



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LIX – The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger

Those dangerous Canonical animals are on the loose again! It's only a flashback, but where was Leon Sterndale or even Sebastian Moran when somebody really needed their services? No, I don't mean that they should have shot Sahara King, who really can't be blamed for the attack on Mrs. Ronder. I was thinking that it might have been satisfying to turn the big guns onto the porcine beast Ronder and the sneaking weasel Leonardo (who deserted Eugenia Ronder after she was nearly deserted by Sahara King.) Ah well, I suppose the big game hunters were simply "un-a-veil-able" at the time. In a moment, I'll post the comments and questions to kick off this week's story of "The Veiled Lodger."

"Poor girl": Deformed, mutilated, or frightening faces occur fairly frequently in the Canon. I can think of "The Man with the Twisted Lip," "The Crooked Man," "The Hound of the Baskervilles (I mean Seldon; as far as I know the Hound was positively radiant)," "The Illustrious Client," "The Blanched Soldier," and also "Wisteria Lodge," if you can judge by the constable's reaction to the that face in the window. "The Yellow Face" turned out to be a mask, but it looked scary enough before its secret was revealed. Can the Hounds think of any other frightening faces in the stories? Are there any common threads to the stories where disfigurement rears its ugly head? Was this "Phantom of the Opera" sort of thing popular in those days? (I mean writing about mutilated faces, not having them.)



Was little Jimmy Griggs in love with Mrs. Ronder?

Is a North African lion different from other types of African lions?

Mrs. Ronder was obviously very troubled in mind, but was she actually "wasting away," or was this merely an exaggeration on the part of the kindly and full-figured landlady?

I find Holmes's sympathy towards Mrs. Ronder to be quite touching, and all the more so because it is so unexpected from Holmes. I have always imagined that Holmes originally came to see the lady merely because he wanted his curiosity satisfied, and that he himself was surprised at the effect her story had upon his emotions. The question is: Why? By 1896, Holmes must have seen and heard of dozens or perhaps hundreds of tragedies and injustices. Why did Mrs. Ronder's case inspire such an unusually heartfelt response from the usually cold reasoning machine?

Notes of his doings: Watson mentioned that "The Veiled Lodger" was one of those "terrible human tragedies," rather than a detective story, but what really inspired the good doctor to include this case among his published chronicles? And while we're speaking of detection: Holmes didn't do any of it in this case. Do you think he took any money?

Is Watson's opening paragraph related in any way to the remainder of the story, or was it simply a handy place to insert some unfinished business? Aside from that warning about the politician, etc., what else might Holmes and Watson have done to protect their case files?

This is a question that comes up every time "The Veiled Lodger" is discussed, but that's because it's simply unavoidable. The internal evidence makes it clear that Watson and Holmes were not sharing rooms at the time of the story, but Watson was obviously quite nearby because that note from Holmes brought him over in time to meet Mrs. Merrilow. What explanation might there be for Watson's absence? As another line of thought, might it be possible to argue that it was Watson who was living in Baker Street and Holmes who was staying elsewhere?

Was Holmes trying to quit smoking? Was that the reason he teased Watson about "your filthy habit?" Had Watson and Holmes taken up separate residences while Holmes was going through withdrawal?

Rosemary Michaud