



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

An Inquiry into:
"The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge"

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"The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" was first published in the September-October 1908 issue of *The Strand Magazine*, and in *Collier's Magazine's* August 15, 1908 issue. It is part of *His Last Bow*.

As the table reveals, our chronologists (surprise!) were unable to come to *any* sort of agreement. Because of this and although we all know that it is usually of dubious reliability,

I give precedence to Doctor Watson's dating; in this instance, 1892. In all fairness, our chronologists' differing estimates are a result of Holmes' disappearance into the Great Hiatus between April 1891 and April 1894.

During all this time, Watson (as did most of the world) believed the Great Detective to have been dead and if he engaged in any kind of investigation, the facts of it are forever lost to us.

Had the case taken place in 1892, Sherlock Holmes would have been 38 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 40.

Main Characters:

Scott Eccles, a respectable, dull English bachelor. Inspector Tobias Gregson of Scotland Yard, an energetic, gallant, and, within his limitations, a capable officer. Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary. Aloysius Garcia a young Latin, living in Surrey, one of Don Murillo's pursuers. Mr. Henderson, a.k.a. Don Murillo, the so-called "Tiger of San Pedro," former brutal dictator of that country. Miss Burnett, a.k.a. *señora* Victor Durando, member of the band of avengers pursuing Murillo.

Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary. Aloysius Garcia a young Latin, living in Surrey, one of Don Murillo's pursuers. Mr. Henderson, a.k.a. Don Murillo, the so-called "Tiger of San Pedro," former brutal dictator of that country. Miss Burnett, a.k.a. *señora* Victor Durando, member of the band of avengers pursuing Murillo.

Notable Quotes:

"I suppose, Watson, we must look upon you as a man of letters."

<i>The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Late March 1892</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Monday, March 24, 1890</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late March 1895</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1896, or 1898-1902</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>March 1894</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Monday, March 21, 1892</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Late March 1894</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Late March 1890</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>End of March 1895</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Thursday, March 24, 1892</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1895</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Monday, March 24, 1902</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

“My mind is like a racing engine, tearing itself to pieces because it is not connected up with the work for which it was built. Life is commonplace, the papers are sterile; audacity and romance seem to have passed forever from the criminal world.”

“You are like my friend, Dr. Watson, who has a bad habit of telling his stories wrong end foremost.”

“It is an error to argue in front of your data. You find yourself insensibly twisting them round to fit your theories.”

“But how come you into this matter, Miss Burnet? How can an English lady join in such a murderous affair?”



The Man of Letters

On more than one occasion we have witnessed Holmes being exaggeratedly heavy-handed with his criticism of Watson’s literary efforts on his behalf. However, this time although he again appears to chide his friend about his writings, it sounds as if he is doing it more in jest than in earnest. The way he puts his “criticism” seems to make this clear: “I suppose, Watson, we must look upon you as a man of letters,” and “If you cast your mind back to some of those narratives with which you have afflicted a long-suffering public....” Unquestionably, by this time Holmes had had to realize the positive effect that Watson’s narrations had upon his professional life.



Although originally there may have been a trace of envy in his disparagement, it is possible that Holmes probably realized that although his writing abilities may have been sufficiently adequate for monographs and other types of formal, scholarly

writing, when it came to fictionalizing his cases for publication to the general public, Watson had him beat by a furlong. I have always thought that our sleuth thought of himself as being capable of excelling in anything that he might tackle and his *amour-propre* might have been —however lightly—stung.

A Refresher in Gross Anatomy?

Successful and competent physician aside, in this instance one is led to think that, while in medical school, our biographer may have played hooky instead of attending the Gross Anatomy class.

I have always found it inexplicable that he, after having examined the voodoo implements found in the house, could have been so undecided regarding one particular item: “At first, as I examined it, I thought that it was a mummified negro baby, and then it seemed a very twisted an an-



cient monkey. Finally, I was left in doubt as to whether it was animal or human.”

Having seen more human remains than I would have wished for, in various conditions, I think that—overwhelmingly—most civilians would have been able to identify those remains as human or not. Any educated layman could have differentiated between the remains of an animal, such as a monkey, and those of a human being. The hands would be a dead (no pun intended) giveaway—man is the only primate with an opposable thumb. The shape of the legs and feet would have been another clue; few humans have what would appear as a set of four hands! Certainly, a single bone would have been far more complicated matter—perhaps even for a doctor unacquainted with forensics—but a *complete* specimen? Really Doctor!

