

# A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

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**His Last Bow  
Adventure XLV -- The  
Disappearance of Lady  
Frances Carfax**

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF  
LADY FRANCES CARFAX  
DATE OF THE ADVENTURE\*

(Date when Holmes rescued Lady Frances Carfax)

CLUES:

1. Whitaker's Almanac for 1904 notes that on August 15, 1903 "Miss Sophie Frances Hickman ... left the hospital about noon ... No trace of her ... could be discovered ... an active search was at once undertaken by police and by scores of amateur detectives ...".#
2. Sophie Frances Hickman is believed by some to be a 'model' for Frances Carfax. (see footnote #).
3. Watson says that in Baden, "This (the last time the manager of the Englischer Hof saw of Lady Frances Carfax) was just three weeks before ..." (944)
4. From Baden Watson went to Montpellier (945)
5. In Montpellier Holmes says, "Now, Watson, ... pack your bag I will cable to Mrs. Hudson to make one of her best efforts for two hungry travellers at 7:30 to-morrow" (947)
6. Watson says, "For two days the Hon. Philip Green ... brought us no news." (948)
7. Holmes says to Watson, "Ask what hour the Poultney Square funeral takes place to-morrow" (950)
8. Lady Frances Carfax was rescued as the coffin was being removed from the house for the funeral.
9. September 1, 1903 was Tuesday

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

# Source: Christ, Jay Finley, *An Irregular Chronology of Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* (The Fanlight House, Chicago, 1947) [Reprinted by *Magico Magazine*, P O Box 156, New York, NY 1983] p. 60

## CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply that Lady Frances Carfax disappeared on August 15, 1903
- B. A and 3 imply that Watson was in Baden three weeks after August 15, that is, on September 5, 1903
- C. B and 4 imply Watson reached Montpellier on September 6
- D. C and 5 imply Watson and Holmes returned to London on September 7
- E. D and 6 imply that no news was received until September 9
- F. E and 7 imply that the funeral was on September 10
- G. F and 8 imply that Lady Frances Carfax was rescued on September 10, 1903
- H. G and 9 imply that Lady Frances Carfax was rescued on Thursday, September 10, 1903

**Lady Frances Carfax was rescued on  
Thursday, September 10, 1903**

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF  
LADY FRANCES CARFAX  
VOCABULARY WORDS

cane-backed chair (942) – **chair with a back made from flexible plant branches of a willow or similar plant**

asperity (942) – **ill temper or irritability**

*pensions* (943) – **hotels or boarding houses**

derelict (943) – **ship abandoned at sea**

scrupulously (944) – **conscientiously; painstakingly**

adroit (944) – **skillful**

promenade (944, 945) – **a public place for a leisurely walk**

veranda (944) – **partly enclosed porch with a roof; the porch extends along the outside of a building**

Midianites (944) – **nomadic tribe with no king and no settled territory; there never has been a kingdom of the Midianites**

miscreant (945) – **villain**

swarthy (945) – **having a dark complexion**

*ouvrier* (946) – **workman**

*cabaret* (946) – **tavern or public house** (since 1903 the definition has changed)

cudgel (946) – **short, heavy stick**

salver (946) – **a tray**

mob cap (946) – **women's indoor cap with side-pieces fastening under the chin**

astute (947) – **shrewd and discerning**

Sea of Azof (948) – **arm of the Black Sea; lies east of Crimea**

ferret eyes (948) – **small, bright and penetrating eyes**

pendulous (950) – **hanging loosely; drooping**

unctuous (950) – **insincere earnestness**

emaciated (951) – **extremely thin from lack of nourishment**

## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LADY FRANCES CARFAX OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Watson says that the manager of the Englischer Hof in Baden told him that Dr. Shlessinger “ ... was preparing a map of the Holy Land with special reference to the kingdom of the Midianites ... “. However, the Midianites were a nomadic tribe with no king. There never was a ‘kingdom of the Midianites’. How can this dichotomy be explained?

**The manager of the Englischer Hof and Watson must have been a little rusty on their knowledge of Biblical events.**

2. Why did Holmes leave London and travel to Baden? Watson had already told him that “ ... Lady Frances had accepted the escort of the Shlessingers to London”. (945) Wouldn’t Holmes have been better off to have stayed in London to track down the criminals?

**Holmes must have felt there was more to be gained by being on the site as he did in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. This time Holmes was mistaken.**

3. Why was Holmes disguised as an *ouvrier*? (946) By that time the Shlessingers had left Baden, and there was nobody else who might be wary of his presence.

**Holmes delighted in dressing in disguises and was very good at it. He was indulging himself in this passion.**

4. Holmes says to Watson, "I cannot at the moment recall any possible blunder which you have omitted. The total effect of your proceedings has been to give the alarm everywhere and yet to discover nothing." (946) However, Watson (a) found the trail of Lady Frances Carfax, (b) learned she left Baden in the company of the Shlessingers, and (c) gave no alarm because the criminals had left the Continent three weeks ago. Why was Holmes so critical of Watson's performance?

