

The Return of SHERLOCK HOLMES

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign of the Four," "A Study in Scarlet," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. D. STEELE

The Adventure of Black Peter

No. 6 of the Series

(Concluded from last week.)

"My good Hopkins, I have investigated many crimes, but I have never yet seen one which was committed by a flying creature. As long as the criminal remains upon two legs so long must there be some indentation, some abrasion, some trifling displacement which can be detected by the scientific searcher. It is incredible that this blood bespattered room contained no trace which could have aided us. I understand, however, from the inquest that there were some objects which you failed to overlook."

The young investigator winced at my companion's ironical comments.

"I was a fool not to call you in at the time, Mr. Holmes. However, there were several objects in the room which called for special attention. One was the harmonium with which the deed was committed. It had been snatched down from a rack on the wall. Two others remained there, and there was a vacant place for the third. On the stock was engraved 'Ss. Sea Unicorn, Dundee.' This seemed to establish that the crime had been done in a moment of fury and that the murderer had seized the first weapon which came in his way. The fact that the crime was committed at 2 in the morning, and yet Peter Carey was fully dressed, suggested that he had an appointment with the murderer, which is borne out by the fact that a bottle of rum and two dirty glasses stood upon the table."

"Yes," said Holmes, "I think that both inferences are permissible. Was there any other spirit than rum in the room?"

"Yes, there was a tantalus containing brandy and whisky on the sea chest. It is of no importance to us, however, since the decanters were full, and it had therefore not been used."

"For all that, its presence has some significance," said Holmes. "However, let us hear some more about the objects which do seem to you to bear upon the case."

"There was this tobacco pouch upon the table."

"What part of the table?"

"It lay in the middle. It was a coarse sack-like—the sort of thing which is used for carrying coal. Inside were 'P. C.' on the flap. There was half an ounce of strong ship's tobacco in it."

"Excellent! What more?"

Stanley Hopkins drew from his pocket a dark covered notebook. The outside was worn and the leaves discolored. On the first page were written the initials "J. H. N." and the date "1888." Holmes laid it on the table and examined it in his minute way, while Hopkins and I gazed over each other's shoulder. On the second page were the printed words "J. H. N." and then came several scraps of numbers. Another heading was "Armstrong's" and then "Costa Rica" and another "San Paulo," each with pages of signs and figures after it.

"What do you make of these?" asked Holmes.

"They appear to be lists of Stock Exchange securities. I thought that 'J. H. N.' were the initials of a broker and that 'C. P. R.' may have been his client."

"Try Canadian Pacific railway," said Holmes.

Stanley Hopkins swore between his teeth and struck his thigh with his clinched hand.

"What a fool I have been!" he cried. "Of course it is as you say. Then 'J. H. N.' are the only initials we have to solve. I have already examined the old Stock Exchange lists, and I can find no one in 1888, either in the house or among the outside brokers, whose initials correspond with these. Yet I feel that the clue is the most important one that I hold. You will admit, Mr. Holmes, that there is a possibility that these initials are those of the second person who was present—in other words, of the murderer. I would also urge that the introduction into the case of a document relating to large masses of valuable securities gives us for the first time some indication of a motive for the crime."

Sherlock Holmes' face showed that he was thoroughly taken aback by this new development.

"I must admit both your points," said he. "I confess that this notebook,

which did not appear at the inquest, modifies any views which I may have formed. I had come to a theory of the crime in which I can find no place for this. Have you endeavored to trace any of the securities here mentioned?"

"Inquiries are now being made at the offices, but I fear that the complete register of the stockholders of these South American concerns is in South America and that some weeks must elapse before we can trace the shares."

Holmes had been examining the cover of the notebook with his magnifying lens.

"Surely there is some discoloration here," said he.

"Yes, sir; it is a blood stain. I told you that I picked the book off the floor."

"Was the blood stain above or below?"

"On the side next the boards."

"Which proves, of course, that the book was dropped after the crime was committed."

"Exactly, Mr. Holmes. I appreciated that point, and I conjectured that it was dropped by the murderer in his hurried flight. It lay near the door."

"I suppose that none of these securities have been found among the property of the dead man?"

"No, sir."

"Have you any reason to suspect robbery?"

"No, sir. Nothing seemed to have been touched."

"Dear me, it is certainly a very interesting case. Then there was a knife, was there not?"

"A sheath knife, still in its sheath. It lay at the feet of the dead man. Mrs. Carey has identified it as being her husband's property."

Holmes was lost in thought for some time.

"Well," said he at last, "I suppose I shall have to come out and have a look at it."

Stanley Hopkins gave a cry of joy.

"Thank you, sir. That will, indeed, be a weight off my mind."

Holmes shook his finger at the inspector.

