



His Last Bow

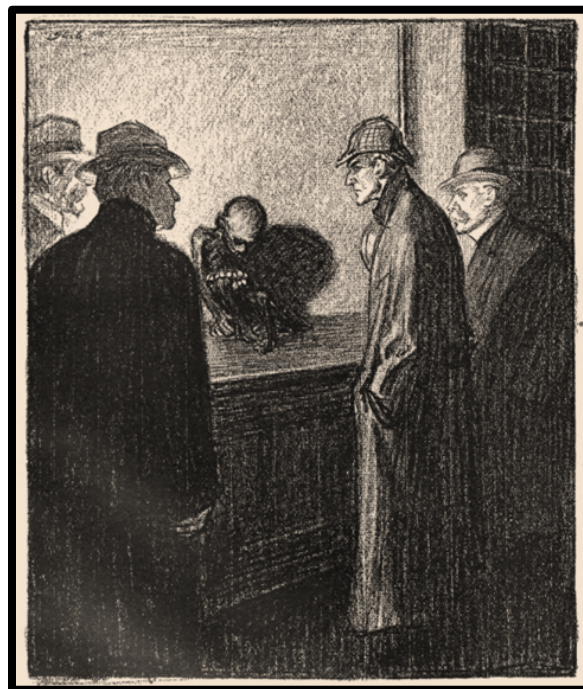
Adventure XLI -- The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge

The first time I read this story, I felt so sorry for Holmes! He looked rather foolish compared to the clever Inspector Baynes. Had it not been for his enlistment of the ex-gardener to watch over the gate and rescue Miss Burnet, Holmes would have come out of the case without any credit at all. It's been said on list that we are sometimes too quick to criticize Sherlock Holmes, but this is one where it might be difficult to see the positive side. In a moment, a few comments and questions to start off the Hounds' pursuit of the difficult and unpopular case of "Wisteria Lodge."

Inspector Baynes: Inspector Baynes is the rare member of the official police who was able to score a clear victory over Sherlock Holmes at his own game; so much so that Holmes seems almost superfluous to the story. I was particularly disappointed that Holmes had to be told the true identity of "Henderson." This is just the kind of thing that Holmes generally found out for himself! Why didn't he know it?

Here's an idea: Sometime during the Great Hiatus – let's say it was in 1892, the seemingly impossible date of this case – Watson, still interested in the art of detection despite Holmes's death, heard of the Wisteria Lodge/High Gables incident and decided to write up a detective adventure featuring the wily Inspector Baynes. Alas, no publisher would touch the story of an unknown provincial policeman, and the account never saw the light of day in its original form.

Years later, when Holmes had gone into retirement, Watson decided to work up the story as if Holmes had been marginally involved, thus ensuring that it would be published. This idea would explain some of the problems of the story. What do the Hounds think?



The difficulty of the situation: In my opinion, this is one adventure where the changes made for the Granada television version actually improved the story (if you leave out those annoying mirror tricks in the camera shots, that is.) We saw “first hand” many more of the people and scenes that were presented to us as third-person accounts in the written version. Even the somewhat forced scene where Holmes and Watson ended up inside High Gable at least gave us a glimpse of the terrible Don Murillo and his henchman, and seemed preferable to the pointless days Holmes spent with his spud and his tin box in the story as it was originally written. My reason for bringing this up is Holmes’s statement in “Wisteria Lodge” that he could not act sooner because, “There is nothing upon which we can apply for a warrant” to search High Gable. This doesn’t seem quite right to me. Did Holmes discuss the question of a warrant with Inspector Baynes before reaching this conclusion? It does not appear that he did. And why not? Because he didn’t want to tip his hand to the official police? Because he wanted the full credit for solving the case? What do the Hounds think of Holmes’s methods here? What was he waiting for? What should he have done?

Rosemary Michaud