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The Adventure of the **Copper Beeches**

66 TO the man who loves art for its own sake," remarked Sherlock

Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of the Daily Telegraph, "It is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenset pleasure is to be derived. It is pleasant to me to observe, Watson, that you have so far grasped this truth that in these little records of our cases which you have been good enough to draw up, and. I am bound to say, occasionally to embeilish, you have given prominence not so much to the many causes celebres and sensational trials in which I have figured, but rather to those incidents which may have been trivial in themselves, but which have given room for those faculties of deduction and of logical synthesis she consults her ledgers, and sees wheth which I have made my special province."

"And yet," said L smilling, "I cannot ulte hold myself absolved from the charge of sensationalism which has been urged against my records."

You have erred, perhaps," he observed, taking up a glowing cinder with the tongs and lighting with it the long cherry-wood nine which was wont to replace his clay when he was in a disputatious rather than a meditative mood-"you have erred serhaps in attempting to put color and life into each of your statements, instead of confining yourself to the task of placing upon record that severe reasoning from cause to effect which is really the only notable feature about the thing."

"It seems to me that I have done you full justice in the matter," I remarked, with some coldness, for I was repelled by the egotism which I had more than once observed to be a strong factor in my friend's singular character.

it is not selfishness or conceit," said he, answering, as was his wont, my thoughts rather than my words. "If I claim full justice for my art, it is because it is an impersonal thing-a thing beyond myself. Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell. You have degraded what should have been a course of lectures into series of tales."

a series of falles. It was a cold morning of the early Spring, and we sat after breakfast on either side of a cheery fire in the old room at Baker street. A thick fog rolled down between the lines of dun-colored houses, and the opposing windows loomed like dark, shapeless blurs through the heavy yellow wreaths. Our gas was llt, and shone on the white cloth and glim-mer of china and metal, for the table had you to condescend to accept anything unand been glient all the morning, dipping me, madam, would commence at £100 had been shent all me morning, up to continuously into the advertisement col-umms of a succession of papers, until at last, having apparently given up his hat, having apparently given up his that to very sweet seemed almost too good to be true. The

emper to lecture me upon my literary shortcomings.

pause, during which he had sat puffing t his long pipe and gazing down into the

with the twisted lip, and the incident of the noble bachelor, were all matters which are outside the pale of the law. But in avoiding the sensational, I fear that you may have bordered on the



er she has anything which would suft them

"Well, when I called last week I was shown into the little office as usual, but I found that Miss Stoper was not alone. A prodigiously stout man with a very smilling face, and a great heavy chin, which rolled down in fold upon fold over his throat, sat at her elbow with a pair of glasses on his nose, looking very sur-nestly at the indics who entered. As I came in he gave quite a jump in his chair, and turned quickly to Miss Stoper. "That will do,' said he: 'I could not nekk for anything better. Capital! Capital! He seemed quite enthusinatic, and rubbed his hands together in the most genial fashion. He was such a comfortable-looking man that it was quite a pleasure

to look at him. "You are looking for a situation, miss?" he asked.

"Yes, sir." "'As governess?

'Yes, BIT. "'And what salary do you ask?"

" 'I had £4 a month in my last place with Colonel Spence Munro.'

tut, tut! sweating-rank sweat-:Oh ing?' he cried, throwing his fat hands out into the air like a man who is in a bi ing passion. 'How could any one offer so pitiful a sum to a lady with such attractions and accomplishments?"

ing-" "Tut, tut" he cried. This is all q

shell. If you have not, you are not fitted for the rearing of a child who may some day play a considerable part in the hiswith

mper to lecture me upon my literary ericomings. "At the same time," he remarked after "At the same time," he remarked after

"'It is also my custom,' said he, smiling in the most pleasant fashion, until his "you can hardly be open to a charge eyes were just two shining slits amid the ensationalism, for out of these cases in you have been so kind as to inwhich you have been so kind as to in-terest yourself in a fair proportion do hand, so that they may meet any little hand, so that they may meet any little commens of their journey and their ward-robe." "It seemed to me that I had never met

ored in help the King of Bohemia, the singular experience of Miss Mary Suther-land, the problem connected with the man As I was already in debt to my trades

and are getting £100 a year. Besides, what use was my hair to me? Many people are improved by wearing it short, and perhaps I should be among the num-ber. Next day I was inclined to think that I had made a mistake, and by the day after I was sure of it. I had al-most overcome my pride so far as to go back to the agency and inquire whether the place was still open, when I re-ceived this letter from the gentleman himself. I have it here, and I will read it to you: it to you

