



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LV – The Adventure of the Three Gables

First published in:

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Time frame of story (known/surmised):

No clue. Some time around 1892 – 1904.

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Not stated clearly, but it seems as if Watson was visiting, not residing at 221B. He is however, present in Holmes' quarters at the beginning of this story.

Opening scene:

The door flew open and a huge negro burst into the room. It was Steve Dixie, the bruiser. Dixie was blustery and threatening, and told Holmes he had a friend interested in things out Harrow way and didn't want Holmes butting in. Holmes seemed to know just what Dixie was talking about, and he told him "You'll tell the magistrate about it, Steve. I've been watching you and Barney Stockdale." Dixie then backed off from his threats.

Holmes told Watson he had received a note from the eventual client, saying she had a succession of incidents in connection with her house, The Three Gables, of Harrow Weald, and would much value Holmes' advice.



Client:

Mrs. Mary Maberley, whose late husband, Mortimer Maberley, was one of Holmes' early clients whom he had served well. Mrs. Maberley was a most engaging elderly person, who bore every mark of refinement and culture.

Crime or concern:

Some very strange happenings at the Three Gables. An offer to buy her house, an unusual document. Mr. Sutro, the client's lawyer, advised her that if she signed it, she could not legally take anything out of the house. Mrs. Maberly did not accept the offer because of this odd provision.

Her son, Douglas had died in Italy. He had been debonair and splendid, but in a single month the gallant boy developed into a moody, morose, brooding creature. His heart was broken, and he became a worn-out cynical man, and then died.

Then, while interviewing the client at her house, Holmes detected Susan Stockdale, the maid, listening to the consultation through the door. Susan was the wife of Barney Stockdale, the small-time crook who sent Dixie to bully Holmes.

Villain:

Isadora Klein, the rich widow of the German sugar king, the beautiful woman who shows no pity, and formerly the mistress of Douglas, the son, before she dumped him in favor of a duke. She was the richest as well as the most lovely widow upon earth.

Motive:

Isadora wanted to marry the Duke of Lomand, who was of such an age he might almost be her son. Isadora had come to that time of life when even the proudest beauty finds the half light more welcome. Douglas had written a novel describing his affair with Isadora, with such detail it would have ruined her. She needed to steal the manuscript before it was published to preserve her prospects.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes' reading of the situation regarding the unusual offer told him there was something which the client did not know she had, and which she would not give up if she did know. The urgency of the demands indicated whatever was wanted had only just come into the house. Then they found the son's belongings, which had just arrived from Italy, and had not even been unpacked.

A page found torn from Douglas' manuscript had queer grammar, in which he changed to first person narrative, being so carried away by the story that he imagined himself at the supreme moment to be the hero.

Holmes suspected intrigue, and consulted Langdale Pike in London. Pike was a human book of reference upon all matters of social scandal. 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. Holmes sometimes helped Pike to knowledge, and on occasion was helped in turn. Pike furnished the information Holmes needed to complete his case.

Policemen:

A couple of constables and a bustling, rubicund inspector.

Holmes' fees:

No mention, but Holmes demanded and got £5000 from Isadora for his silence in the matter, so her marriage to the Duke could proceed. The money was to be paid to the client, although Holmes probably got his share.

Transport:

A short railway journey, and a shorter drive, brought Holmes & Watson to the house of the client, The Three Gables. They made a return trip the next day after being wired that the house was burgled during the night.

Food & Drink:

No mention

Vices:

At the very beginning of this story, Holmes had curled down with his pipe in his mouth upon the chair opposite Watson, when Steve Dixie arrived. Holmes raised his pipe with a languid smile when confronted by Dixie. Then after the departure, Holmes knocked out the ashes of his pipe with a quiet chuckle.

Other cases mentioned:

None

Notable Quotables:

“Good-bye, Susan. Paregoric is the stuff.” (Holmes’ insult to the deceitful maid.)

Homes advice to Isadora: “Have a care, have a care! You can’t play with edged tools forever without cutting those dainty hands.”

Holmes – “Surely no man would take up my profession if it were not that danger attracts him.”

Holmes to Watson: “ I made a mistake, I fear, in not asking you to spend the night on guard.” (after the burglary)

Other interestings:

Paregoric is camphorated tincture (solution in alcohol) of opium, used in Victorian times for relief of diarrhea and intestinal pain.

A scenic area in Cumbria County in Northwest England is the Great Langdale Valley, near the Langdale Pikes, a group of mountainous peaks on the northern side of the valley.

When all was said and done:

The son, Douglas, was attache’ at Rome, and he died there of pneumonia, broken-hearted. Mrs. Maberly got the money she wanted to travel the world. Isadora got to marry the Duke. Holmes compounded a felony, “as usual”.

McMurdo’s Camp