



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

taken place. Their dating is shown on the table.

The year most agreed upon is 1903. If that is when the case took place, then at the time Sherlock Holmes would have been 49 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 51.

Main Characters:

Steve Dixie, prizefighter and hired thug, sent to threaten Holmes. Mrs. Mary Maberley, elderly widow, mother of the deceased Douglas Maberley. Douglas Maberley, rejected lover of Isadora Klein. Susan, Mrs. Maberley's servant. Mr. Sutro, Mrs. Maberley's solicitor. Isadora Klein, a wealthy South American widow, former lover of Douglas. Langdale Pike, London gossip-monger, with deep connections to society.

Notable Quotes:

"There are always some lunatics about. It would be a dull world without them."

Langdale Pike was his human book of reference upon all matters of social scandal.

The lady had come, I felt, to that time of life when even the proudest beauty finds the half light more welcome.

"Surely no man would take up my profession if it were not that danger attracts him."

"I am not the law, but I represent justice so far as my feeble powers go."

An Inquiry into:

"The Adventure of the Three Gables"

Vol. XIV No. 54 • October 10, 2024

"The Adventure of the Three Gables" was first published in *Liberty Magazine* in September 18, 1926 and *The Strand Magazine* in October 1926. It is part of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*.

Unsurprisingly so, there is little agreement among our chronologists regarding when this case is supposed to have

The Adventure of the Three Gables

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	Unspecified
Baring-Gould	Tuesday, May 26, 1903
Bell	Late May 1903
Blakeney	1903
Brend	Summer 1903
Christ	October (or later) 1902
Dakin	1903
Folsom	Late September 1902
Hall	Spring 1902
Keefauver	Wednesday, March 15, 1893
Klinger	1902
Zeisler	About June 1, 1896

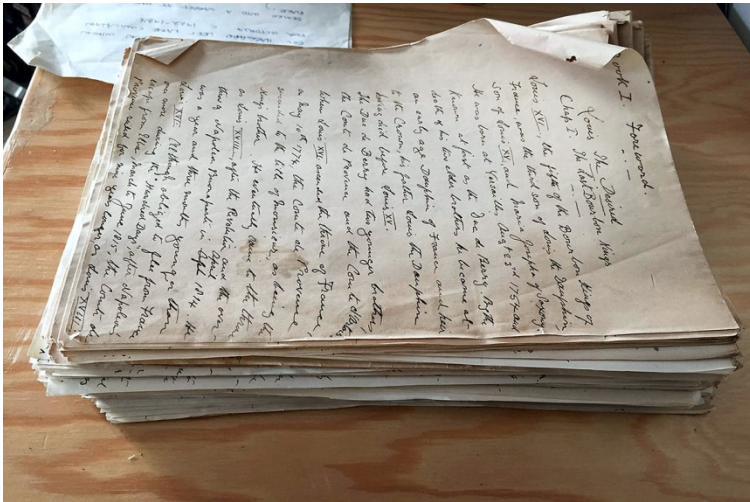
Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

“I suppose I shall have to compound a felony as usual.”



The Missing Novel

Up to a point, we can all understand Mrs. Maberley’s hesitancy in going through her dead son’s things—the wound opened by his death was still quite fresh. What should have counterbalanced this were the facts surrounding his death; i.e., her son Douglas turned into a “moody, morose, brooding creature” and died a worn-out, cynical man. This alone should have stimulated her to be more interested in the contents of his bags.



She already knew that a woman (or, as she put it, “a fiend”) had been actively involved in her son’s ruination. Considering that in those days it was not unusual for people of that class to keep a journal, it should have occurred to her that perhaps she might have found something that might have helped her avenge her son’s tragic death.

In any case, even if no journal existed, she still would have found the manuscript of his novel, which would have made everything clear: the reasons for his miserable demise as well as to why some stranger might have been so interested in the complete contents of the house. As it is, the lady seemed singularly untouched by the whole affair.

The Compounded Felony

It never ceases to amaze me how just a slight change in perspective can completely alter a scene. If one considers the whole sorry Klein/Maberly affair from the perspective of the lady in question, a very solid argument could be made that Isadora was simply acting in self-defense when she had Douglas beaten up. She tells Holmes that Douglas “became pertinacious.” According to my dictionary this would mean that he was stubborn, obstinate, persistent, unshakeable, headstrong, perverse, willful, and tenacious—by today’s standards all of those qualities would have labeled him a stalker.