THE COPPER BEECHES, near Win-"THE COPPER BEECHES, near Win-chester.-Dear Miss Hunter: Miss Stoper has very kindly, given me your address, and I write from here to ask you whether you have reconsidered your decision. My, wife is very anxious, that you should come, for she has been much attracted by my description of you. We are willing to give £80 a quarter, or £130 a year, so as to recompense you for any little inas to recompense you for any little in-convenience which our fads may cause you. They are not very exacting, after all. My wife is fond of a particular shade of electric blue, and would like you to wear such a dress indoors in the morning. You need not, however, go to the

expense of purchasing one, as we have one belonging to my dear daughter Allce (now in Philadelphia), which would, I should think fit you very well. Then, as to sitting here or there, or amusing your-self in any manner indicated, that need

cause you no inconvenience. As regards your hair, it is no doubt a pity, espe-cially as I could not help remarking its beauty during our short interview, but I am afraid that I must remain firm upon but this point, and I only hope that the in creased salary may recompense you for the loss. Your duties, as far as the child

"Well, Miss Hunter, if your mind is white clouds drifting across from west to

pointed to something abnormal though whether a fad or a plot, or whether the man were a philanthropist or a villain, it was quite beyond my powers to deter-mine. As to Hoimes, I observed that he sat frequently for half an hour on end, with knitted brows and an abstracted also be the second the matter away with

with knitted brows and an abstracted air, but he swept the matter away with a wave of his-hand when I mentloned it. "Data! Data! Data!" he cried impa-tiently. "I can't make bricks without ciay." And yet he would always wind up by muttering that no sister of his should ever have accepted such a situation. The telegram which we eventually re-ceived came late one night, just as I was thinking of turning in, and Holmes was settling down to one of those all-night chemical researches which he frequently indulged in, when I would leave him stooping over a retort and test-tube at stooping over a retort and test-tube at night, and find him in the same position when I came down to breakfast in the morning. He opened the yellow envelope, and then, glancing at the message, threw it across to me.

"Just look up the trains in Bradshaw," said he, and turned back to his chemical studies. The summons was a brief and urgent

Please be at the Black Swan Hotel at Winchester at mid-day tomorrow, said. "Do come! I am at my wits' end. "HUNTER."

"HUNTER." "Will you come with me?" asked Holmes, glancing up. "I should wish to." "Just look it up, then." "There is a train at half past nine." said I, glancing over my Bradshaw. "It is due at Winchester at 11:30."

of the acetones, as we may need to be at our best in the morning." By 1 o'clock the next day we were well ipon our way to the old English capital. Holmes had been buried in the morning papers all the way down, but after we had passed the Hampshire border he threw them down and began to admire the scenery. It was an ideal Spring day, a light blue sky flecked with little fleecy

conditions, the light duties, all | what I should do. Your advice will altogether invaluable to me." "Pray tell us what has happened to

and the second second

"I will do so, and I must be quick, for I have promised Mr. Rucastle to be back before 3. I got his leave to come into town this morning, though he little

knew for what purpose." "Let us have everything in its due order." Holmes thrust his long, thin legs out toward the fire and composed himself to listen. "In the first place, I may say that I

have met, on the whole, with no actual fil-treatment from Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle. It is only fair to them to say that. But I cannot understand them, and I am not

