



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes Adventure LV – The Adventure of the Three Gables

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is not living at Baker Street, but is visiting Holmes.

Dixie barges into their rooms and attempts to intimidate Holmes who says that he will convict him of the murder of young Perkins if he does not leave.

Mary has consulted Holmes – she knew of him because he had done some work for her late husband – because of a strange offer she has received. A house agent has approached her with an offer to buy her house and furniture for a princely sum. When she has Sutro look over the agreement he tells her that it is worded in such a manner that she cannot even take her personal effects from the house.

Douglas was a promising young diplomat living in Italy. He met Isadora and had an affair with her. She ended the affair and Douglas was devastated. He took to drink and died of pneumonia. Before his death, Douglas wrote a novel describing their affair in graphic detail. There were two copies of the novel's manuscript. Douglas gave Isadora one of them but died before he could take the other copy to a publisher. Isadora is now engaged to the Duke of Lombard and the appearance of this novel would create a scandal.

The other copy of the novel is among Douglas' effects which have just arrived from Italy and are now with his mother at Three Gables. Isadora wishes to buy the house in order to obtain and destroy the manuscript. When Mary refuses her offer, she has Stockdale and his gang break into the house and steal it. She then burns it.



Holmes learns the sordid details from Pike. He confronts Isadora who reminds him that she tried all legitimate means before resorting to theft. Holmes has Isadora make out a check to Mary so that Mary can take a trip around the world.

SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

The story begins with a visit to 221B Baker Street from Steve Dixie, a black man and a cowardly ruffian who warns Sherlock Holmes to keep away from Harrow. Although Dixie has come to intimidate Holmes, Holmes secures Dixie's future cooperation by threatening to tell what he knows about the suspicious Perkins death involving Dixie. Dixie's boss is Barney Stockdale, and he must be connected with the Harrow Weald case, of which Holmes has just learnt from a message from Mary Maberley, a lady who lives at Three Gables, a house at Harrow Weald.

Mrs. Maberley is an elderly woman whose son has recently died in Rome. He was an attaché there. Some peculiar things have happened at Three Gables. Mrs. Maberley has lived there nearly two years and in all that time has attracted very little attention from her neighbours. Suddenly, however, a man came to her recently and offered to buy her house and all the furniture in it. She was not really willing to do it, especially after her lawyer, Mr. Sutro, told her that the legal agreement drawn up by this prospective buyer would forbid her to remove any possessions from the house when she moved out.

As she is telling Holmes this story, he becomes aware that someone is eavesdropping on the conversation. He opens a door and drags in Susan, a wheezing maid. Holmes manages to establish that Susan communicated to Barney Stockdale the fact that her mistress was hiring Sherlock Holmes, and that precipitated Steve Dixie's visit. Holmes also finds out that a rich woman hired Barney Stockdale and his thugs to do her dirty work. Susan is also a member of the gang but will not give up all their secrets. She leaves in a huff.

Obviously, this woman wants something that has come into the house quite recently. Holmes, seeing some trunks with Italian placenames on them, realizes that her late son Douglas's belongings must hold the key. He instructs Mrs. Maberley to try to get Mr. Sutro to spend a couple of nights at Three Gables, to keep the house guarded.

Holmes finds Dixie outside, keeping the house under surveillance. Dixie is now inclined to help Holmes if he can, to avoid any indiscreet talk about the Perkins lad who met his end so tragically. He swears, however, that he does not know who has hired Barney Stockdale.

Holmes and Watson go back to Three Gables to investigate a burglary that has happened there. The burglars chloroformed Mrs. Maberley and stole a manuscript from her son's belongings. She retained part of

one sheet of paper from it when, coming round, she lunged after one of the thieves.

The police inspector at the scene treats the matter as an ordinary burglary, but Holmes knows better. He examines the bit of manuscript retained by Mrs. Maberley, and it appears to be the end of a lurid novel. Holmes is struck by the peculiar wording; the story abruptly changes from third-person narration to first-person narration. It is in Douglas's handwriting; so it would seem that he was putting himself in a story that he was writing. Holmes and Watson go to see Isadora Klein, a wealthy woman who is used to getting what she wants.

The happenings at Three Gables, and the information Holmes obtained from Langdale Pike, "his human book of reference upon all matters of social scandal", have all added up to something. It turns out that Douglas Maberley was involved with Isadora Klein at one time. She broke the relationship off, and he almost wrought his revenge by writing a thinly veiled account of their affair, to be published as a novel. Everyone in London would know who the characters truly were, were the novel ever published. Isadora established that no copy had ever been sent to Douglas's publisher but realized that he must have a copy. She hired Barney Stockdale and his confederates to secure the manuscript. She tried legal means at first, and when that did not work, she resorted to crime. She has burnt the manuscript.

Holmes forces Isadora Klein to write a cheque for £5000 to furnish Mrs. Maberley with a first-class trip round the world in return for his silence about Isadora's nefarious dealings.