

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 the Second Stain
 No. 13 of the Series

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HAD intended "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" to be the last of those exploits of my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, which I should ever communicate to the public. This resolution of mine was not due to any lack of material, since I have notes of many hundreds of cases of which I have never allowed, nor was I content with any wanting interest on the part of my readers in the singular personality and unique methods of this remarkable man. The real reason lay in the reluctance which Mr. Holmes—as shown to the continued publication of his experiences. So long as he was a practical professional practice the records of his successes were of some practical value to him, but since he has definitely retired from London and taken himself to study and be far from the Strand, his history has become more of a legend than a fact. I have, however, been so much interested in this matter that I have decided to publish it as a special feature of the "The Adventure of the Second Stain" should be published when the times were ripe and pointing out to him that it is only appropriate that this long series of episodes should culminate in the most important international case which he has ever been called upon to handle that I at last succeeded in obtaining his consent that a carefully guarded account of the incident should be laid before the public.

It was, then, in a year, even in a decade that shall be unnameable, that upon one weekday morning in autumn we found our visitors of European fame within the walls of our humble room in Baker Street. The one, austere, high nosed, gleamed and dominant, was none other than the illustrious Lord Bellingham, vice premier of Britain. The other, dark, clean cut and elegant, hardly yet middle aged and endowed with every beauty of body and of mind, was a slight, thin, Trelawney Hope, secretary for European affairs and the best rising statesman in the country. They sat side by side upon our paper strewn settee, and it was easy to see on their worn and anxious faces that was business of the most pressing portance which had brought them.

The premier's thin, blue veined hands were clasped tightly over the ivory end of his umbrella, and his gaunt, hectic face looked gloomily from planes to me. The European secretary pulled nervously at his mustache and fidgeted with the seals of his chain.

"When I discovered my loss, Mr. Bellingham, which was at 8 o'clock this morning, I at once informed the prime minister. It was at his suggestion that have both come to you."

"Have you informed the police?"

"No, sir," said the prime minister, in the most decisive manner for which he was famous. "We have not to do so, nor is it possible that we should do so. To inform the police, in the first place, means to inform the public. What is what we particularly desire to avoid?"

"And why, sir?"

"Because the document in question of such immense importance that its disclosure might very easily—I might not say probably—lead to European applications of the utmost moment, is not too much to say that peace or may hang upon the issue. Unless recovery can be attended with the most secrecy then it may as well not be recovered at all, for all that is aimed at by those who have taken it is that its contents should be generally known."

"I understand, now, Mr. Trelawney Hope, I should be much obliged if you could tell me exactly the circumstances under which this document appeared."

"That can be done in a very few words, Mr. Holmes. The letter—for it is a letter from a foreign potentate—was received six days ago. It was of such importance that I have never left my safe, but I have taken it each evening to my house in the hill terrace and kept it in my room in a locked dispatch box. It was there last night. Of that I am certain. I actually opened the box as I was dressing for dinner and the document inside. This morning it was gone. The dispatch box had been beside the glass upon my dressing table all night. I am a light sleeper and so I am sure. We are both here and I repeat that no one could have entered the room during the night, and yet I repeat that the paper was gone."

"What time did you dine?"

"Half past seven."

"How long was it before you went to bed?"

"My wife had gone to the theater. I went up for her. It was half past eleven when we went to our room. I had been for four hours the dispatch had been unaccounted for."

to act unless we give you our entire confidence."

"I agree with you," said the younger statesman.

"Then I will tell you, relying entirely upon your honor and that of your colleague, Dr. Watson. I may appeal to your patriotism also, for I could not imagine a greater misfortune for the country than that this affair should come out."

"You may safely trust us."

"The letter, then, is from a certain foreign potentate who has been ruffled by some recent colonial developments of this country. It has been written hurriedly and upon his own responsibility entirely. Inquiries have shown that his ministers know nothing of the matter. At the same time it is couched in so unfortunate a manner and certain phrases in it are of so provocative a character that its publication would undoubtedly lead to a most dangerous state of feeling in this country. There would be such a ferment, sir, that I do not hesitate to say that within a week of the publication of that letter this country would be involved in a great war."

Holmes wrote a name upon a slip of paper and handed it to the premier.

"Exactly. It was he. And it is this letter—this letter which may well mean the expenditure of a thousand millions and the lives of a hundred thousand men—which has become lost in this unaccountable fashion."

"Have you informed the sender?"

"Yes, sir; a cipher telegram has been dispatched."

"Perhaps he desires the publication of the letter?"

"No, sir; we have strong reason to believe that he already understands that he has acted in an indiscreet and hot headed manner. It would be a greater blow to him and to his country than to us if this letter were to come out."

