



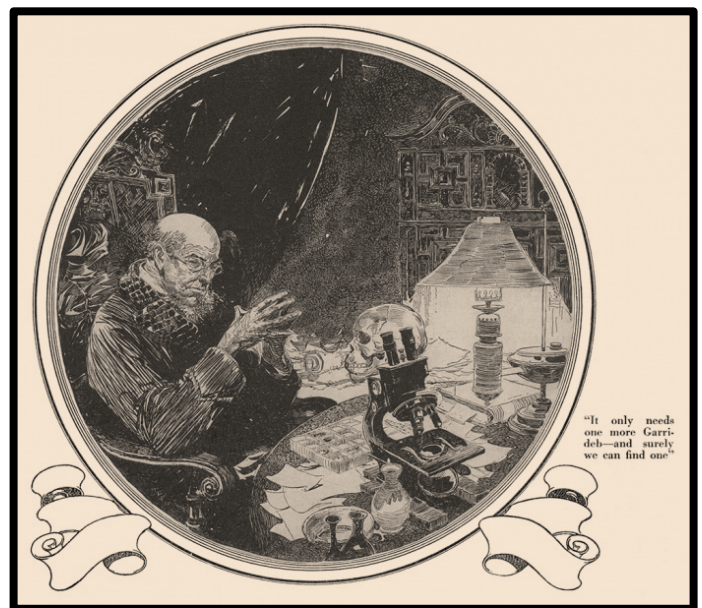
The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LIII – The Adventure of the Three Garridebs

It was a whimsical thing that brought Holmes out of his bed, where he had stayed for the past several days. Not much of a challenge, on the surface — “Find a male adult named ‘Garrideb.’” Actually, three adult males with this improbable surname were required, but two were already at hand. All that stood between these two and a one-third share of fifteen million dollars was the lack of a third namesake, or so attorney John Garrideb’s story ran.

“Why,” said Nathan Garrideb, “I shall be the Hans Sloane of my age!” I fear that not everyone knows about Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), “The Great Collector” whose botanical and entymological specimens are housed in Britain’s Natural History Museum to this day. Sir Hans’ tastes and acquisitions were as far-ranging as his intellectual curiosity could take him, and in his time, he contributed mightily to mankind’s knowledge of the natural sciences. There is another Sherlockian connection to Sir Hans: “The Hans Sloane of My Age” was the Irregular Investiture of the late, beloved John Bennett Shaw.

This week’s story is a brief one as the adventures go, and it is a story in which there are no winners save perhaps the much-maligned C.I.D. of the London police force. Consider: Holmes got no fee; Watson was wounded (albeit superficially); “John Garrideb” a.k.a. Killer Evans went back to prison; and poor old Nathan Garrideb was consigned to a nursing home. With respect to the latter, a person with such catholic tastes and inquisitive mind surely deserved a more kindly fate.



In the second paragraph of the story, Watson casually informs us that Holmes had refused a knighthood for unspecified (but we can guess) services, ostensibly to the Crown. While we understand that Holmes is an intensely private person, such a declination would have been a rebuff to the Sovereign, who at this time was Edward VII. Would Holmes have refused the Honours List had the ruler been Victoria, the gracious lady whose initials adorned the wall at 221B?

Our introduction to “Mr. John Garrideb, Counsellor at Law” clearly gives the impression that this is an intelligent, imaginative person; someone to be reckoned with. Later on, Holmes referred to him as “clever”. But how intelligent, how clever could he be to have fallen prey to what were obviously trap questions posed by Holmes? And couldn’t he have devised a simpler scheme to inveigle Nathan Garrideb away from his “museum”? News of a well-preserved hominid fossil on Piltdown Commons, for example, or a fine example of a Syracusan coin on sale for a pittance in Land’s End? The more complex a scheme, the more parts of it there are to come undone, and Killer Evans’s plan unraveled within minutes of his meeting with Holmes.

Do we dare suppose that Holmes would have killed Evans had Watson been fatally wounded? Does this fit with what we know of the character of the Master Detective? Is it consistent with his action when he saw Watson reel after being shot by Evans — crashing his revolver down on Evans’ head instead of shooting him? Could he have done in cold blood what he did not do in hot blood?

Why did Watson say that “the counterfeiter stands in a class by himself as a public danger”? Granted that counterfeiting is a felony, in what way does it endanger the public? And what happened to the £200,000 in Prescott’s counterfeit bills? I note that the Yard was happy to discover his printing apparatus, but there was no further mention of the notes Prescott had already printed. Could it be that Holmes and Watson helped themselves before alerting the authorities?

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