"Their reasons for their conduct. But you shall have it all just as it occurred. When I came down Mr. Rucastle met me here and drove me in his dogcart to the Copper Beeches. It is, as he said, beau-tifully situated, but it is not beautiful in itself, for it is a large, square block of a house, whitewashed, but all stained and streaked with damp and bad weather. There are grounds round it, woods on three sides, and on the fourth a field which slopes down to the Southampton highroad, which curves past about a hundred yards from the front door. This ground in front belongs to the house, but the woods all round are part of Lord Southerton's preserves. A clump of cop-per beeches immediately in front of the hall door has given its name to the place. "I was driven over by my employer, who was as amfable as ever, and was in-troduced by him that evening to his wife and the children. There was no truth, Mr. Holmes, in the conjecture which seemed to us to be probable in your rooms at Baker street. Mrs. Rucastle is not mad. I found her to be a silent, pale-faced woman, much younger than her husband, not more than thirty, I should think, while he can hardly be less than forty-five. From their conversation I have gathered that they have been mar-ried about seven years, that he was a widower, and that his only child by the first wife was the daughter who has gone to Philadeiphia. Mr. Rucasile told me in relaxie that the remove why she had laft private that the reason why she had left them was that she had an unreasoning aversion to her stepmother. As the daughter could not have been loss than twenty, I can quite finagine that her position must have been uncomfortable with her father's young wife. "Mrs. Rucastle seemed to me to be col-

orless in mind as well as in feature. She impressed me neither favorably nor the reverse. She was a nonentity. It was easy to see that she was passionately de-voted both to her husband and to her little son. Her light gray eyes wandered continually from one to the other, noting every little want and forestalling it if possible. He was kind to her also in his bluff, beisterous fashion, and on the whole they seemed to be a happy couple. And yet she had some secret sorrow, this woman. She would often be lost in deep thought, with the saddest look upon her More than once I have surprised her in tears. I have thought sometimes that it was the disposition of her child that weighed upon her mind, for I have never met so utterly spollt and so ill-natured a little creature. He is small for his age, with a head which is quite dis-proportionately large. His whole life ap-pears to be spent in an alternation between savage fits of passion and gloomy intervals of sulking. Giving pain to any There are young on and groundy that still much to pack away, I was for Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle are going on a visit and will be away all evening, so of the third drawer. It struck me that i must look after the child. Now the capture of mice, little birds and insecta. But I would rather not talk about the creatures. Mr. Holmes, and, indeed, he has little to do with my story." I am glad of all details, remarked my friend. "Whether they seem to you to be har."

little to do with my story." "I am giad of all details," remarked my friend, "whether they seem to you to be

me, unpapered and uncarpeted, which ess that I was disappointed. There was nothing. At least, that was my first im-pression. At the second ginnee, however, I perceived that there was a man stand-ing in the Southampton Road, a small were open. They each led into an empty bearded man, in a gray suit, who seemed to be looking in my direction. The road, is an important highway, and there are so thick with dirt that the evening light usually people there. This man, however, was leaning against the railings which glimmered dimity through them. The center door was closed, and across the outside of it had been fastened one of was rearing against the rainings which bordered our field, and was looking earn-estly up. I lowered my handkerchief and fixed upon me with a most searching fixed upon me with a most searching fixed upon me with a most searching. The door itself was locked as well, and the key was not there. This barricaded door corresponded clearly with the shut. The door itself was locked as well, and the key was not there. This barricaded door corresponded clearly with the shut-tered window outside, and yet I could see by the glimmer from beheath it that mirror in my hand, and had seen what was behind me. She rose at once. "Jephro,' said she, 'there is an imperti-

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the room was not in darkness. Evidently

gazing at the sinister door, and wonder-

ing what secret it might well. I suddenly heard the sound of steps within the room,

door. A mad, unreasoning terror ros

"So," said he, smilling, 'it was you, then. I thought that it must be when I saw the door open."

"But his voice was just a little too coaxing. He overdid it. I was keenly on my guard against him.

it is so dreadfully still in there!" "'Only that?" said he, looking at ma

"'Why, what did you think?" I asked.

"I am sure that I do not know.

'I am sure if I had known'-

losity was almost as strong as my fears. My mind was soon made up. I would send you a wire. I put on my hat and closk,

rible doubt came into my mind as I ap-proached the door lest the dog might be

loose, but I remembered that Toller had

drunk himself into a state of insensibility that evening, and I knew that he was the only one in the household who had

any influence with the savage creature

or who would venture to set him free

went down to the office, which is about half a mile from the house, and then re- # turned, feeling very much easier. A hor-

"Why do you think that I lock this

keenty.

door?

'I was foolish enough to go into the

nent fellow upon the road there who stares up at Miss Hunter." there was a skylight which let in light from above. As I stood in the passage "No friend of yours, Mine Hunter" he

asked.