Holmes attitude towards Isadora Klein was atypical and disappointing. Consider that



the woman was not only being stalked and eventually forced to take drastic steps to keep a novel with

libelous undertones from being published. Had that not done what she did she would have been left with a reputation irretrievably in tatters and a ruined life.

One cannot help but think that had she gone to Holmes for help first, ahead of Mrs. Maberly, he would have been willingly acted in a way similar to hers, at least where the manuscript was concerned. There is a precedent for this: Holmes displayed no reticence in representing the interests of



a client who had behaved in a very ungentlemanly manner—I refer, of course, to Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismund von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia. That Irene Adler intelligently bested him does not detract from the fact that he was willing to go after the lady as if she had been one of the criminals with which he often dealt.

Some time back, an old schoolmate of mine (now a portly, balding, eminent psychiatrist—alas, we were not all in the college yearbook!) commented to me rather nostalgically that in our modern times, the *crime passionnel*, as it was understood during

Holmesian times is now a rarity. “Men and women no longer kill one another over affairs of the heart as they once used to,” he said almost regretfully. “These days, very few men blow their brains out in despair because the lady of their dreams rejected them.”

I asked him why this might be and his reply was somewhat cynical: “Our society today has too many distractions that keep a person from brooding too deeply about such things—cellphones, tablets, and TVs offer a flood of political nonsense, empty news, and mindless entertainment 24/7. This tends to distract the person’s mind from the rejection.” He sighed and added, “Same reason why people do not mourn a death as much as they used to.”

An Extremely Doubtful Provenance

I tend to agree with those who state that it is very doubtful that Watson was the author of this account.

Reasonably so, many Canon scholars have wondered whether this is a spurious case. Undeniably, it

does not read like anything that the Good Doctor would have penned. For example, we have here a Sherlock Holmes who acts in a completely atypical way, cracking bad jokes (“Paregoric is the stuff.”), and behaves not as the consummate Victorian gentleman that we all know him to be, regarding Steve Dixie’s race.

The ending, as well, is quite unsatisfactory. Although we have witnessed his decision to “compound a felony” on more than one occasion, his reasons for doing so have been unassailable; i.e., he has done it for a good reason. In BOSC, for example, although he protects the innocence of the accused young McCarthy, he allows the



real murderer of the elder McCarthy, old John Turner, go free because of the reasons which led him

to commit the crime and because his poor health will soon have him standing before a Higher Tribunal. In *ABBE* we witness practically the same situation: Holmes lets Captain Jack Croker get away with the killing of Sir Eustace Brackenstall because he acted in self-defense and to protect Mary, Sir Eustace's severely abused wife; he saw no reason to cause a scandal.

In the present case, however, Holmes lets Isadora go although she instigated deadly violence against a former lover. Although it is true that young Maberley did not accept her refusal and became a stalker, the guilt was not only on one side—it was abundantly shared by both, rendering any possible outcome less than satisfactory. This is particularly so, because hers was an action partially prompted by self-defense which was further and more strongly propelled by an urgent desire to make a profitable marriage with a nobleman. Her only punishment—if it may be called that in view that she was extremely wealthy—was to have her issue Mrs. Maberley, her dead former lover's mother, a £5,000 (≈\$1,900,000) check to enable her to travel around the world.

Overall, this is not one of Holmes or Watson's better cases. The Great Detective shines opaquely, and the "crime" he investigates, like a good equation, balances with equal guilt on both sides—Isadora and Douglas'—making for an unsatisfactory conclusion.

The Remarkable Langdale Pike

In my case, the main reason for me to wish that I were convinced of the canonicity of this adventure lies mostly at the feet of Langdale Pike. We are told that he is Sherlock Holmes' "human book of reference upon all matters of social scandal." We are further told that, "This strange, languid creature spent his waking hours in the bow window of a St. James's Street club and was the receiving-station as well as the transmitter for all the gossip of the metropolis. He made, it was said, a four-figure income by the paragraphs which he contributed every week to the garbage papers which cater to an inquisitive public. If far down in the turbid depths of London life there ever was some strange swirl or eddy,



it was marked with automatic exactness by this human dial upon the surface. Holmes discreetly provided Langdale information, and on occasion was helped in turn. We have here a remarkable eccentric, with an equally as eccentric *nom de guerre*.

