

# The Return of SHERLOCK HOLMES

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ILLUSTRATED BY F. D. STEELE

The Adventure of  
Charles & John  
Milverton  
No. 7 of the Series  
(Concluded from last week.)

It was a good fire, and the room was illuminated by it. Near the door I saw the gleam of an electric switch, but it was unnecessary, even if it had been safe, to turn it on. At one side of the fireplace was a heavy curtain which covered the bay window we had seen from outside. On the other side was the door which communicated with the veranda. A desk stood in the center, with a turning chair of shining red leather. Opposite was a large bookcase with a marble bust of Athena on the top. In the corner, between the bookcase and the wall, there stood a tall, green safe, the firelight flashing back from the polished brass knobs upon its face. Holmes stole across and looked at it. Then he crept to the door of the bedroom and stood with slanting head, listening intently. No sound came from within. Meanwhile it had struck me that it would be wise to secure our retreat through the outer door, so I examined it. To my amazement it was neither locked nor bolted. I touched Holmes on the arm, and he turned his masked face in that direction. I saw him start, and he was evidently as surprised as I.

"I don't like it," he whispered, putting his lips to my very ear. "I can't quite make it out. Anyhow, we have no time to lose."

"Can I do anything?"  
"Yes, stand by the door. If you hear any one come, bolt it on the inside, and we can get away as we came. If they come the other way, we can get through the door if our job is done or hide behind these window curtains if it is not. Do you understand?"

I nodded and stood by the door. My first feeling of fear had passed away, and I thrilled now with a keener zest than I had ever enjoyed when we were the defenders of the law instead of its defiers. The high object of our mission, the consciousness that it was unselfish and chivalrous, the villainous character of our opponent, all added to the sporting interest of the adventure. Far from feeling guilty, I rejoiced and exulted in our dangers. With a glow of admiration I watched Holmes unrolling his case of instruments and choosing his tool with the calm, scientific accuracy of a surgeon who performs a delicate operation. I knew that the opening of safes was a particular hobby with him, and I understood the joy which it gave him to be confronted with this green and gold monster, the dragon which held in its maw the reputations of many fair ladies. Turning up the cuffs of his dress coat—he had placed his overcoat on a chair—Holmes laid out two drills, a hammer and several skeleton keys. For about half an hour Holmes worked with concentrated energy, laying down one tool, picking up another, handling each with the strength and delicacy of the trained mechanic. Finally I heard a click, the broad green door swung open, and inside I had a glimpse of a number of paper packets, each tied, sealed and inscribed. Holmes picked one out, but it was hard to read by the flickering fire, and he drew out his little dark lantern, for it was too dangerous with Milverton in the next room to switch on the electric light. Suddenly I saw him halt, listen intently, and then in an instant he had swung the door of the safe to, picked up his coat, stuffed his tools into the pockets and darted behind the window curtain, motioning me to do the same.

It was only when I had joined him there that I heard what had alarmed his quicker senses. There was a noise somewhere within the house. A door slammed in the distance. Then a confused, dull murmur broke itself into the measured thud of heavy footsteps rapidly approaching. They were in the passage outside the room. They paused at the door. The door opened. There was a sharp snick as the electric light was turned on. The door closed once more, and the pungent reek of a strong cigar was borne to our nostrils. Then the footsteps continued backward and forward, backward and forward, with a few yards of us. Finally there was a creak from a chair, and the footsteps ceased. Then a key clicked in a lock, and I heard the rattle of the door.

So far I had not dared to look, but now I saw the partition of the entrance in front of me and

peeped through. From the pressure of Holmes' shoulder against mine I knew that he was sharing my observations. Right in front of us and almost within our reach was the broad, rounded back of Milverton. It was evident that we had entirely miscalculated his movements; that he had never been to his bedroom, but that he had been sitting up in some smoking or billiard room in the farther wing of the house, the windows of which we had not seen. His broad, grizzled head, with its shining patch of baldness, was in the immediate foreground of our vision. He was leaning far back in the red leather chair, his legs outstretched, a long, black cigar projecting at an angle from his mouth. He wore a semimilitary smoking jacket, claret colored, with a black velvet collar. In his hand he held a long legal document, which he was reading in an indolent fashion, blowing rings of tobacco smoke from his lips as he did so.

