



## His Last Bow

### Adventure XLI – The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge

John Scott Eccles had just undergone what he termed “a most incredible and grotesque experience.” So jarring was it that he lost little time in consulting Sherlock Holmes, the explainer of the inexplicable. Yet just as Eccles was beginning to relate his story, who should visit 221B Baker Street but Inspector Gregson and another police official, looking for Eccles in connection with the mysterious and brutal death of his host of the previous evening.

After hearing Eccles’s tale of woe, Inspector Gregson was convinced that he had had nothing to do with Mr. Garcia’s death. But the circumstances surrounding that death were so bizarre that Holmes and Watson felt it necessary to visit the scene of the crime. In a few minutes, the Maître de Chasse will unleash the Hounds upon a scent which contains elements of despotism, voodoo, and vengeance. The trail begins in Latin America and winds through Europe before it leads to the body of a man, his head beaten in, lying in the Oxshott Common.

I sometimes feel that WIST started off like STUD may have: Too long for a short story; not long enough for a novel. For all its relative length, however, there isn’t much mystery or substance to the tale, IMHO. But I note the appearance of the redoubtable Inspector Baynes, who from all appearances is nearly the equal of the Master Detective, at least in this Adventure. Indeed, it was Baynes who learned the true identity of “Mr. Henderson” and his secretary through true detective work: checking “Henderson’s” travels back until his country of origin was revealed. Holmes did not trouble himself to do this.



Baring-Gould places this Adventure as having occurred in 1890; could it be that Watson delayed publishing the story for 18 years out of a sense of embarrassment for Holmes, who was at the peak of his powers in the 1890's?

Just the first couple of paragraphs brought several questions to mind:

1. No dictionaries, now, how would you define "grotesque?"
2. Is "Scott Eccles" a compound surname?
3. Why wouldn't a woman send a reply-paid telegram instead of appearing in person?

Gregson said that he was led to 221B by Eccles's wire to Holmes. Was Scotland Yard in the custom of sifting through the myriad telegrams sent throughout London and beyond each day? Or, if Scotland Yard inspectors had John Scott Eccles in view at the time he sent his telegram, why didn't they detain him on the spot, at Charing Cross Station?

Miss Burnet/Signora Durando was a governess to Don Murillo's children. It is inconceivable that she did not speak Spanish, particularly as her late husband had Spanish as his native tongue. Why **did** she write the fatal note to Garcia in English?

For those among us who are conversant with voodoo rituals, what might the mummified object left behind by Murillo's cook have been, and what did it symbolize? And for the medicos, would strong coffee rapidly overcome the effects of opium?

Miss Burnet/Signora Durando says of Don Murillo, "He escaped as you have just described." As **who** just described? The description of Murillo's escape from San Pedro is related to us in the form of a mental "flashback" by Watson. It was not spoken aloud. Was Miss Burnet a psychic, a mind-reader?

**Steve Clarkson**

**February 19, 1999**