



# An Inquiry into: “The Adventure of the Creeping Man”

Vol. XII No. 32 • April 1, 2021

“The Adventure of the Creeping Man” was first published in *The Strand Magazine*, on March 1923. It is part

## *The Adventure of the Creeping Man*

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	Sunday, September 6, 1903
Baring-Gould	Sunday, September 6, 1903
Bell	Sunday, September 6, 1903
Blakeney	Sunday, September 6, 1903
Brend	September 1903
Christ	Sunday, September 6, 1903
Dakin	September(?) 1903
Folsom	Sunday, September 6, 1902
Hall	September 1902
Keefauver	Sunday, September 6, 1903
Klinger	1903
Zeisler	Sunday, September 6, 1903

*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.*

of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*.

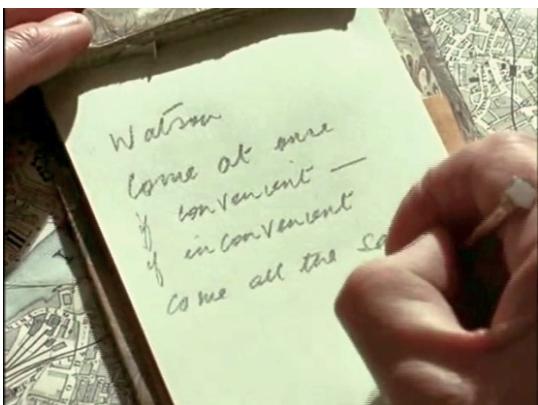
Although, as the table shows, there is not full agreement on the part of our chronologists as to the exact date in which the case took place, most of those cited almost unanimously agree on the date.

If the case took place in 1903, then at the time Sherlock Holmes would have been 49 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 51.

### Main Characters:

Professor Presbury, Eminent physiologist at the University of Camford. Trevor Bennett, amanuensis, lodger, and future son-in-law of the Professor. Edith Presbury, Professor Presbury's daughter and Bennett's fiancée. Alice Morphy, Professor Presbury's fiancée. H. Lowenstein, physiologist operating from Prague. A. Dorak, Lowenstein's agent in London.

### Notable Quotes:



When it was a case of active work and a comrade was needed upon whose nerve he could place some reliance, my role was obvious. But apart from this I had uses. I was a whetstone for his mind. I stimulated him. He liked to think aloud in my presence.

“The same old Watson! You never learn that the gravest issues may depend upon the smallest things.”

“Dr. Watson is the very soul of discretion.”

“Mr. Holmes is a well-known man. You cannot possibly treat him with such courtesy.”

“Always look at the hands first, Watson. Then cuffs, trouser-knees, and boots.”

"The highest type of man may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny."

"There is danger there—a very real danger to humanity. Consider, Watson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become?"

### ***Too much Self-Deprecation?***

After all that they have gone through together by this time, it seems strange that Watson would have such a low opinion of himself regarding his contribution to the Great Friendship. Summoned by

Holmes at the story's beginning, he tells us that he had become a habit for Holmes, "As an institution, I was like the violin, the shag tobacco, the old black pipe, the index books, and others perhaps less excusable," meaning drugs?

It is almost as if Watson not only describes himself as a habit of the Great Detective, but a bad habit at that! How could this be? He had to have fathomed his inscrutable friend's regard for him by this point in the relationship; after all, there had been more than one indication of Sherlock Holmes' deep regard.

For example, when Watson was shot in 3GAR, he describes it this way:

*Then my friend's wiry arms were round me, and he was leading me to a chair. "You're not hurt, Watson? For God's sake, say that you are not hurt!"*

*It was worth a wound—it was worth many wounds—to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.*

Courtesy of ITV Granada

And then:

*His face set like flint as he glared at our prisoner, who was sitting up with a dazed face. "By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive."*

Does this sound like Watson was merely "a habit for Holmes"?

### ***Doctor Watson's Omission***

There is a puzzling disconnect in Holmes' deduction that Professor Presbury was dosing himself every nine days with some sort of unknown drug of powerful effects. What led him to conclude this? The whole thing appears to have been a leap of intuition rather than something arrived at after a study of the available data.

The whole thing is made even more perplexing by the fact that at this time there were many drugs—now proscribed or under strict control—which could have been bought over the counter; back then, even Coca-Cola offered its drinkers a jolt of cocaine. The very popular laudanum was a panacea made up of about 10% opium (roughly 1% morphine) suspended in alcohol, which routinely was used by doting mothers to calm teething pains in toddlers, menstrual discomfort, and migraine headaches. After the Curies discovered radium, a number of products containing the radioactive el-

ement, such as toothpaste, clothing, and even suppositories appeared on the market celebrating its curative and health-preserving capabilities.

From what Watson told us, there was nothing that might even remotely indicate that the aging academic's recurring behavior was the result of the use of some unknown drug that he received from Bohemia; it could have been the result of his use of a cocktail of other, known drugs.