It seems very likely to me that their means of exchange was not composed of pounds and shillings, but by something far more valuable to both: information. My most favorite Canon scholar, the legendary William S. Baring-Gould's claimed in his biography of Holmes, *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street*, that Pike was a college acquaintance of the Great Detective who encouraged a young

Holmes to try acting. Baring-Gould then proceeds to identify Pike by his true name, "Lord Peter." In the Granada Television adaptation of the Canon, Pike is also presented as old university chum of Holmes', and is depicted as the mirror image of the notorious blackmailer Charles Augustus Milverton, in that he suppresses more information than he exposes. Watson is rather scathing about Pike, but Holmes sympathetically suggests that Pike is as isolated as he is.

It makes sense that Holmes would know and keep in touch with someone like Pike. Our sleuth's relationship with Shinwell Johnson, whom Watson tells us in *ILLU* had become "a valuable assistant" in

keeping our sleuth abreast of the goings-on of “the huge criminal underworld of London and obtaining information which often proved to be of vital importance.” Both Shinwell and Pike (and very likely others left unmentioned), were opposite sides of the same magnet, and would have served similar useful purposes— one concentrated on crime, the other on high society.

Perhaps not much of a difference there. . .



What else happened in 1903:

Empire



Britain and France agree to settle disputes through International Court at The Hague.

◀ Coronation Durbar for Edward III, King-Emperor, at Delhi.

British expeditionary force sent to Tibet.

Alaskan frontier question between Canada and U.S. settled by arbitration.

Exchange of visits between London and Paris; Arbitration Treaty establishes Entente Cordiale.

Britain

Joseph Chamberlain begins Tariff Reform Campaign.

Foundation of universities at Liverpool and Manchester.

Establishment of Workers' Educational Association.

GRW introduces early motor-bus service from Helston to the Lizard; the initiation of bus services largely originates from railway companies.

Wyndham's Act--Irish landlords to be bought out; peasant ownership; repayments over 68-and-a-half years.

Road speed limit in England increased to 20 mph.

World



Dutch Democratic Labor Party formed; general strike suppressed by troops.

◀ Russian massacre of Jews at Kishinyov.

Mursteg Program—Austro-Russian proposals to solve Macedonian problems fails.

Russia refuses to evacuate Manchuria under terms of Russo-Japanese Convention.

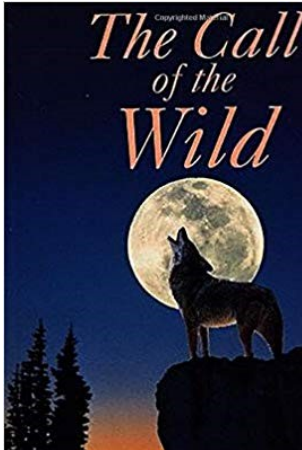
Belgium introduces Old Age Pension plan.

Foundation Bank of Persia loans with large Russian interests.

Alexander Obrenovitch and Queen Draga of Serbia assassinated; Peter Karageorgevitch elected king.

Art

Barrie writes his play, *The Admirable Critchon*.



Degas, *Dancers in Yellow Skirts*.

First recording of an opera, Verdi's *Ernani*.

Elgar, *The Apostles*, an oratorio.

◀ Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*.

German, *A Princess of Kensington*, operetta.

Pisarro, *Bridge at Bruges*.

Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, a semi-autobiographical novel of middle-class life is published posthumously.

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands*, a novel.

Shaw, *Man and Superman*.

Science and Technology

First radio press messages published by *The Times*.

Tsiolkovski publishes paper on astronautics.

Orville and Wilbur Wright make their first flight in a heavier-than-air machine.

Henry Ford founds his motor company.

Wilhelm Einthoven invents the electro-cardiograph.

J.J. Thomson publishes *Conduction of Electricity through Gases*.

Bertrand Russell publishes *Principia Mathematica*.

Phenobarbitone, a long lasting sedative, developed.

Next week's case: BLAN.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly..."

All Sherlock Holmes photos have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

Copyright © 2024 Alexander E. Braun