"If this is so, whose interest is it that the letter should come out? Why should any one desire to steal it or to publish it?"

"There, Mr. Holmes, you take me into regions of high international politics. But if you consider the European situation you will have no difficulty in perceiving the motive. The whole of Europe is an armed camp. There is a double league which makes a fair balance of military power. Great Britain holds the scales. If Britain were driven into war with one confederacy it would assure the supremacy of the other confederacy, whether they joined in the war or not. Do you follow?"

"Very clearly. It is then the interest of the enemies of this potentate to secure and publish this letter, so as to make a breach between his country and ours?"

"Yes, sir."

"And to whom would this document be sent if it fell into the hands of an enemy?"

"To any of the great chancelleries of Europe. It is probably speeding on its way thither at the present instant as fast as steam can take it. Now, Mr. Holmes, you are in full possession of the facts. What course do you recommend?"

Holmes shook his head mournfully.

"You think, sir, that unless this document is recovered there will be war?"

"I think it is very probable."

"Then, sir, prepare for war."

"That is a hard saying, Mr. Holmes."

"Consider the facts, sir. It is inconceivable that it was taken after 11:30 at night, since I understand that Mr. Hope and his wife were both in the room from that hour until the loss was found out. It was taken, then, yesterday evening between 7:30 and 11:30, probably near the earlier hour, since whoever took it evidently knew that it was there, and would naturally secure it as early as possible. Now, sir, if a document of this importance were taken at that hour, where can it be now? No one has any reason to retain it. It has been passed rapidly on to those who need it. What chance have we now to overtake or even to trace it? It is beyond our reach."

"What you say is perfectly logical, Mr. Holmes. I feel that the matter is indeed out of our hands."

"Let us presume, for argument's sake, that the document was taken by the maid or by the valet."

"They are both old and tried servants."

"I understand you to say that your room is on the second floor, that there is no entrance from without and that from within no one could go up unobserved. It must, then, be somebody in the house who has taken it. To whom would the thief take it? To one of several international spies and secret agents whose names are tolerably familiar to me. There are three who may be said to be the heads of their profession. I will begin my research by going round and finding if each of them is at his post. If one is missing—especially if he has disappeared since last night—we will have some indication as to where the document has gone."

"Why should he be missing?" asked the European secretary. "He would take the letter to an embassy in London, as likely as not."

"I fancy not. These agents work independently, and their relations with the embassies are often strained."

The prime minister nodded his acquiescence.

"I believe you are right, Mr. Holmes. He would take so valuable a prize to headquarters with his own hands. I think that your course of action is an excellent one. Meanwhile, Duke, we cannot neglect all our other duties on account of this one misfortune. Should there be any fresh developments during the day we shall communicate with you, and you will no doubt let us know the results of your own inquiries."

The two statesmen bowed and walked gravely from the room.

When our illustrious visitors had departed Holmes lit his pipe in silence and sat for some time lost in the deepest thought. I was reading the morning paper when my friend gave an exclamation, sprang to his feet and laid his pipe down upon the mantelpiece.

"Yes," said he, "there is no better way of approaching it. The situation is desperate, but not hopeless. Even now, if we could be sure which of them has taken it, it is just possible that it has not yet passed out of his hands. After all, it is a question of money with these fellows, and I have the British treasury behind me. It is conceivable that the fellow might hold it back to see what bids come from this side before he tries his luck on the other. There are only those three capable of playing so bold a game—there are Oberstein, La Rothiere and Eduardo Lucas. I will see each of them."

I glanced at my morning paper.

"Is that Eduardo Lucas of Godolphin street?"

"Yes."

"You will not see him."

"Why not?"

"He was murdered in his house last night."

My friend has so often astonished me in the course of our adventures that it was with a sense of exultation that I realized how completely I had astonished him. He stared in amazement and then snatched the paper from my hands. This was the paragraph which I had been engaged in reading when he rose from his chair:

