



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LII – The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire

Publishing History

52 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, January, 1924

In the US *Hearst's International*, January, 1924

Part of *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* collection by John Murray, London, 1927

George D. Doran, New York, 1927

British illustrator – H. K. Elcock

American illustrator – W. T. Benda



Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story as Thursday, November 19

to Saturday, November 21, 1896 making it 40th of the 60. This means that Holmes is 42 and Watson 44.

Christopher Morley Says

"The beautiful Peruvian wife of an English athlete (who played football against Watson) was suspected of being a vampire. She had sucked the blood of he own child. And why was the pet spaniel paralyzed? The best thing in the queer tale is Holmes's method of indexing his scrapbooks."

Dummies Short Summary

"When Bob Ferguson finds his mysterious South American wife sucking blood from the neck of their infant son, he fears he's married to one of the undead."

How Many Words

At 5,999 words SUSS has the 5th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 7 classified as fear of physical harm or public scandal. The others were COPP, CREE, GLOR, TWIS, SCAN, and 3STU.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle did not have it on his list of 12 favorites.
- 1959 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 52nd of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 44th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1896)

- Jameson Raid in South Africa; British negotiations with Boers (to 1899) fail.
- Start of Kitchener's campaign against the Madhi in the Sudan (1896 - 99).
- Widespread famine in India, to 1897.
- National Portrait Gallery moves to present site in Trafalgar Square.
- First all-steel English building erected at West Hartlepool.
- Locomotives Act: repeal of "Red Flag" restriction; maximum speed raised to 14 mph.
- Royal Victorian Order founded as Personal Order of Sovereign.
- First modern Olympic Games are held at Athens.
- Utah admitted as state in the U.S.
- France annexes Madagascar.
- French Tunisian protectorate recognized by Italy.
- Italians are defeated by Menelek of Abyssinia at Adowa, resulting in Treaty of Addis-Ababa and end of Italian protectorate.
- Massacre of Armenians by Kurds and Circassians supported by the Sultan.
- Insurrection in Crete against Turkish rule.
- Beginning of the Klondike Gold Rush.
- First public film exhibition, in U.S.

- Wells publishes *Island of Dr. Moreau*.
- Giacomo Puccini debuts *La Boheme* at Turin.
- Antoine Henri Becquerel, observes radiation from uranium affects photographic plates; discovery of radioactivity.
- Nobel Prizes started, for physics, physiology or medicine, chemistry, literature, furtherance of the cause of peace.
- Guglielmo Marconi demonstrates on Salisbury Plain the practicability of wireless telegraphy.
- Samuel Langley (U.S.), successfully flies a steam-driven model aircraft.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Holmes and Watson are sharing quarters at Baker Street as usual.

Dramatis Personae

- **Robert Ferguson**, tea broker of Cheeseman's, Lamberly
- **Morrison, Morrison & Dodd**, legal firm who referred Ferguson to Holmes.
- **Mrs. Ferguson**, a Peruvian whom Ferguson met on a trip when buying nitrates.
- **Dolores**, long time companion and servant of Mrs. Ferguson. A fellow Peruvian.
- **Mrs. Mason**, nursemaid to the Ferguson infant.
- **Ferguson Infant**
- **Jackie**, son of Ferguson by a former marriage, 15 years old, crippled by a childhood injury.

Quotable Sherlock

- “Matilda Briggs was not the name of a young woman, Watson, said Holmes in a reminiscent voice. It was a ship which is associated with the giant rat of Sumatra, a story for which the world is not yet prepared.”
- “This Agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain.”
- “We must not let him think that this agency is a home for the weak-minded.”
- “It is simpler to deal direct.”

Holmes' Fee

There is no mention of a fee. This is probably because the fee as client is a friend of Watson.

Unrecorded Cases

One of our longest lists. Several unwritten cases. “The giant rat of Sumatra” Has had more pastiches than any.

- The case of *Matilda Briggs*; associated with the giant rat of Sumatra – a story for which the world is not yet prepared.
- Victor Lynch, the forger.
- The case of the venomous lizard
- Vittoria the circus belle
- Vanderbilt and the Yeggman
- Vigor, the Hammersmith wonder
- Vipers

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

This tale has been on a screen only twice. Subject matter or just a dull story?

- 1992 *The Sussex Vampire* with Jeremy Brett in his 43 episode *Sherlock Holmes* series.
- 1999 *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* as an episode in the *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (Animated TV series)

Annotated Sherlock

Just one term, and most of you probably know it anyway.

- . . . “yeggmen” a burglar or safecracker

Weapons

We have a collection of weapons quite different from all other cases.

- Arrows - Tipped with curare , from the collection of Peruvian weapons, of Mrs. Ferguson, which Jacky Ferguson, her husband’s son by a previous marriage, used to inflict wounds upon both the family dog and his stepmother’s baby (both of whom recovered).
- Stick - Used by Mrs. Ferguson to beat her demonic stepson Jacky.
- Curare - On the tips of poisoned arrows in Mrs. Ferguson’s collection of Peruvian weapons which Jacky Ferguson used to poison the infant offspring of his father’s second marriage.

- **Hands** - Of Mrs. Ferguson, with which she struck her abominable step-son.
- **Teeth** - Of Mrs. Ferguson, which she used to bite her infant, though not for the purpose which suggested the title of the story.
- **Collection of Peruvian Weapons** - Of Mrs. Ferguson, which contained the poison arrows.

Frank Mentzel