Murillo's Hesitation and the Clumsy Minions

Whenever we study this case, it has always been a source of puzzlement for me Murillo hesitated in getting rid of the governess, particularly after he realized she really was *señora* Durando. Then later, he takes the enormous risk of taking her with him—drugged—as a passenger on a train—a very public conveyance. It would have been far safer for him (and his family) to send her to her Maker and stuff whatever was left in a trunk to be leisurely disposed of later. For someone so adept in avoiding enemies, he did not seem to be thinking very logically when it came to the lady.



Miss Burnet also acted peculiarly. Considering all the risks she was willing to take—and knowing the savagery and killing that the desperate men she was with were capable of—she claimed that had she known what they would do to García she would not have given them his address. Inevitably, one must ask oneself what else could she have possibly have thought they were going to do to him? Highly unlikely they wanted to invite him over for hot chocolate and churros!

When it comes to measuring brightness, Murillo's minions do not particularly shine either. I have always thought (and many Canon scholars have remarked upon this same fact) that Lopez acted stupidly

by attacking her before she had a chance to finish addressing the envelope. He then not only had to force the address from her, but ended with an envelope addressed in a different hand.

The late Aloysius García did not act very logically as well. He knew exactly the kind of prey he and his companions were after, yet the different writing on the envelope did not raise his suspicions. That it did not, surely led to his death.

Then there is the matter of the *corpora delicti*. Why would they not ensure they made García's body impossible, or at least difficult, to find? If they had



wanted to avoid burial, surely in that open country there had to have been somewhere a convenient well or even better yet, convenient outhouse in which to dispose of his body, which brings me to the second body—that of Miss Burnet, the body that never was.

However repulsive, the decision to murder García was understandable; unquestionably, the man was an immediate danger to all of them. Although Miss Burnet was as dangerous to Murillo and his cohorts as the rest of her band (it was she who led the others to him), his decision to keep her alive and not disposing of her as well makes little sense. Whichever way you looked at it, she certainly was more dangerous to them alive than dead.

Cupid's Arrow?

Holmes comments to Watson: “I may add that Miss Burnet’s age and character make it certain that my first idea that there might be a love interest in our story is out of the question.” I think that our sleuth may have been a little too quick to dismiss this first impression.

In light of everything that had happened, it seems strange that the ruthless Murillo allowed Miss Burnet to live. The question must be asked, why?



Let us recall how Watson described Murillo: “He had made his name as the most lewd and bloodthirsty tyrant that had ever governed any country with a pretense to civilization.” Perhaps the Tiger of San Pedro was wounded by one of Cupid’s shafts; after all, in classical mythology, Cupid is the god of desire, erotic love, attraction, and affection.

It is not too farfetched to conjecture that to continue her quest to remain with Murillo and keep track of

him, she may have been willing to sacrifice herself to worse than death and become more than a simple governess in the former dictator’s household. This would be a very plausible explanation as to why the bloodthirsty former dictator did not have her promptly snuffed out alongside García. A likely explanation for this is that he priced her very personal services well-above the possible risk that her continued existence might represent; especially if her freedom was firmly under his control.

It is well to remember that with his practice in disappearing by assuming different identities, aided by his considerable resources, leaving two instead of only one body behind would not have added much to his difficulties and risks.

Admittedly, the police would have tried to find the murderers of Garcia and Miss Burnet; however, the crime probably would have assumed rather quickly the reduced temperature of a cold case, especially as new felonies made their appearance.

The Impressive Baynes

One must tip one’s hat to Baynes. From the very beginning, it is shockingly obvious that he was at least one step ahead of Holmes. Consider how he surprised (perhaps “stunned” would be a better

word) our sleuth when he identified Murillo by the simple expedient of tracking his travels. The Great Detective must have recalled with a great deal of embarrassment how amused he was when Baynes arrested the mulatto. When Baynes stated his intent to continue on his own track it was al-



most as if Baynes was making fun of him, when Holmes warned him of what seemed like an error.

To add bitter icing on the cake, he quietly and comfortably watched Holmes (whatever happened to “That is what you may expect to see”?) as he cased Murillo’s house.

