



## Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

### The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes Adventure LI – The Adventure of the Creeping Man

#### SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married and has a busy practice. He says this was one of Holmes' last cases (Sept. 1903) and that the facts have been in the dispatch box for over 20 years. Holmes is considering writing a monograph on dogs in detective work, not for tracking, but because a dog reflects the attitude of a family: a happy family has a happy dog, a dangerous family has a dangerous dog etc.

Holmes has been contacted by Bennett who says that Roy had attacked Professor Presbury on several occasions before being banished to the barn. Roy has attacked no one else and is otherwise quite manageable.

Professor Presbury fell in love with his colleague's daughter and she reluctantly agreed to marry him. After the marriage, the professor disappeared for two weeks and would not tell anyone where he had been, but one of his former students told Bennett that he had seen him in Prague.

The professor has been radically different since his return: combative, more physical etc. "A shadow darkened his higher qualities." He is seen creeping about on all fours (Hence the title, clever, huh?)

Holmes deduces that he has been taking a rejuvenating serum manufactured from Langur monkeys by Lowenstein and supplied to Presbury via Dorak. Just after taking the serum, the professor is quite ape-like for an interval of several hours and likes to tease the dog while in this state. Roy breaks loose and attacks the professor. Fortunately, Holmes, Watson and Bennett are on hand to pull them apart.



Holmes says he will write Lowenstein and tell him he will be held responsible for the criminal effects of his serum. No further epilogue is given.

### **SUMMARY (Wikipedia)**

A man named Trevor Bennett, the personal secretary of one Professor Presbury, comes to Holmes with a most unusual problem. He is engaged to the professor's daughter, Edith, and the Professor is himself engaged to a young lady, Alice Morphy, although he himself is already 61 years of age. Their impending marriage has caused no scandal, but the trouble seems to have begun at about the time of the engagement. First, the professor suddenly left home for a fortnight without telling anyone of his destination, with the family later learning that he had been to Prague. Upon returning, Presbury unprecedentedly forbid Mr Bennett from opening certain stamped letters. The professor had also brought a carved wooden box from Prague, and became very angry with Bennett for touching it.

The whole household also observes severe changes in the man's personality: he has become furtive and sly, with changes in his moods and habits, some of which quite bizarre, though not impeding his functions. Bennett notes particularly strange incidents: one, in which he saw the professor crawling along the hall on his hands and feet, and his master swore him off; and another, witnessed by Edith Presbury, who saw her father at her bedroom window at two o'clock in the morning. Her bedroom is on the second floor, with no long ladder in the garden.

Further, the professor's usually faithful Irish Wolfhound has started attacking him (Holmes notes this happens at 9 day intervals), and has to be chained up outside.

Holmes and Watson go to the university city of Camford to see the professor. They pretend that they have an appointment, but the professor sees through the ruse, and becomes furiously angry at the intrusion. Bennett dissuades the professor from violence. Holmes and Watson leave, Holmes confiding to Watson that the visit has taught him that the professor's mind is clear and functional, despite recent behaviour. Bennett tells Holmes that he has found the address of the mysterious letters. The addressee is a man named Dorak, a Central European name, fitting with the professor's secret journey to Prague. Holmes later finds out from Mercer, his "general utility man", that Dorak is indeed an elderly Bohemian, who keeps a large general store. Holmes examines Edith's bedroom window, finding that the only way to climb up to it is using the creeper, unusual for a 61-year-old man.

Holmes forms a theory that every 9 days, Professor Presbury takes some drug which causes the odd behaviour, having become addicted in Prague, and is supplied by Dorak in London. Holmes also comes to

realise, by connecting the professor's thick and horny knuckles, his odd behaviour, the dog's attacks, and the use of the creeper, that the professor is behaving like a monkey.

Shortly after the realisation, Holmes and Watson are treated to a firsthand display of Professor Presbury's odd behaviour. He comes out of the house, scampers about on all fours, climbs on the creeper, and torments the tied-up dog. Unfortunately, the wolfhound gets loose and attacks the professor. The two of them, with Mr Bennett's help, get the dog off the professor, who is wounded badly. Watson and Bennett, also a medical man, tend to the professor's injuries.

Holmes then examines the professor's little wooden box after having obtained the key from the unconscious owner. It contained a drug, as Holmes expected, but also a letter from a man named Lowenstein, a quack. The professor had sought out Lowenstein's rejuvenation treatments, for his upcoming marriage to a younger woman. The drug's effects are explained as a consequence of being obtained from langurs. Promising to hold Lowenstein responsible, Holmes muses on the consequences of such drugs, and departs with Watson.