'No; I know no one in these parts.' " 'Dear me! How very impertinent. Kindly turn round and motion to him to go away.

and saw a shadow pass, backward and forward against the liftle slift of dim light which shone out from under the Surely, it would be better to take no notice 'No, no, we should have him loitering

up in me at the sight, Mr. Hoimes. My overstrung nerves failed me suddenly, and here always. Kindly turn round, and wave him away, like that. "I did as I was told, and at the same I turned and ran-ran as though some dreadful hand were behind me clutching at the skirt of my dress. I rushed down the passage, through the door, and straight into the arms of Mr. Rucastle, who was walting outside. instant Mrs. Rucastle drew down the blind. That was a week ago, and from that time I have not sat again in the window, nor have I worn the blue dress,

"Pray continue." said Holmes. "Your then. parrative promises to be a most interest-

"Oh. I am so frightened!" I panted. "My dear young lady! my dear young lady!"-you cannot think how careiging ing one.' You will find it sather disconnected, fear, and there may prove to be little relation between the different incidents and soothing his manner was-'and what has frightened you, my dear young lady?"

of which I speak. On the very first day that I was at the Copper Beeches, Mr. Rucastle took me to a small outbourse which stands near the kitchen door. As which stands near the kitchen doot. As we approached it I heard the sharp rat-tling of a chain, and the sound as of a large animal moving about. "Look in here;" said Mr. Rucastle, showing me a slit between two planks. empty wing.' I answered. 'But it is so lonely and cerie in this dim light that I was frightened and ran out again. On,

"Is he not a beauty?" "I looked through and was conscious of two glowing eyes, and of a vague fig-

ure huddled up in the darkness. "'Don't be frightened," said my em ployer, laughing at the start which I had siven. 'It's only Carlo, my mastiff. I call him mine, but really old Toller, my

"It is to keep out people who have no business there. Do you ree?" He was still smilling in the most amiable mangroom, is the only man who can do any-thing with him. We feed him once a day, and not too much, then, so that he "Well, then, you know now. And if you ever put your foot over that threshold ts always as keen as mustard. Toller lets him loose every night, and God help the trespasser whom he lays his fangs upon. again'-here in an instant the smile hard. For goodness' sake don't you ever on any pretext set your foot over the threshold at night, for it is as much as your life ened into a grin of rage and he glared down at me with the face of a demon-

I'll throw you to the mastiff. "I was so terrified that I do not know what I did. I suppose that I"must have rushed past him into my room. I re-member nothing until I found myself lyis worth." "The warning was no idle one, for two nights later I happened to look out of bedroom window about 2 o'clock in morning. It was a beautiful mooning on my bed trembling all over. Then

light night, and the laws in front of the house was slivered over and almost as bright as day. I was standing, wrapt in the man, of the woman, of the servants, even of the child. They were all horrible to me. If I could only bring you down all would be well. Of course, I might have fiel from the house, but my curthe penceful beauty of the scene, when I was aware that something was moving under the shadow of the copper beeches. As it emerged into the moonshine, I saw what it was. It was a glant dog, as large as a calf, tawny tinted, with hanging jowl, black muzzle and huge projecting bones. It walked slowly across the lawn and vanished into the shadow upon the other side. That dreadful silent sentinel gent a chill to my heart which I do not think that any burgiar could have done. "And now I have a very strange expe-rience to tell you. I had, as you know, cut off my hair in London, and I had placed it in a great coll at the bottom of my trunk. One evening, after the child was in bed. I begah to amuse myself by examining the furniture of my room and by rearranging my own little things. There was an old chest of drawers in the room, the two upper ones empty and open, the lower one locked. I had filled leave to come into Winchester this mornthe first two with my linen, and, as I ing, but I must be back before 3 o'clock, had still much to pack away, I was for Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle are going on

is concerned, are very light. Now, do try to come, and I shall meet you with the dog-cart at Winchester. Let me know your train. Yours faithfulls your train. Yours faithfully, "'JEPHRO RUCASTLE." "That is the letter which I have just received, Mr. Holmes, and my mind is made up that I will accept it. I thought,

however, that before taking the final step I should like to submit the whole matter to your consideration."

een novel and of interest."

