



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LX – The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place

Smoke curls from Sherlock Holmes' oldest and foulest pipe...as well as from a furnace that hasn't been lit for some time! We move on to one of the canon's more macabre tales, The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place. My questions and comments:

Besides picture frame makers, what are some other jobs that involve the use of glue?

It's Applause-o-Meter time! Who's the greater hero of this story: the dog or the horse?

Do you believe that Sir Robert did or didn't "wrong" the dead?

Good, bad, or ugly? Just what sort of light does this story cast on gambling and gamblers?

Holmes and Watson tantalize us with the unchronicled "St. Pancras Case," a likely reference to a murder in the London railway station of that name. Pancras was a Turkish lad martyred by the Romans. He was a patron saint of children, oath-takers, and treaty-makers, and he can be invoked by those seeking relief from cramps (I don't make this up). St. Pancras is the only saint singled out by name in SHOS, but many of the activities and occupations mentioned in the story actually have saints to call their own. Servants are the province of Sts. Zita, Notburga, and Adelem. Publicans and innkeepers look to Sts. Armand, Gentian, Julian the Hospitaller, and Martha for intercession. Dogs have St. Hubert of Liege, while horses have Sts. Hippolytus and Martin of Tours. Actors look to Sts. Vitus and Genesius. Jockeys have St. Eloy. Anglers pray for lots of help from St. Zeno. Police rely on the intercession of Sts. Michael, Sebastian, and Christopher. The recently dead, like



Lady Beatrice Falder, can count on St. Gertrude of Nivelles. And so on. Getting back to St. Pancras, though, it's noteworthy that one of the very first Christian churches dedicated in England bore his name, and from the 7th century onward St. Pancras was the focus of a huge cult following there. Ultimately, a number of churches and chapels were called after him (including the one which once stood on the site now occupied by the London station). The ancient nave and crypt in Shoscombe Park might even have been one such "St. Pancras' Chapel." Though I'm not much good at Sherlockian chronologies, I know that St. Pancras Day falls on May 12— a perfectly acceptable candidate for that "bright May evening" prior to Derby day, when Holmes and Watson left London with their rods and reels. If so, we can say that the events at Shoscombe represent the second of two St. Pancras Cases in the canon.

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