



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LVII – The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane

Just when Sherlock Holmes thought he’d earned a little retirement and relaxation, along comes our next case, *The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane*. My weekly questions and comments:

Holmes says surds and conic sections are high, abstract concepts. I remember them as bonehead high school math. Who’s right?

Why do Maud’s father and brother, her immediate family and closest living relatives, refer to themselves merely as her “guardians?”

What exactly is Maud’s “station?” How is Fitzroy’s station different from Maud’s?

“He gulped down brandy, a whole bottleful, and it seems to have saved his life.” How does brandy act on the human body to achieve a cure like this?

Maud Bellamy’s house is “the one with the corner tower” in the made-up vilage of Fulworth, Sussex. Holmes probably invented the name, as Watson often did, for the sake of confidentiality. Though most observers locate Fulworth in East Sussex, it’s worth noting that there was a house on the West Sussex shore which could have inspired some small part of “The Lion’s Mane.” It stood in the resort town of Felpham, past the post office on Limmer Lane. A contemporary description of this “Turret House” says it was a “plain white house in the village, with its turret in a corner of the walled garden.” Once the home of gentleman-writer William Hayley (1745-1820), Turret House became better known as the haunt of Hayley’s reluctant protege, William Blake — that visionary



genius (some say madman) who soared in the realms of mystical art and poetry. For several years, beginning in 1800, Hayley provided Blake with a thatched cottage a few steps away from his own door. Blake wrote of the initial summons to Turret House:” Away to Sweet Felpham, for heaven is there; The Ladder of Angels descends thro’ the air; On the Turret its spiral does softly descend...” Heaven soon turned to hell for Blake, who clashed with the imperious Hayley. Blake scribbled many delicious, sarcastic couplets about his patron in the margins of his surviving drawing books. The cottage Blake occupied survived, too; it’s marked with a brass plaque. Turret House, alas, fell into the clutches of a developer several years ago and the site is now home to some modern flats.

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