'Fehaw, my dear fellow, what do the public, the great unobservant public, who could hardly tell a weaver by his tooth or a compositor by his left thumb, care about the finer shades of analysis and de-duction! But, indeed, if you are trivial, I cannot binme you, for the days of the great cases are past. Man, or at least criminal man, has lost all enterprise and originality. As to my own little practice, it seems to be degenerating into an agency for recovering lost lead pencils and giving advice to young indies from sounding-schools. I think that I have soarding-schools. touched bottom at last, however. This note I had this morning marks my zero-point, I fancy. Read it!" He tossed a crumpled letter across to me.

It was dated from Montague place upon the precoding evening, and ran thus:

"Dear Mr. Holmes: I am very anxious to consult you as to whether I should or should not accept a situation which has been offered to me as governess. I shall call at 20:30 tomorrow, if I do not inconvenience you. Yours faithfully, "VIOLET HUNTER."

"Do you know the young lady?" I

maked. Not L."

.....

"lt is 20:30 now."

'Yes, and I have no doubt that is her

ring." "It may turn out to be of more interest then you think. You remember that the affair of the blue carbuncle, which appeared to be a mere whim at first, developed into a serious investigation. It may be so in this case also."

"Well, let us hope so. But our doubts will very soon be solved, for here, unless I am much mistaken, is the person in enestion.

As he spoke the door opened and a young lady entered the room. She was sightly but neatly dressed, with a bright, quick face, freckled like a plover's egg, and with the brisk manner of a woman who has had her own way to make in !

"I am afraid that it is quite essen-"I am afraid that it is quite essen-tial," said he. "It is a little fancy of my masure." said she, as my companion rose to greet her. "but I have had a very strange experience, and as I have no parents or relations of any sort from whom I could ask advice. I thought that am sure," said said to greet her. "but I have han strange experience, and as I have no partents or relations of any sort from whom I could ask advice, I thought that perhaps you would be kind enough to tell me what I should do." "Pray, take a seat, Miss Hunter. I shall be happy to do anything I can to serve you." I could see that Holmes was favorably " could see that Holmes was favorably " The managerees had sat all this while busy with her papers, without a word to busy with her papers, but she glanced at me now

busy with her papers, without a word to-either of us, but she glanced at me now with so much annoyance upon her face that I could not help suspecting that she

his new client. He looked her over in his searching fushion, and then composed binnelf, with his lids drooping and his finger-tips together, to listen to her story. "I have been a governess for five years," said she, "in the family of Colo-nel Spence Munro, but two mouths ago the Colonel received an appointment at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, and took his children over to Americs with him, so that I found myself without a situation. I advertised, and I answered advertise-ments, but without success. At last the I advertised, and I answered advertise-ments, but without success. Al last the little manay which I had saved began to run short, and I was at my wits' end as pour Goed-day to you. Miss Hunter.' She

"There is a woll-known agency for gov-ernesses in the West End called West-away's, and there i used to call about ence a week in order to see whether any-thing had turned up which might suit me. Westaway was the name of the founder of the business, but it is really thim managed by Mias Stoper. She sits in her own little office, and the ladies who are the and are then shown in one by one, when

men, the advance was a great convenience, and yet there was something un-natural about the whole transaction which made me wish to know a little more before I quite committed myself. 'May I ask where you live, sir?' said I. "The end may have been so," I an-"wered, "but the methods I hold to have been novel and of interest." "Hamisshire. Charming rural place. The Copper Beeches, five miles on the far side of Winchester. It is the most

lovely country, my dear young lady, and the dearest old country house." "'And my duties, sir? I should be glad-

to know what they would be." "One child-one dear little romper just 5 years old. Oh, if you could see him killing cockroaches with a slipper! Smack! smack! smack! Three gone before you could wink!" He leaned back in his chair and laughed his eyes into his head again. "I was a little startled at the nature of the child's amusement, but the father's laughter made me think that perhaps he was joking. ""My sole duties, then," I asked, 'are

Holmes, smiling.

to take charge of a single child?" "No, no, not the sole, not the sole, my fuse? dear young indy,' he cried. 'Your duty would be, as I am sure your good sense would suggest, to obey any little comapply for."

mands my wife might give provided al- "What ways that they were such commands as Holmes" a lady might with propriety obey. You see no difficulty, beh? "I should be happy to make myself useful."

opinion?"