I felt Holmes' hand steal into mine and give me a reassuring shake, as if to say that the situation was within his powers and that he was easy in his mind. I was not sure whether he had seen what was only too obvious from my position, that the door of the safe was imperfectly closed and that Milverton might at any moment observe it. In my own mind I had determined that if I were sure from the rigidity of his gaze that it had caught his eye I would at once spring out, throw my greatcoat over his head, pluck him and leave the rest to Holmes. But Milverton never looked up. He was languidly interested by the papers in his hand, and page after page was turned as he followed the argument of the lawyer. At least, I thought, when he had finished the document and the cigar he will go to his room, but before he had reached the end of either there came a remarkable development which turned our thoughts into quite another channel.

Several times I had observed that Milverton looked at his watch, and once he had risen and sat down again, with a gesture of impatience. The idea, however, that he might have an appointment at so strange an hour never occurred to me until a faint sound reached my ears from the veranda outside. Milverton dropped his papers and sat rigid in his chair. The sound was repeated, and then there came a gentle tap at the door. Milverton rose and opened it.

"Well," said he curtly, "you are nearly half an hour late."

So this was the explanation of the unlocked door and of the nocturnal vigil of Milverton. There was the gentle rustle of a woman's dress. I had closed the slit between the curtains as Milverton's face had turned in our direction, but now I ventured very carefully to open it once more. He had resumed his seat, the cigar still projecting at an insolent angle from the corner of his mouth. In front of him, in the full glare of the electric light, there stood a tall, slim, dark woman, a veil over her face, a mantle drawn round her chin. Her breath came quick and fast, and every inch of the little figure was quivering with strong emotion.

"Well," said Milverton, "you've made me lose a good night's rest, my dear. I hope you'll prove worth it. You couldn't come any other time—eh?"

The woman shook her head.

"Well, if you couldn't you couldn't. If the Countess is a hard mistress you have your chance to get level with her now. Bless the girl, what are you shivering about? That's right. Pull yourself together. Now let us get down to business." He took a notebook from the drawer of his desk. "You say that you have five letters which compromise the Countess d'Albert. You want to sell them. I want to buy them. So far so good. It only remains to fix a price. I should want to inspect the letters, of course. If they are really good specimens—Great heavens! Is it you?"

The woman, without a word, had raised her veil and dropped the mantle from her chin. It was a dark, handsome, clear-cut face which confronted Milverton—a face with a curved nose, strong, dark eyebrows shading hard, glittering eyes, and a straight, thin lipped mouth set in a dangerous smile.

"It is I," she said—"the woman whose life you have ruined."

Milverton laughed, but fear vibrated in his voice. "You were so very obstinate," said he. "Why did you drive me to such extremities? I put the price well within your means. You would not pay."

"So you sent the letters to my husband, and he—the noblest gentleman that ever lived, a great scholar, a

was never worthy to lace—he broke his gallant heart and died. You remember that last night, when I came through that door, I begged and prayed you for mercy, and you laughed in my face as you are trying to laugh now, only your coward heart cannot keep your lips from twitching? Yes, you never thought to see me here again, but it was that night which taught me how I could meet you face to face and alone. Well, Charles Milverton, what have you to say?"

"Don't imagine that you can bully me," said he, rising to his feet. "I have only to raise my voice and I could call my servants and have you arrested. But I will make allowance for your natural anger. Leave the room at once as you came, and I will say no more."

The woman stood with her hand buried in her bosom and the same deadly smile on her thin lips.

"You will ruin no more lives as you have ruined mine. You will wring no more hearts as you wrung mine. I will free the world of a poisonous thing. Take that, you hound—and that—and that—and that!"

