

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



His Last Bow
Adventure XLIII -- The
Adventure of the
Devil's Foot

THE DEVIL'S FOOT
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*
(Date when Dr. Leon Sterndale confessed)

CLUES:

1. Watson says, "It was ...the spring of the year 1897 ..." (955)
2. Watson also says, "...two men ... entered... out little sitting-room on Tuesday, March the 16th ..." (956)
3. The next morning Mortimer Tregennis was found dead. (962-963)
4. On the day that Mortimer Tregennis was found dead, Watson said, " ... we heard nothing from them (the police) for the next two days" (964)
5. That day Dr. Sterndale came to visit Holmes (966)
6. During that visit to Holmes, Dr. Sterndale confessed (968-969)

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply the case started Tuesday, March 16, 1897
- B. A and 3 imply that Tregennis was found dead on Wednesday, March 17, 1897
- C. B, 4, and 5 imply that Dr. Sterndale's visit to Holmes was on Friday, March 19, 1897
- D. C and 6 imply that Dr. Sterndale confessed on Friday.

Dr. Leon Sterndale confessed on Friday, March 19, 1897

*The story may contain other clues to the date of the adventure. However, use only the clues shown here. Your only goal should be to use logical reasoning to find a date based on the clues shown here.

THE DEVIL'S FOOT VOCABULARY WORDS

placid (955) – **calm or quiet**

lee shore (955) – **shore sheltered from the wind**

dun-coloured (955) – **neutral brownish gray**

Chaldean (955) – **language of the ancient Semitic people who ruled in Babylon**

Phoenician traders (955) – **traders from the ancient maritime country of southwest Asia consisting of city-states along the eastern Mediterranean Sea in present-day Syria and Lebanon. They were the foremost navigators and traders of the Mediterranean by 1250 B.C. and established numerous colonies, including Carthage, in northern Africa**

philology (955) – **the study of a particular language**

vicar (956) – **priest of a parish in the Church of England who receives a stipend or salary but does not receive the tithes of a parish**

parish (956) – **area served by one particular church of the Church of England**

portly (956) – **comfortably stout**

garrulous (956) – **tiresomely talkative**

Providence (956) – **divine direction**

palpitating (956) – **trembling, shaking**

obtrusive (957) – **undesirably noticeable**

whist (957) – **card game, a predecessor to bridge, played by two teams of two players, in which the last card dealt indicates trump; tricks of four cards are played, and a point is scored for each trick over six won by each team.**

- Helston (959) – **small town in Cornwall (population about 3,000)**
- villa (959) – **large, luxurious country house**
- ascetic (960) – **displaying a life of self-discipline and self-denial**
- neolithic man (961) – **people who lived around 10,000 B.C. in the Middle East and later elsewhere; their civilization was characterized by the development of agriculture and the making of polished stone implements**
- celts (961) – **Indo-European people originally of central Europe and spreading to western Europe, the British Isles, and southeast to Galatia during pre-Roman times**
- shards (961) – **pieces of broken pottery, especially ones found in an archaeological dig**
- grizzled (961) – **streaked with or partly gray**
- dog-cart – (962) – **a cart with two seats placed back-to-back; the name is derived from box under rear seat originally used to carry dogs**
- paroxysm (963) – **spasm, fit or convulsion**
- phlegmatic (963) – **unemotional**
- arbour (966, 970) – **shady resting place in a garden surrounded by climbing shrubs or vines**
- cogent (966) – **convincing**
- prevaricate (968) – **evade the truth**

THE DYING DETECTIVE OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Dr. Sterndale stopped beside a heap of reddish gravel just outside his own house, and filled his pockets with some of the gravel. (968) Later he “ ... drew some of the gravel from (his) pocket, and (he) threw it up at the window (of Mortimer Tregennis)” (968) Why did Dr. Sterndale bother to carry gravel in his pocket while he walked a mile to the vicarage? Surely there was some gravel or small stones lying around nearby the vicarage.

Perhaps Sterndale was trying to make it easy for Holmes to solve the mystery so he could tell his story.

2. Watson says, “Holmes’s iron constitution showed some symptoms of giving way in the face of ... (among other things) occasional indiscretions of his own.” (955) What could those indiscretions have been?

Perhaps Holmes had returned to his use of cocaine. Still, in *The Sign of Four* he claimed only to use cocaine when he was inactive and needed stimulation (90). This certainly was not one of those times. Perhaps, however, Holmes had experimented with other drugs which he thought could clarify the mind and invigorate him in times of stress.

THE DEVIL'S FOOT SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. What was the devil's foot?
 - a. a stinging sea animal
 - b. a large rock at the edge of the ocean
 - c. a powder which when burned caused either death or madness
 - d. none of the above

2. What was the last name of the family two of whom died and two of whom were driven insane?
 - a. Mortimer
 - b. Richards
 - c. Tregennis
 - d. none of the above

3. What almost killed Holmes and Watson?
 - a. an air gun
 - b. poison fumes
 - c. a large falling rock
 - d. none of the above

* The Simple Quiz is designed to determine if the student has read the story. Anyone who has read the story through should have no trouble in completing this quiz. The Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

THE DEVIL'S FOOT INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. Why was Holmes in Cornwall where the case took place?
 - a. he was invited to visit an old friend
 - b. he was ordered by his doctor to take a vacation
 - c. he was summoned there by a client
 - d. none of the above

2. Where was Dr. Leon Sterndale headed when he was called back by the vicar, Dr. Roundhay?
 - a. Africa
 - b. India
 - c. South America
 - d. none of the above

3. Why couldn't Dr. Leon Sterndale marry Brenda Tregennis?
 - a. she refused to marry him
 - b. his brother wouldn't allow it
 - c. he was already married
 - d. none of the above

4. What did Holmes do with Dr. Leon Sterndale at the end of the story?
 - a. turned him over to the local police
 - b. let him go to Africa
 - c. told him to stay in Cornwall for the remainder of his life
 - d. none of the above

[#] The Intermediate Quiz is designed to test whether the student has read the story with reasonable attention to detail. The Simple Quiz is an easier test while the Advanced Quiz is much more challenging.

THE DEVIL'S FOOT ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. What language did Holmes think the ancient Cornish language was akin to?
 - a. Celtic
 - b. Chaldean
 - c. Mesopotamian
 - d. none of the above

2. Which one of the following was NOT the first name of one of the Tregennis family?
 - a. Brenda
 - b. George
 - c. Henry
 - d. Owen

3. What was the name of the cook and housekeeper at Tredannick Wartha?
 - a. Mrs. Abernetty
 - b. Mrs. Hobbs
 - c. Mrs. Porter
 - d. none of the above

4. Dr. Leon Sterndale lived in a small bungalow buried in what lonely wood?
 - a. Beauchamp Arriance
 - b. Little Purlington
 - c. Tredannick Forest
 - d. none of the above

[&] The Advanced Quiz is designed for aficionados of the Canon. The questions are quite challenging. The Intermediate and Simple Quizzes are designed for the more casual reader of the stories.

ANSWERS TO QUIZZES FOR HIS LAST BOW

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Wisteria Lodge				
Simple	b	a	a	xx
Intermediate	a	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
Cardboard Box				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	a
Advanced	a	b	b	a
Red Circle				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	a
Advanced	b	c	c	a
Bruce Partington Plans				
Simple	a	b	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	b
Advanced	a	b	a	a
Dying Detective				
Simple	d	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	c
Advanced	a	b	c	c
Lady Frances Carfax				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	b	c	b	a

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Devil's Foot				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	a	c	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
His Last Bow				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	d	c	a