"It would have been an easier task a week ago," said he. "But even now my visit may not be entirely fruitless. Watson, if you can spare the time I should be very glad of your company. If you will call a four wheeler, Hopkins, we shall be ready to start for Forest Row in a quarter of an hour."

Alighting at the small wayside station, we drove for some miles through the remains of widespread woods which were once part of that great forest which for so long held the Saxon invaders at bay—the impenetrable weald, for sixty years the bulwark of Britain. Vast sections of it have been cleared, for this is the seat of the first iron works of the country, and the trees have been felled to smelt the ore. Now the richer fields of the north have absorbed the trade, and nothing save these ravaged groves and great scars in the earth shows the work of the past. Here, in a clearing upon the green slope of a hill, stood a long, low stone house, approached by a curving drive running through the fields. Nearer the road and surrounded on three sides by bushes was a small outhouse, one window and the door facing in our direction. It was the scene of the murder.

Stanley Hopkins led us first to the hut, where he introduced us to a haggard, gray-haired woman, the widow of the deceased man, whose gaunt and deep lined face, with the furtive look of terror in the depths of her red rimmed eyes, told of the years of hardship and ill usage which she had endured. With her was her daughter, a pale, fair haired girl, whose eyes blazed defiantly at us as she told us that she was glad that her father was dead and that she blessed the hand which had struck him down. It was a terrible household that Black Peter Carey had made for himself, and it was with a sense of relief that we found ourselves in the sunlight again, making our way along a path which had been worn across the fields by the feet of the dead man.

The outhouse was the simplest of dwellings, wooden walled, shingle roofed, one window beside the door and one on the farther side. Stanley Hopkins drew the key from his pocket and had stooped to the lock when he paused with a look of attention and surprise upon his face.

"Some one has been tampering with it," he said.

There could be no doubt of the fact. The woodwork was cut, and the scratches showed white through the paint, as if they had been there instant done. Holmes had been examining the window.

"Some one has tried to force this also. Whoever it was has failed to make his way in. He must have been a very poor burglar."

"This is a most extraordinary thing," said the inspector. "I could swear that these marks were not here yesterday evening."

"Some curious person from the village, perhaps," I suggested.

"Very unlikely. Few of them would dare to set foot in the grounds, far less try to force their way into the cabin. What do you think of it, Mr. Holmes?"

"I think that fortune is very kind to us."

"You mean that the person will come again?"

"It is very probable. He came expecting to find the door open. He tried to get in with the blade of a very small penknife. He could not manage it. What would he do?"

"Come again next night with a more useful tool."

"So I should say. It will be our fault if we are not there to receive him. Meanwhile let me see the inside of the cabin."

The traces of the tragedy had been removed, but the furniture within the little room still stood as it had been on the night of the crime. For two hours with most intense concentration Holmes examined every object in turn, but his face showed that his quest was not a successful one. Once only he paused in his patient investigation.

"Have you taken anything off this shelf, Hopkins?"

"No; I have moved nothing."

"Something has been taken. There is less dust in this corner of the shelf than elsewhere. It may have been a book lying on its side. It may have been a box. Well, well, I can do nothing more. Let us walk in these beautiful woods, Watson, and give a few hours to the birds and the flowers. We shall meet you here later, Hopkins, and see if we can come to closer quarters with the gentleman who has paid this visit in the night."

It was past 11 o'clock when we formed our little ambush. Hopkins was for leaving the door of the hut open, but Holmes was of the opinion that this would rouse the suspicions of the stranger. The lock was a perfectly simple one, and only a strong blade was needed to push it back. Holmes also suggested that we should wait, not inside the hut, but outside it among the bushes which grew round the farther window. In this way we should be able to watch our man if he struck a light and see what his object was in this stealthy nocturnal visit.

It was a long and melancholy vigil, and yet brought with it something of the thrill which the hunter feels when he lies beside the water pool and waits for the coming of the thirsty beast of prey. What savage creature was it which might steal upon us out of the darkness? Was it a fierce tiger of crime, which could only be taken fighting hard with flashing fang and claw, or would it prove to be some skulking jackal, dangerous only to the weak and unguarded?

In absolute silence we crouched among the bushes, waiting for whatever might come. At first the steps of a few belated villagers or the sound of voices from the village lightened our vigil, but one by one these interruptions died away and an absolute stillness fell upon us, save for the chiming of the distant church, which told us of the progress of the night, and for the rustle and whisper of a fine rain falling amid the foliage which roofed us in.

Half past 2 had chimed, and it was the darkest hour which precedes the dawn, when we all started as a low but sharp click came from the direction of the gate. Some one had entered the drive. Again there was a long silence, and I had begun to fear that it was a false alarm, when a stealthy step was heard upon the other side of the hut, and a moment later a metallic scraping and clinking. The man was trying to force the lock. This time his skill was greater or his tool was better, for there was a sudden snap and the creak of the hinges. Then a match was struck, and next instant the steady light from a candle filled the interior of the hut. Through the gauze curtain our eyes were all riveted upon the scene within.