**Holmes was angry that the investigation was not going well and took out his frustration on Watson.**

5. Holmes says, "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just." (950) What is the source of this quotation?

**Shakespeare's play *King Henry VI* (Act III, Scene 2, line 233)**

6. "Quick, Watson, quick! Here is a screw-driver!" (Holmes) shouted as the coffin was replaced upon the table. (953) Where did Holmes get the screw-driver?

**Apparently Holmes either (a) anticipated the need for some tools and concealed them on his body or (b) always carried some tools around just in case he needed them. Another possibility is that the Shlessingers left the screwdriver there after they had fastened down the lid of the coffin.**

7. Watson says, "... with artificial respiration, with injected ether, ... some flutter of life (returned to Lady Frances Carfax) ..." (953). Why did Watson inject the lady with ether shortly after she had been chloroformed?

**This is a very strange act for three reasons. First, ether would only make matters worse for poor Lady Frances Carfax. Second, ether is inhaled not injected. Third, Watson must have had an enormous black bag to carry ether along with the other usual contents of a physician's medical bag**

8. Holmes says, "These people (Dr. Shlessinger and his wife) had never, to my knowledge, done a murder. They might shrink from actual violence at the last" (954). If chloroforming a lady and then burying her alive is not violence and murder, then what is?

**Apparently Holmes meant killing Lady Frances violently, that is by stabbing, strangling or shooting her.**

9. Why didn't the undertaker question the need for such an unusually deep coffin?

**Perhaps the undertaker did question the need for the deep coffin. It would be interesting to know how Dr. Shlessinger answered the question. One answer might have been that it was their custom to bury possessions of the deceased together with the remains.**

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF  
LADY FRANCES CARFAX  
SIMPLE QUIZ\*

1. Who rescued Watson when he was attacked by Philip Green?
  - a. a French postman
  - b. an English policeman
  - c. Sherlock Holmes
  - d. none of the above
  
2. Where was Lady Frances Carfax finally found?
  - a. in a coffin
  - b. bound and gagged in a French hotel
  - c. wandering aimlessly in the streets of London
  - d. none of the above
  
3. Who had kidnapped the Lady Frances Carfax?
  - a. two French ruffians
  - b. the Shlessingers
  - c. the Prescotts
  - d. none of the above

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\* 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 DISAPPEARANCE OF  
LADY FRANCES CARFAX  
INTERMEDIATE QUIZ<sup>#</sup>**

1. What was the physical characteristic of Shlessinger that allowed Holmes to identify him as Holy Peters?
  - a. a torn left ear
  - b. a crooked nose
  - c. a decided limp with his left leg
  - d. none of the above
  
2. How was Holmes disguised in France?
  - a. as a common loafer
  - b. as a French ouvrier
  - c. as a French gendarme
  - d. none of the above
  
3. What was the relationship between Philip Green and Lady Frances Carfax?
  - a. they had been previously married
  - b. he had been her suitor
  - c. they were brother and sister
  - d. none of the above
  
4. What was unusual about the coffin in which Lady Frances Carfax was found?
  - a. it was made of cedar wood which masked odors
  - b. it was exceptionally wide
  - c. it was exceptionally deep
  - d. none of the above

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<sup>#</sup> 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 DISAPPEARANCE OF  
LADY FRANCES CARFAX  
ADVANCED QUIZ<sup>&</sup>

1. What was the name of Lady Frances Carfax's maid?
  - a. Susan Dobney
  - b. Marie Devine
  - c. Annie Fraser
  - d. none of the above
  
2. Of what family was Lady Frances Carfax the sole direct survivor?
  - a. the Duke of Carfax
  - b. the Baron Balmoral
  - c. the Earl of Rufton
  - d. none of the above
  
3. To what address was the coffin delivered?
  - a. 13 Firbank Villa
  - b. No. 36, Poultney Square
  - c. No. 31, Pitt Street
  - d. none of the above
  
4. How many men supported the coffin as it was being carried out of the Shlessingers' house?
  - a. three
  - b. four
  - c. six
  - d. none of the above

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<sup>&</sup> 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
<b>Wisteria Lodge</b>				
Simple	b	a	a	xx
Intermediate	a	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
<b>Cardboard Box</b>				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	a
Advanced	a	b	b	a
<b>Red Circle</b>				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	a
Advanced	b	c	c	a
<b>Bruce Partington Plans</b>				
Simple	a	b	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	b
Advanced	a	b	a	a
<b>Dying Detective</b>				
Simple	d	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	c
Advanced	a	b	c	c
<b>Lady Frances Carfax</b>				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	b	c	b	a

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