" Quite so. In dress now, for example. We are faddy people, you know-faddy but kind-hearted. If you were asked to wear any dress which we might give you, you would not object to our little whim. one possible solution. Mr. Rucastle seemed to be a very kind, good-natured man. Is it not possible that his wife is a lunatic, that he desires to keep the matter quiet for four she should be taken Heh? to an asylum, and that he humora her fancies in every way in order to prevent "No," said I, considerably astonished

at his words. "'Or to sit here, or sit there-that an outbreak?" "That is a possible solution-in fact, as matters stand, it is the most probable

would not be offensive to you?" " 'Or to cut your hair quite short before

spoke.

centricity. Very few gov

For one to us? "I could hardly believe my ears. As you may observe, Mr. Holmes, my hair is somewhat inxuriant and of a rather pe-cullar tint of chestnut. It has been con-

one. But, in any case, it does not seem to be a nice household for a young lady." "But the money, Mr. Holmes, the "Well, yes, of course the pay is good-too good. That is what makes me uneasy. Why should they give you £120 a year, when they could have their pick for sidered artistic. I could not dream of sacrificing it in this off-hand fashion. "I am afraid that that is quite impos-sible, said I. He had been watching me eagerly out of his small eyes, and I could see a shadow pass over his face as I sucks.

months. There is something distinctly novel about some of the features. If you should find yourself in doubt or in danmet-

Perhaps you have yourself formed some

"Well, there seems to me to be only

"Danger! What danger do you fore-

Holmes shook his head gravely. **T£ would cease to be a danger if we could define it." said hs. "But at any time, day or night, a telegram would bring me

down to your help." "That is enough." She rose briskly from her chair with the anxiety all awept from her face. "I shall go down to Hampshire quite easy in my mind now. I shall write

to Mr. Rucastle at once, sacrifice my poor hair tonight and start for Winches-

you. Good-day to you, Miss Hunter. She struck a gong upon the table, and I was shown out by the page. "Well, Mr. Holmes, when I got back to my lodgings and found little enough in the cupboard and two or three bills upon the table. I began to ask myself whether I had not done a very foolish thing. After all, if these people had strange fads and expected obedience on the most extraordinary matters, they were at least ready to pay for their se-centricity. Very few governesses in Enganes in Eng-

and yet there was an exhilarating nip in just after breakfast and whispered somethe air which set an edge to a man's energy. All over the countryside, away to the rolling hills around Aldershot, the little red and gray roofs of the farmsteadings peeped out from amid the light green of the new foliage. "Are they not fresh and beautiful!" I "Ah, I have no data. I cannot tell.

turn like mine that I must look at every-thing with reference to my own special subject. You look at these scattered houses and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of isolation and of the impunity with which crime may be committed there." "Good heavens!" I cried "Who would associate crime with these dear old home-steads". steads?

Think of the deeds of hellish crucity, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser. Had this lady who appeals to us for help gone to live in Winchester I should never have had a fear for her. It is the five miles of country which makes the danger. Still, it is clear that ahe is not personally threatened." "No. It she can come to Winchester to meet us she can get away." "Quite so. She has her freedom." "What can be the matter then? Can yeu suggest no explanation?" "I have devised siven separate expla-nations, each of which would cover the facts as far as we know them. But

The second secon

relevant or not."

"I shall try not to miss anything of importance. The one unpleasant thing about the house, which struck me at once, was the appearance and conduct of the servants. There are only two, a man and his wife. Troller, for that is his name, is a rough, uncouth man, with grizzled hair. and whiskers, and a perpetual smell of drink. Twice since I have been with them he has been quite drunk, and yet Mr Rucastle seemed to take no notice of it. His wife is a very tall and strong woman, with a sour face, as silent as Mra. Ru-castle, and much less amiable. They are a most unpleasant couple, but fortunately I spent most of my time in the nursery I could make nothing at all of what it meant. I returned the strange hair to a drawer which they had locked. "I am naturally observant, as you may have remarked. Mr. Holmes, and I soon and my own room, which are next to each other in one corner of the building. "For two days after my arrival at the

