



## The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure LIV – The Adventure of the Illustrious Client

#### **First published in:**

*Collier's Weekly*, November 8, 1924; *The Strand Magazine* in two parts, February and March 1925

#### **Time frame of story (known/surmised):**

Definitely stated – began on September 3, 1902

This was a case from the latter phases of Holmes' career.

#### **Holmes & Watson living arrangements:**

Holmes at 221B, Watson was living in his own rooms in Queen Anne Street at the time.

#### **Opening scene:**

Holmes & Watson in drying room of the Turkish bath, Holmes invited Watson to 221B to help with a case.



#### **Client:**

Sir James Damery, whose name was a household word in society, a man of the world with a natural turn for diplomacy. He was a big, masterful aristocrat. Sir James, in turn was representing an unidentified friend of General de Merville who was concerned about the general's daughter marrying a scoundrel.

**Crime or concern:**

Worry that the love-smitten Violet de Merville would marry the dastardly Baron Gruner.

**Villain:**

Baron Adelbert Gruner, an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as a fashionable consultant, and poisonous as a cobra. He had breeding in him — a real aristocrat of crime. He had a poisonous, lying tongue that explained and soothed.

**Motive:**

Gruner had a history of using women for his own purposes, murdering or destroying them. Holmes was hired by a friend of the family to break up the romance.

**Holmes' method:**

With the help of a snitch, he identified Kitty Winters, a ruined soul and a victim, who was motivated to help bring down the Baron. She was a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face, youthful, and yet worn with sin and sorrow. The terrible years had left their leprous mark upon her. Holmes intended to use her information to burgle the Baron's house and steal a tell-all diary. But Kitty was there too, and threw vitriol in the Baron's face, painfully injuring him and ruining his good looks. Holmes succeeded in stealing the book on behalf of his client.

**Policemen:**

There was nothing in which Scotland Yard could act regarding the romance.

Later, an inspector of police arrived following the vitriol-throwing incident.

**Holmes' fees:**

Not mentioned, but most likely a lucrative case for Holmes, unless he was still serious about the statement he made a year or two earlier, in THOR, regarding his fees, "I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether."

**Transport:**

Holmes dragged Kitty into a cab to avoid a public scene.

Upon hearing of Holmes beating, Watson sprang into a hansom and went to Baker Street.

**Food:**

Holmes & Watson met by appointment at Simpson's, where they sat at a small table in the front window. No mention of what they actually ate. The following evening, they dined once more there.

**Drink:**

No mention

**Vices:**

Holmes & Watson smoked in the pleasant lassitude of the drying-room of the Turkish bath.

**Other cases mentioned:**

The Hammerford Will case. Not known if it was Holmes' case or not.

So-called "accident" in the Splügen Pass that resulted in the death of Gruner's wife.

**Notable Quotables:**

"A complex mind," said Holmes. "All great criminals have that."

"Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male." – Holmes

"The wages of sin, Watson — the wages of sin!" said he. "Sooner or later it will always come. God knows, there was sin enough."

Watson on Holmes: "There was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many dramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what his exact plans might be."

"I'm a bit of a single-stick expert" – Holmes

**Other interesting:**

Holmes deals with his snitch, Shinwell (Porky) Johnson, a huge, coarse, red-faced, scorbatic man.

Holmes was beaten up by Gruner's thugs, but publicly exaggerated his injuries to trick Gruner into letting down his guard.

Sir James' cell phone number was XX.31

Holmes speaks of Violet as his hypothetical daughter.

**When all is said and done:**

At the end, Holmes and Watson learn the identity of the Illustrious Client, but Watson leaves it out of the story. Some believe it was King Edward VII. Could have been; we'll never know.

The incriminating diary was given to Sir James, who used it effectively. Three days later there appeared a paragraph in the Morning Post to say that the marriage between Baron Adelbert Gruner and Miss Violet de Merville would not take place.

The same paper had the first police-court hearing of the proceedings against Miss Kitty Winter on the grave charge of vitriol-throwing. Such extenuating circumstances came out in the trial that the sentence, as will be remembered was the lowest that was possible for such an offence. Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a prosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is sufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and elastic. (Holmes was not charged.)

**McMurdo's Camp**