powers which you are said to possess you can find such an envelope as I describe with its enclosure, you will have deserved well of your country, and earned any reward which it lies in our power to bestow." Could Holmes have lost his chance at a very big fee by pretending the letter had never really disappeared in the first place?

Unrecorded Cases

- The woman at Margate whom Holmes suspected because she sat with the window at her back in order to obscure her face.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

- 1922 *The Second Stain* with Eille Norwood as one of his 47 Holmes movies. The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released
- 1968 *The Second Stain* with Peter Cushing as an episode of his *Sherlock Holmes* series. It is lost.
- 1986 *The Twentieth Century approaches* with Vasily Livanov in the Russian *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson* series. Combines elements of SECO, & ENGR)

- 1986 *The Second Stain* with Jeremy Brett as one of his 43 episodes.
- 2001 *The Adventure of the Second Stain* as an episode in the *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (Animated TV series)

Fainting In The Canon

In SECO, Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope both pretends to faint and actually does faint.

Newspapers

- **Daily Telegraph (and Courier)** - Morning paper of London which was Liberal until the middle of the 1880's whereby it became Unionist. It became very popular for the middle classes. Established in 1855. Is considered the country's "other paper of record."

Annotated Sherlock

- **"Queer Street"** An imaginary street or place for queer people, especially for people who have become, or are likely to become, entangled in difficulties of any kind.
- **"salver"** a tray upon which food or drinks are served.
- **"a small broad drugger"** a rug made of coarse wool or wool and cotton

Weapons

- **Curved Indian Dagger** - From the collection of Oriental Arms of Eduardo Lucas, which Mme. Henri Touraye, his wife under an assumed name, used to kill him.
- **Letter** - Of a foreign potentate which, if published, would cause a major war, purloined from the possession of Trelawney Hope, a rising young cabinet minister.
- **Indiscreet Letter** - Written to Lady Hilda Trelawney Hole, wife of the above, by which Eduardo Lucas, the master spy, forced her to steal the above-mentioned epistle for him.
- **Collection of Oriental Arms** - Owned by Eduardo Lucas.
- **Chair** - Which Lucas picked up to defend himself against the attack of his passionate (and demented) wife.

Frank Mentzel