



## The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure LVII – The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane

“Everyone delights to spend a summer holiday,  
Down beside the side of the silvery sea.  
I’m no exception to the rule, in fact if I’d my way,  
I’d reside by the side of the silvery sea.”

So sang Basil Rathbone in his disguise as a music hall performer during “The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.” And the real Sherlock Holmes obviously endorsed the sentiment, since he retired to the seaside. But when one of his neighbors fell dead at his feet, Holmes leaped into action (to the extent that his rheumatism would allow) and not only solved the case, but wrote it up himself for our enjoyment and edification. In a moment, the comments and questions to get us in the swim with “The Lion’s Mane.”

“My own chronicler:” Holmes speaks of “that soothing life of Nature for which I had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the gloom of London.” And yet Watson’s writings had led us to believe that Holmes preferred the excitement of the city. Was Watson wrong, or did Holmes simply change his opinion at some point?

Why did Holmes choose to write up this story? Does Holmes’s writing style suggest that he was trying to imitate

Watson? For a good portion of the story, Holmes seemed to forget all about the clue of the dying man’s words, “the lion’s mane.” Do you think that Holmes genuinely forgot this clue, or was this merely his authorial attempt to misdirect the readers in order to present the real solution as a more impressive surprise?



If it was a mere trick upon the readers, was this fair play? When you first read the story, were you disappointed that the “murderer” was only a coelenterate?

If Watson had been there to write the story instead, how might he have changed it to make it more interesting to the reader?

Holmes was obviously much attracted to Maud Bellamy. Do you think he ever followed up on his feelings, or did he leave the field clear for Ian Murdoch?

A Shore Thing: Leaving aside Holmes’s merits as a writer, what do you think of his detective skills in this story? Was he too quick to suspect Murdoch?

When Fitzroy McPherson was stung by the jellyfish, he did not stop to dry himself with his towel, but instead just pulled on a few articles of clothing and staggered up from the beach. Why didn’t Holmes and Stackhurst notice that McPherson had been swimming? Shouldn’t his trousers or his shoes, or at least his hair, have shown signs of dampness? How did Holmes miss this vital clue?

How did Holmes get those photographs of McPherson’s injuries?

The probable answer to the mystery occurred to Holmes in a flash of inspiration. He only needed to consult his library to verify his theory. This is perfectly understandable, but why did he not arrange for someone to keep guard at the beach to prevent keep anyone else from swimming in the pool? And why did he allow the visit from Inspector Bardle to keep him from going straight down to the beach in the morning? Why did he choose to withhold his suspicions from the Inspector?

Is it strange that a man who once boasted of his ignorance of the solar system should have read about and remembered an obscure species of jellyfish? Where do you think Holmes drew the line between useless information and practical information?

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