Copper Beeches my life was very quiet; on the third, Mrs. Rucastle came down thing to her husband. "'Oh, yes,' said he, turning to

into this suite, but it was invariably are very much obliged to you. Miss Hun-ter, for failing in with our whims so far as to cut your hair. I assure you that through this door, his keys in his hand, and a look on his face which made him a very different person to the round, joy-It has not detracted in the linkest lota from your appearance. We shall now see how the electric-blue dress will become ial man to whom I was accustomed. His cheeks were red, his brow was all crink-led with anger, and the veins stood out you. You will find it laid out upon the bed in your room, and if you would be so

me was of a peculiar shade of blue. It was of excellent material, a sort of beige, but it hore unmistakable signs of having been worn before. It could not have been better fit if I had been measured for it. Soth Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle expressed a delight at the looks of it, which seemed quite exaggerated in its vehemence. They were waiting for me in the drawing-room which is a very large room, stretching along the entire front of the house, with three long windows reaching down to the

floor. A chair had been placed close to the central window, with its back turned toward it. If this I was asked to slt, and

then Mr. Rucawie, walking up and down on the other side of the room, began to tell me a peries of the funniest stories that I have ever listened to. You can imagine how comical he was, and I haughed until I was quite weary Mrs. Rucastle, however, who has evidently no sense of humor, never so much as smiled, but sat with her hands in her lAp, and a sad, anxious-look upon her face. After an hour or so, Mr. Rucastle suddenly remarked that it was time to comme the duties of the day, and that I might change my dress and go to little Edward

in the nursery. "Two days later this same performanc was gone through under exactly similar circumstances. Again I changed my dress, again I sat in the window, and again I laughed very heartily at the funny stories of which my employer had an immense repertoire, and which he told inimitably. Then he handed me a yellow-backed novel and, moving my chair a little side-ways, that my own shadow might not fail upon the page, he begged me to read along to him. I read for about ten minaloud to him. I read for about ten min-utes, beginning in the heart of a chapter, and then suddenly, in the middle of a

and then suddenly, in the middle of a senter, have needed and the senter of the subscription of the senter of the

room, his hands in his pockets and an ex-

word or a look. "This aroused my curiosity: so when I went out for a walk in the grounds with my charge I strolled round to the side from which I could see the windows of this part of the house. There were four of them in a row, three of which were derive Merry while the fourth were shut

or them in a row, three out which were simply dirty, while the fourth was shut-tered up. They were evidently all de-serted: As I strolled up and down, glan-cing at them occasionally, Mr. Rucastle came out to me, looking as merry and

"Ah" said he, 'you must not think me rule if I passed you without a word, my dear young lady. I was preoccupied with business matters." "I assured him that I was not offended. The the way,' said I 'you seem to have

"By the way,' said I, 'you seem to have quite a suite of spare rooms up there, and one of them has the shutters up."

his eyes as he looked at me. I read suspicion there and annoyance, but

"Well, Mr. Holmes, from the moment

that I understood that there was some-thing about that suite of rooms which I

"I took it up and examined it. It was of the same peculiar tint, and the same thickness. But then the impossibility of the thing obtruded itself upon me. How could my hair have been looked in the time of the most profound gravity "Is Toller still drunk?" he asked i "Yes. I heard his wife tell Mrs. Bu could my hair have been locked in the drawer? With trembling hands I undid my trunk, turned out the contents, and "Th

"That is well. And the Rucastles go drew from the bottom my own halr. I laid the two tresses together, and I as-sure you that they were identical. Was it not extraordinary? Puzzle as I would, lock?"

"Is there a cellar with a good strong

"Yes, the wine-cellar." "You seem to have acted all through the drawer, and I suid nothing of the matter like a very brave and sensible matter to the Rucastles, as I felt that I had put myself in the wrong by opening could perform one more feat? I should not ask it of you if I did not think you'

not ask it of you if I did not inink you a quite exceptional woman." "I will try. What is it?" "We shall be at the Copper Beeches by 7 o'clock, my friend and I. The Rucastles had a pretty good plan of the whole house in my head. There was one wing, however, which appeared not to be inhabited at all. A door which faced that which led into the quarters of the Tollers opened will be gone by that time, and Toller will, we hope, be incapable. There only re-mains Mrs. Toller, who might give the alarm. If you could send her into the locked. One day, however, as I ascended the stair, I met Mr. Rucastle coming out cellar on some errand, and then turn the key upon her, you would facilitate mat.