On top of everything else, had it not been for Warner’s decisive intervention, Miss Burnet would have been taken before Holmes detective was able to intervene; in fact,

he was preparing to attempt her rescue at the house, when she already had been taken away.

Even Holmes had to admit the inspector’s excellence, “You will rise high in your profession. You have instinct and intuition.”

Well done, Inspector Baynes!

An Uncharacteristic Case

This is an atypical case, in that both Holmes and Watson seem to have been slightly off their game. We have our biographer unable to tell man from beast when he examined the voodoo implements found in García’s house.

Then we have Holmes—arguably the top detective of his (or any) generation—being topped by what is essentially a country cop—Baynes. It is somewhat strange that Watson would have chosen to publish this case (we assume with Holmes’ accord), which does little to enhance his reputation.

Consider that Baynes was one or more steps ahead of Holmes in just about every aspect of this investigation. He was the one who identified Murillo, he was the one to come up with the ruse of arresting the mulatto to expose the others, and he was comfortably hidden while observing Holmes’ approach to the house.

Then, on top of everything else, Holmes misses the governess altogether, who is fortunately rescued by somebody else.

Except for Baynes, practically everybody in the case seemed to have problems in thinking straight. Even the Tiger of San Pedro, who we are told is a dangerous, ruthless, astute ex-dictator, who has been successfully avoiding his enemies, makes a bad decision which endangers him. It would seem more true to his character and that of his acolytes to have disposed of Miss Burnett in a quick, permanent way. Why drug her and risk attracting attention while helping a wobbly person into the train? It would have been far more logical to break her neck and take her with then in a trunk.

It does appear that with the exception of Baynes, nobody was thinking very logically.



What else happened in 1892:

Empire

Britain and Germany agree on Cameroons.

Cape-Johannesburg railroad completed.

Durand Agreement defines the frontier between India and Afghanistan.

Matabele War.

Britain



Salisbury resigns; Gladstone forms his fourth (and last) Liberal government.

Keir Hardie, first independent Labour Member of Parliament, takes his seat.

◀ Lottie Collins, music-hall star sings, *Ta-ra-ra boom-de-ay*.

Liverpool overhead electric railway built.

Imperial Institute opens in London.

National Mining strike.

World

Franco-Russian Alliance.

In Pennsylvania a bloody five-month strike fails at one of Andrew Carnegie's steel mills.

Prince Ito becomes Premier of Japan.

U.S Marines overthrow the native government in Hawaii.

The World's Columbian Exposition is held in Chicago celebrating the 400th anniversary

Giolitti becomes Premier of Italy.

Ivory Coast becomes a French colony.

Tewfik, Khedive of Egypt dies; succeeded by Abbas II.

of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World.

In Russian-ruled Poland, unrest among workers brings an attack sent by authorities that kills 46.

The Sierra Club is founded, with 182 charter members. John Muir is elected president. The club defeats an effort to reduce the boundaries of Yosemite National Park.

France captures Dahomey.

Baseball is officially invented.

Grover Cleveland elected U.S. president.

Pan-Slav Conference held at Cracow.

"Gentleman Jim" Corbett defeats John L. Sullivan, wins heavyweight boxing title.

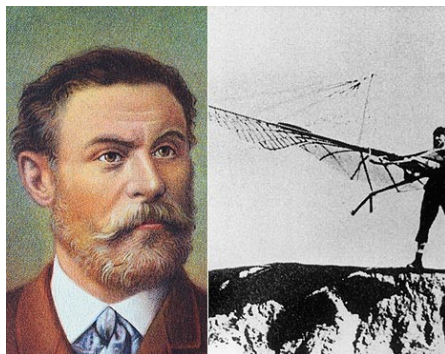
Art



Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Science and Technology

American inventor John Froelich develops and constructs the first gasoline-powered tractor.



Diesel patents his internal combustion engine.

◀ Otto Lilienthal successfully flies a glider, crashes in 1896 after some 2,000 flights.

Hermann Dresser introduces acetyl-salicylic acid, later to be known by the trade name of "Aspirin."

First automatic telephone switchboard introduced.

Henry Ford designs his first motor vehicle.

C.F. Cross and E.J. Bevan produce "viscose," which will lead to

the manufacture of rayon.

Next week's case: BRUC.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly..."

All Sherlock Holmes photos have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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