She had drawn a little gleaming revolver and emptied barrel after barrel into Milverton's body, the muzzle within two feet of his shirt front. He shrank away and then fell forward upon the table, coughing furiously and clawing among the papers. Then he staggered to his feet, received another shot and rolled upon the floor. "You've done me!" he cried and lay still. The woman looked at him intently and ground her heel into his upturned face. She looked again, but there was no sound or movement. I heard a sharp rustle, the night air blew into the heated room and the avenger was gone.

No interference upon our part could have saved the man from his fate, but as the woman poured bullet after bullet into Milverton's shrinking body I was about to spring out when I felt Holmes' cold, strong grasp upon my wrist. I understood the whole argument of that firm, restraining grip—that it was no affair of ours; that justice had overtaken a villain; that we had our own duties and our own objects, which were not to be lost sight of. But hardly had the woman rushed from the room when Holmes with swift, silent steps was over at the other door. He turned the key in the lock. At the same instant we heard voices in the house and the sound of hurrying feet. The revolver shots had roused the household. With perfect coolness Holmes slipped across to the safe, filled his two arms with bundles of letters and poured them all into the fire. Again and again he did it, until the safe was empty.

Some one turned the handle and beat upon the outside of the door. Holmes looked swiftly round. The letter which had been the messenger of death for Milverton lay, all mottled with his blood, upon the table. Holmes tossed it in among the blazing papers. Then he drew the key from the outer door, passed through after me and locked it on the outside. "This way, Watson," said he, "we can scale the garden wall in this direction."

I could not have believed that an alarm could have spread so swiftly. Looking back, the huge house was one blaze of light. The front door was open, and figures were rushing down the drive. The whole garden was alive with people, and one fellow raised a view halloo as we emerged from the veranda and followed hard at our heels. Holmes seemed to know the grounds perfectly, and he threaded his way swiftly among a plantation of small trees. I close at his heels and our foremost pursuer panting behind us. It was a six foot wall which barred our path, but he sprang to the top and over. As I did the same I felt the hand of the man behind me grab at my ankle, but I kicked myself free and scrambled over a grass strewn coping. I fell upon my face among some bushes, but Holmes had me on my feet in an instant, and together we dashed away across the huge expanse of Hampstead heath. We had run two miles, I suppose, before Holmes at last halted and listened intently. All was absolute silence behind us. We had shaken off our pursuers and were safe.

We had breakfasted and were smoking our morning pipe on the day after the remarkable experience which I have recorded when Mr. Lestrade of Scotland Yard, very solemn and impressive, was ushered into our modest sitting room.

"Good morning, Mr. Holmes," said he; "good morning. May I ask if you are very busy just now?"

"Not too busy to listen to you."

"I thought that perhaps if you had nothing particular on hand you might care to assist us in a most remarkable case which occurred only last night at Hampstead."

"Dear me!" said Holmes. "What was that?"

"A murder—a most dramatic and remarkable murder. I know how keen you are upon these things, and I would take it as a great favor if you would step down to Appledore Towers and give us the benefit of your advice. It is no ordinary crime. We have had

(Continued on next page.)

## 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 $\frac{1}{4}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and S $\frac{1}{2}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  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 Register and Receiver at Lakeview, Oregon, on the 21st day of November, 1905, viz:

William H. Benefield, H. E. No. 2498, for the W $\frac{1}{2}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  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 $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$  E $\frac{1}{2}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  sec. 31, Sw $\frac{1}{4}$  Sw $\frac{1}{4}$

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. 43

## Notice for Publication.

Department of the Interior, Land Office at Lakeview, Oregon, Oct. 16, 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 27th day of November 1905; viz:

Gideon Sherman, H. E. No. 2700, for the Sw $\frac{1}{4}$  NE $\frac{1}{4}$  W $\frac{1}{2}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$  and SE $\frac{1}{4}$  Sw $\frac{1}{4}$  sec. 17, Tp. 41 S., R. 21 E., w. m.

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

Geo. Sherman, B. L. Reid, A. M. Smith, James Vincent, all of New Pine Creek, Oregon. J. N. Watson, Register. 42-46

## 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. 2238, for the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$  SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 6, and NW $\frac{1}{4}$  SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , 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. Bostop, all of Lakeview, Oregon. J. N. Watson, Register. 44

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