Unfortunately, Watson does not take us through the Great Detective's deductive chain. This inclines one to think that the omission might have been due to the fact that Presbury's drug, regardless of its undesirable anthropoidal effects worked—that is, it achieved sexual rejuvenation. That being the case, there would have been many men who, regardless of the undesirable transformation, would have been willing to endure the one to attain the other.

That being the case, and considering Holmes' fear for the future of humanity should such drugs and other life-extending nostrums worked, it seems logical that our biographer would not have given us a more complete picture.

### *The Giver of Youth*

To the obvious distress of many of our anthropoid cousins, endocrine treatments of this kind were a fad (dangerous or not, depending on results) during the 1920s. At the front of the pseudomedical crowd stood one Serge Abrahamovitch Voronoff, a French surgeon of Russian extraction. He quickly

attained fame and fortune during the 1920s and 1930s, for his monkey gland treatment, which primarily consisted of grafting primate testicle tissue on to men's.

Like Dumbo's feather of flight, the success of Voronoff's treatment on aging males anxious to regain the vitality that they had had during their teenage years only existed in their hopeful imaginations and in some cases may have improved performance, if only for a short

time. Eventually the ape mutilator came to the attention of mainstream medicine and after a series of investigations into his methods he was thoroughly discredited, making him the punchline of many a randy joke.

In view of how unlikely it is that a dose of monkey gland extract—regardless of the donor's species—would make the recipient reek of monkey or act like one, Watson was right when he concluded that an alienist was needed.

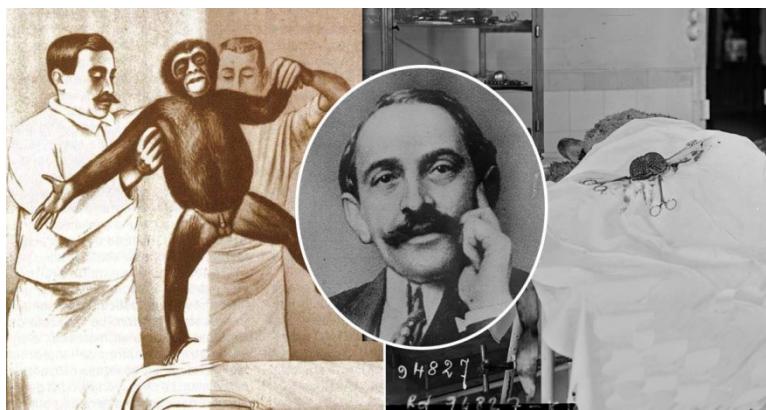
### *What else happened in 1903:*

#### *Empire*

Britain and France agree to settle disputes through International Court at The Hague.



Courtesy of ITV Granada



Coronation Durbar for Edward III, King-Emperor, at Delhi.

British expeditionary force sent to Tibet.

Alaskan frontier question between Canada and U.S. settled by arbitration.

Exchange of visits between London and Paris; Arbitration Treaty establishes Entente Cordiale.

## ***Britain***

Foundation of universities at Liverpool and Manchester.



Joseph Chamberlain begins Tariff Reform Campaign.

► Women's Social and Political Union formed to demand votes for women.

Establishment of Workers' Educational Association.

GRW introduces early motor-bus service from Helston to the Lizard; the initiation of bus services largely originates from railway companies.

Wyndham's Act—Irish landlords to be bought out; peasant ownership; repayments over 68-and-a-half years.

Road speed limit in England increased to 20 mph.

## ***World***



Dutch Democratic Labor Party formed; general strike suppressed by troops.

Russian massacre of Jews at Kishinyov.

Mursteg Program—Austro-Russian proposals to solve Macedonian problems fails.

► Alexander Obrenovitch and Queen Draga of Serbia assassinated; Peter Karageorgevitch elected king.

Russia refuses to evacuate Manchuria under terms of Russo-Japanese Convention.

Belgium introduces Old Age Pension plan.

Foundation Bank of Persia loans with large Russian interests.

## ***Art***

Barrie writes his play, *The Admirable Crichton*.

Degas, *Dancers in Yellow Skirts*.

First recording of an opera, Verdi's *Ernani*.

Elgar, *The Apostles*, an oratorio.

German, *A Princess of Kensington*, operetta.

Pisarro, *Bridge at Bruges*.

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*.

Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, a semi-autobiographical novel of middle-class life is published posthumously.

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands*, a novel.

Shaw, *Man and Superman*.

## ***Science and Technology***

First radio press messages published by *The Times*.



Tsiolkovski publishes paper on astronautics.

Orville and Wilbur Wright make their first flight in a heavier-than-air machine.

► Henry Ford founds his motor company.

Wilhelm Einthoven invents the electro-cardiograph.

J.J. Thomson publishes *Conduction of Electricity through Gases*.

Bertrand Russell publishes *Principia Mathematica*.

Phenobarbitone, a long lasting sedative, developed.

## ***Next week's case: SUSS***

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...”

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at [CourageousMurray@aol.com](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).

© 2021 Alexander E. Braun