MURDER IN WESTMINSTER
 A crime of mysterious character was committed last night at 16 Godolphin street, one of the old fashioned and secluded rows of eighteenth century houses which lie between the river and the abbey, almost in the shadow of the great tower of the houses of parliament. This small but select mansion has been inhabited for some years by Mr. Eduardo Lucas, well known in society circles both on account of his charming personality and because he has the well deserved reputation of being one of the best amateur tenors in the country. Mr. Lucas is an unmarried man, thirty-four years of age, and his establishment consists of Mrs. Pringle, an elderly housekeeper, and of Milton, his valet. The former retires early and sleeps at the top of the house. The valet was out for the evening, visiting a friend at Hammersmith. From 10 o'clock onward Mr. Lucas had the house to himself. What occurred during that time has not yet transpired, but at a quarter to 12 Police Constable Barrett, passing along Godolphin street, observed that the door of No. 16 was ajar. He knocked, but received no answer. Perceiving a light in the front room, he advanced into the passage and again knocked, but without reply. He then pushed open the door and entered. The room was in a state of wild disorder, the furniture being all swept to one side and one chair lying on its back in the center. Beside this chair and still grasping one of its legs lay the unfortunate tenant of the house. He had been stabbed to the heart and must have died instantly. The knife with which the crime had been committed was a curved Indian dagger, plucked down from a trophy of oriental arms which adorned one of the walls. Robbery does not appear to have been the motive of the crime, for there had been no attempt to remove the valuable contents of the room. Mr. Eduardo Lucas was so well known and popular that his violent and mysterious fate will arouse painful interest and intense sympathy in a widespread circle of friends.

"Well, Watson, what do you make of this?" asked Holmes after a long pause.

"It is an amazing coincidence."

"A coincidence! Here is one of the three men whom we had named as possible actors in this drama, and he meets a violent death during the very hours when we know that that drama was being enacted. The odds are enormous against its being coincidence. No figures could express them. No, my dear Watson, the two events were connected—must be connected. It is for us to find the connection."

"But now the official police must know all."

"Not at all. They know all they see at Godolphin street. They know—and shall know—nothing of Whitehall terrace. Only we know both events and can trace the relation between them. There is one obvious point which would in any case have turned my suspicions toward Lucas. Godolphin street, Westminster, is only a few minutes' walk from Whitehall terrace. The other secret agents whom I have named live in the extreme west end. It was easier, therefore, for Lucas than for the others to establish a connection or receive a message from the Euro-

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TIMBER LAND NOTICE

United States Land Office, Lakeview, Oregon, October 20th, 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, Frank Hall, of Klamath Falls, county of Klamath, state of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statements No. 3015 for the purchase of the NE 1/4 NE 1/4 NW 1/4 SE 1/4 NW 1/4 and lot 2 of section 19 in township No. 34 S., Range No. 18 E., S. 4 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 Geo. Chaistain, clerk of Klamath county, at his office at Klamath Falls, Oregon, on Saturday, the 13th day of January, 1906. He names witnesses: C. H. McCumber, of Dairy, Oregon; Herbert Crenner, Fred Bensing of Klamath Falls, Oregon, and E. A. McCulley, of McCloud, Calif.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 13th day of Jan., 1906. 44-1 J. N. Watson, Register.

TIMBER LAND NOTICE

United States Land Office Lakeview, Oregon, Nov. 15, 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, Horace K. Dunlap, of Lakeview, county of Lake, state of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 2964, for the purchase of the SW 1/4 of sec. 10, 17 in township No. 37 S., range No. 10 East, 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 Friday, the 26th day of January, 1906. He names as witnesses: W. R. Bernard, W. A. Masingill, Geo. Lynch, Wm. McConley, all 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 26th day of Jan. 1906. 47-4 J. N. Watson, Register.



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 SHE SEATED HERSELF WITH HER BACK TO THE WINDOW.

"That is a state secret of the utmost importance, and I fear that I cannot tell you, nor do I see that it is necessary. If by the aid of the powers which you are said to possess you can find such an envelope as I describe, with its inclosure, you will have deserved well of your country and earned any reward which it lies in our power to bestow."

Sherlock Holmes rose with a smile.

"You are two of the most busy men in the country," said he, "and in my own small way I have also a good many calls upon me. I regret exceedingly that I cannot help you in this matter, and any continuation of this interview would be a waste of time."

The premier sprang to his feet with that quick, fierce gleam of his deep set eyes before which a cabinet has cowered. "I am not accustomed, sir," he began, but mastered his anger and resumed his seat. Then the old statesman shrugged his shoulders.

"We must accept your terms, Mr. Holmes. No doubt you are right, and it is unreasonable for us to expect you

ment is recovered there will be war?"

"I think it is very probable."

"Then, sir, prepare for war."

"That is a hard saying, Mr. Holmes."

"Consider the facts, sir. It is inconceivable that it was taken after 11:30 at night, since I understand that Mr. Hope and his wife were both in the room from that hour until the loss was found out. It was taken, then, yesterday evening between 7:30 and 11:30, probably near the earlier hour, since whoever took it evidently knew that it was there, and would naturally secure it as early as possible. Now, sir, if a document of this importance were taken at that hour, where can it be now? No one has any reason to retain it. It has been passed rapidly on to those who need it. What chance have we now to overtake or even to trace it? It is beyond our reach."

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