ters immensely." "I will do it." "Excellent! We shall then look thoroughly into the affair. Of course, there is only one feasible explanation. You have been brought there to personate good as to put it on we should both be extremely obliged.' "The dress which I found walting for word or a look." some one, and the real person is impris-oned in this chamber. That is obvious. As to who this prisoner is, I have no doubt that it is the daughter. Miss Alice Rucastle, if I remember right, who was said to have gone to America. You were chosen, doubtless, as resembling her in height, figure and the color of your hair. Hers had been cut off, very possibly in some illness through which she had passed, and so, of course, yours had to be macrificed also. By a curious chance you came upon her treeses. The man in the road was undoubtedly some friend of hers-possibly her flance-and no doubt, as you wore the girl's dress and was so like her, he was convinced from your laughter, whenever he saw you, and afterward from your gesture, that Miss Rucastle was perfectly happy and that she no'longer desired his attentions. The dog is let loose at night to prevent him from sudeavoring to communicate with from endeavoring to communicate with her. So much is fairly clear. The most serious point in the case is the disposi-tion of the child."

and one of them has the shutters up." "He looked surprised, and, as it seemed to me, a little startied at my remark. "Photography is one of my hobbles, said h6. T have made my dark room up there. But, dear me! what an ob-servant young lady we have come upon. Whe would have believed it? Who would ever have believed it? He spoke in a jesting tone, but there was no jest in his ever as he looked at me. I read "What on earth has that to do with "" I ejaculated.

"My dear Watson, you as a medical "My dear warson, you as a mendant man are continually gaining light as to the tendencies of a child by the study of the parents. Don't you see that the con-verse is equally valid. I have frequently gained my first real insight into the char-acter of parents by studying their ohli-dren. This child's disposition is abnor-maths end marghy for crudity's subsmally cruel, merely for cruelty's sake and whether he derives this from his

and whether he derives this from his smilling father, as I should suspect, or from his mother, it bodes evil for the poor girl who is in their power." "I am sure that you are right, Mr. Holmes," cried our client. "A thousand things come back to me which make me certain that you hit it. Oh, let us lose are not hortering half to this thing about that suite of rooms which I was not to know. I was all on fire to go over them. It was not mere curiosity, though I have my share of that. It was more a feeling of duty-a feeling that some good might come from my pene-trating to this place. They talk of woman's instinct, perhaps it was woman's instinct which gave me that feeling. At any rate, it was there, and I was keenly on the look out for any chance to pase not an instant in bringing help to this poor creature." "We must be circumspect, for we are

dealing with a very cunning man. We can do nothing until 7 o'clock. At that hour we shall be with you, and it will not be long before we solve the mys-

Not be song before we worke the high tery." We were as good as our word, for it was just T o'clock when we reached the Copper Besches, having put up our trap at a wayside public-house. The group of trees with their dark leaves shining like burnished metal in the light of the set-ting sun, were sufficient to mark the house, even had Miss Hunter not been standing smiller on the doorston

house, even had Miss Hunter not been standing smilling on the doorstep. "Have you managed it?" asked Hofmen. A loud thudding noise came from some-where downstairs. "That is Mrs. Toller

IT WAS MY COIL OF HAIR. made you, that settles the question." said east. The sun was shining very brightly,

"Do you know, Watson," said he, "that it is one of the curses of a mind with a turn like mine that I must look at every-

easy. Why should they give you £120 a year, when they could have their pick for 2407 There must be some strong reason behind." "I thought that if I told you the circum-stances you would understand afterward if I wanted your help. I should feel so much stronger If I feit that you were at the back of me." "Oh, you may carry that feeling away with you. I assue you that your little problem promises to be the most inter-osting which has come my way for some months. There is something distinctly novel about some of the features. If you

at these lonely houses, each in its own fields, filled for the most part with poor, ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the deeds of hellish crucity, the

"But you would not advise me to re-"I confess that it is not the situation which I should like to see a sister of mine What is the meaning of it all, Mr.

cried with all the enthusiasm of a man fresh from the fogs of Baker street. But Holmes shook his head gravely.

"that

"They always fill me with a certain horror. It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the