

The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

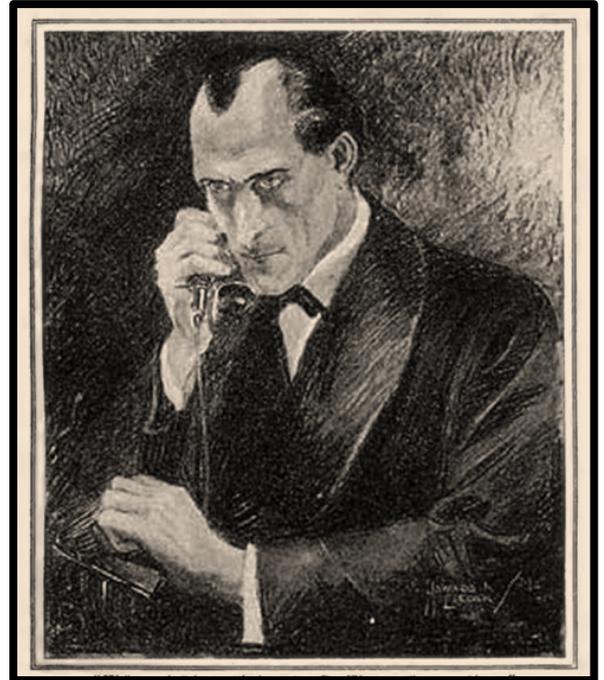
Adventure LIII – The Adventure of the Three Garridebs

Ah yes, it's the one where Watson gets shot, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

The story begins with Watson telling us that Holmes has refused a knighthood for services which he could not describe at that particular time. This fits in well with Holmes' lack of ambition beyond solving problems which others cannot. He is so much more likable and complex as a result. The complexity comes from being both unpretentious but also adoring praise all at the same time. A spontaneous round of applause from Watson and a group of constables means more to him than a knighthood.

Watson goes on to describe his position as that of 'partner and confidant' which is quite a statement really. As I have remarked before, the use of the word 'partner' infers an equal footing to Holmes and a dependency upon each other which acknowledges the contributions of both to the success of the, shall we say, detective agency.

This story has similarities to The Red-Headed League, in that it's all about someone finding an ingenious method of getting a person out of the way. An elaborate ruse is concocted with the sole purpose of getting an eccentric old collector to leave his house so that someone can break in and plunder the forger's den set up in his cellar by the previous occupant. The collector is called Nathan Garrideb and is so absorbed by his collection of curios that he rarely ever leaves the house.



The American villain (yes it's another foreign baddie) who wants access to the house has to invent a

tale to shift him, and uses his unusual name as a starting point.

Pretending to be a Mr John Garrideb, the American claims that he has been left a fortune by an eccentric millionaire whose name was also Garrideb. He can only claim the money if he can find two other men with the same surname, then they will receive a third each. He claims to have come recently to London (a lie which Holmes dismisses due to his English outfit being clearly well-worn) upon hearing that a Garrideb resided there. He then tells Nathan Garrideb that the third man has been found and that he must go and meet with him in order to seal the deal. Eager to inherit the money and add rare artefacts to his collection, Mr Nathan agrees to leave his house and go. Fortunately, Holmes has deduced the real reason for his departure and lies in wait with Watson to catch the American.

This is where things take on a dramatic turn and Watson pays the price for following Holmes into danger. Upon realising that he has been caught out, the American turns his weapon on poor Watson and shoots him in the thigh. And here we see the strongest evidence of Holmes' genuine depth of emotion for his friend. Holmes smashes his pistol down on the man's head then rushes to put his arms around his friend, helping him to a chair and asking most earnestly – "You are not hurt Watson? For God's sake, say that you are not hurt!"

These two sentences are full of concern, a touch of panic and perhaps even a little guilt knowing that he put his friend in harm's way. But it is what Watson tells us which is the most poignant of all – '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.' What a fantastic and profound statement to make. This shows as much about Watson's love for Holmes as vice-versa. So there we have it, Holmes was without doubt capable of great emotion and did truly love his friend despite often being cold and difficult. And Watson clearly longed for that love – or for the confirmation of it at least.

After tearing Watson's trousers with his pocket-knife and discovering to much relief that the wound is superficial, Holmes turns on the American and says – "By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive." And I really think he meant it.

I really enjoyed this story on two levels. Firstly, for the narrative itself – this is very clever, albeit far-

fetches, and certainly makes you want to turn the page to see how it all ends up. And secondly, for the insight it gives into the relationship between these two men and their enduring friendship. Here we see an emotional Holmes, the emotion we always knew him capable of but had never seen to this extent before.

I have to give this a 9 out of 10.

Charles Anne Walters

November 08, 2011