The nocturnal visitor was a young man, tall and thin, with a black mustache, which intensified the deadly pallor of his face. He could not have been much above twenty years of age. I have never seen any human being who appeared to be in such a pitiable fright, for his teeth were visibly chattering, and he was shaking in every limb. He was dressed like a gentleman, in Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, with a cloth cap upon his head. We watched him staring round with frightened eyes. Then he laid the candle end upon the table and disappeared from our view into one of the corners. He returned with a large book, one of the logbooks which formed a line upon the shelves. Leaning on the table, he rapidly turned over the pages of this volume until he came to a page which he sought. Then, with a furtive gesture of his clinched hand, he closed the book, replaced it in the corner and put out the light. He had hardly turned to leave the hut when

Timber Land Notice.

United States Land Office, Lakeview, Oregon, August 14 1905. Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1892, Hellen Miller, of Lake City, county of Modoc, State of California, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 2971, for the purchase of the NW 1/4 SE 1/4 SW 1/4 NE 1/4 and SW 1/4 NE 1/4 of Section No. 29 in Township 40 S, R 22 E, W M, and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Register and Receiver at Lakeview, Oregon, on Thursday, the 23 day of November, 1905. Names as witnesses: James Dodson, of Adel, Oregon, Eldon Woodcock, George Hankins and P. M. Curry, of Lakeview, Oregon.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 23d day of November 1905.

38-47 J. N. Watson, Register.

Final Proof.

Land Office at Lakeview, Oregon, Oct. 9th, 1905. Notice is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before the Register and Receiver at Lakeview, Oregon, on the 21st day of November, 1905, viz:

William H. Benefield, H. E. No. 2498, for the W 1/2 NE 1/4 SE 1/4 NW 1/4 and NW 1/4 SE 1/4 sec. 18 Tp. 36, S., R. 22 E. w. m.

He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land viz:

C. W. Dent of Lakeview, Oregon, Edmond Lynch, J. M. Parrish, B. C. Hankins, of Plush, Oregon.

J. N. Watson, Register. 41-45

Notice For Publication.

Department of the Interior, Land Office at Lakeview, Oregon, Oct. 4, 1905.

NOTICE is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before Register and Receiver at Lakeview, Oregon, on the 25th day of November, 1905, viz:

Albert Dent, H. E. No. 2045, for the SE 1/4 NE 1/4 E 1/2 SE 1/4 sec. 31, Sw 1/4 Sw 1/4

sec. 32 Tp. 39 S., R. 17 E. w. m.

He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land viz:

Charles Palmerlee, James I. Melick, of Vistillis; George L. Holbrook, A. W. Howard, W. D. Tracy, of Lakeview, Oregon. J. N. Watson, Register. 45

TIMBER LAND NOTICE.

United States Land Office, Lakeview, Oregon, August 8th, 1905. Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the Act of June 3, 1878 entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1892, the following persons have this day filed in this office their sworn statements to-wit:

Kate Barry, of Lakeview, county of Lake, state of Oregon. Sworn statement No. 3001, for the purchase of the NE 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4 NE 1/4 and Lots 1 and 2 Sec. 6, Tp 40 S., R 22 E W M.

Nellie Barry, of Lakeview, county of Lake, state of Oregon. Sworn statement No. 3002, for the purchase of the NW 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4 SE 1/4 and SW 1/4 NE 1/4 Sec. 6, Tp 40 S., R 22 E W M.

That they will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes and to establish their claim to said land before Register & Receiver at Lakeview, Or., on Monday the 23 day of October 1905.

They name as witnesses:

Thomas Lynch, Benjamin Daly and Dennis Sullivan of Lakeview, Oregon, and John Barry of Adel, Oregon.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 23d day of October 1905.

37-52 J. N. Watson, Register.

Notice For Publication.

Department of the Interior, Land Office at Lakeview, Oregon, Sept. 29, 1905.

NOTICE is hereby given that the following named settler has filed notice of his intention to make final proof in support of his claim, and that said proof will be made before Register and Receiver at Lakeview, Oregon, on the 13th day of November, 1905, viz:

Edwin T. Bishop, H. E. No. 2258, for the NE 1/4 SW 1/4, N 1/2 SE 1/4, Sec. 6, and NW 1/4 SW 1/4, Sec. 5, Tp. 40 S., R. 20 E., w. m.

He names the following witnesses to prove his continuous residence upon and cultivation of said land, to-wit:

W. G. Spencer, Al. Cheney, Elbert S. Morris, I. W. Bishop, all of Lakeview, Oregon. J. N. Watson, Register. 44

The Return of SHERLOCK HOLMES

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(Continued on next page.)