

The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

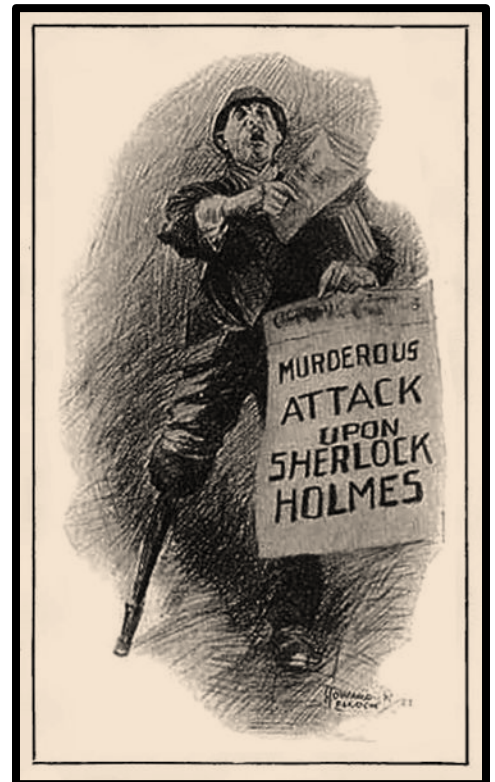
Adventure LIV – The Adventure of the Illustrious Client

The best part of this story has to be the fiery and fabulous Miss Kitty Winter, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

At last, a feisty, strong and determined woman who we can really believe in. Kitty Winter is my favourite minor character in all the stories and she even played her part in inspiring the protagonist in my own novel. She is a raw and honest woman of ill-repute who storms into the lives of Holmes and Watson, brought along by Holmes' underworld agent Shinwell, to help persuade a highly-duped society woman against marrying the evil Baron Gruner. Kitty herself was duped into loving him once and came to know his evil secrets before being tossed aside. She is hungry for revenge and full of spirit – a revenge she ultimately gets in a very dramatic fashion.

Holmes has been commissioned by an illustrious client who is not named (via an agent) to prevent Miss Violet de Merville from marrying the evil Baron who murdered his first wife and is a prolific philanderer, even keeping a little book with pictures and details of all his conquests. The silly young girl has fallen for all his lies and will not listen to reason.

Holmes takes Kitty around to see her in the hope that her testimony will make her see reason but despite the passionate words Kitty delivers, Miss Merville remains steadfast.



Here again we see Holmes resort to burglary to achieve results, as he breaks into the Baron's house to snatch the book while Watson keeps the Baron occupied by pretending to be an expert in Chinese pottery. The Baron spots Holmes and rushes to stop him but Kitty jumps out and throws acid in his face, her perfect act of revenge.

The baron's beautiful features which he has used to ensnare many vulnerable women melt before their eyes.

Holmes has got the book and it is passed on to Miss Merville, prompting her to swiftly call off the engagement.

I do love this story; it's silly, fantastical, a bit over-the-top but great fun and a real page turner. It does leave me with unanswered questions though such as – who was the illustrious client? Do we really care anymore when we have become used to Holmes working for royalty and the Prime Minister? Why was the Baron so intent on marrying this woman? It can't have been simply for money as he had plenty of his own. Was it for respectability or was it simply because he could? And why has Watson moved out of 221B to take rooms at Queen Anne Street? Has he re-married?

As this is the first story in The Case Book, we are treated to a preface written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This is a rather strange piece in which he makes it clear that he has had enough of Sherlock Holmes, only brought him back from the dead due to public pressure, and sees the work as somewhat inferior to his other more lofty endeavours such as historical writings, poetry and psychic research. Don't get me wrong, he doesn't exactly come out and state all this but the inferences are clear. For me, this makes for a rather negative start to The Case Book which is a shame as the first story is such an enjoyable one.

**For Kitty and wronged women everywhere – The Illustrious
Client gets 9 out of 10.**

**Charlotte Anne Walters
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