

英语注释读物·新福尔摩斯探案集④

**Sherlock Holmes and
the Circus of Fear**

**福尔摩斯与
恐怖的马戏团**

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I Enter 'Lord' George

(乔治“勋爵”进来)

桑格所拥有的巡回马戏团规模极大, 节目精彩, 生意火红。他向福尔摩斯和华生求助说近来他的马戏团不断出事, 如匿名信接二连三, 支撑帐篷用的拉索被割断, 猛兽被放出笼外……。最新的一封匿名信说, “……欢迎第 9 条命……。”桑格邀请福尔摩斯和华生当晚就到罗姆福特观看演出并开始调查。结果, 最大的雄狮中毒而死。传说“猫有 9 条命”, 而狮子正是猫科动物, 恐吓果真应验了。这时桑格又收到封匿名信说, “星星明, 星星亮, 明晚肯定更辉煌。”福尔摩斯当即要求华生回贝克街拿些换洗衣服, 然后到下一站奥尔德肖特与马戏团同吃同住以便观察。他自己则另有安排。

‘Our caller, Watson, is according to his visiting card, a peer of the realm^①.’

I was staying with my friend Mr Sherlock Holmes at the old rooms in Baker Street whilst my wife was visiting relatives. Moreover, I had placed my practice in the capable hands of a trusted locum^② that I might spend time with my old friend and perhaps even

① peer of the realm 王国的贵族

② locum n. = locum tenens [英](牧师、医师等的)临时代理

relive a little of the spirit of the halcyon^① days. We had breakfasted well, if in my case somewhat late, so that Holmes, although having long finished the first meal of the day, yet sat and gossiped as I still masticated^②. Our small talk was interrupted by a tread^③ upon the stairs and the presentation by Billy of a visiting card.

I enquired, 'You doubt, then, the validity^④ of the engraved^⑤ words?' He passed the card to me for inspection and I observed that it was about four inches by five, and engraved upon buff^⑥ stock^⑦. It bore the name Lord George Sanger and there was also an address in Finchley.

Holmes asked me, 'Did you ever encounter before a calling card of such formidable size, other than that of a tradesman?' I had to admit that it was indeed large for the card of a nobleman.

The page^⑧ had no such doubts and he bowed and scraped^⑨ our visitor into the room. Years of no game being afoot^⑩ had made me ignore the message of the footsteps on the stairs, and I was expecting a tall, well-built man. No doubt Holmes was not surprised when our visitor turned out to be wiry^⑪ and of less than average height.

① halcyon *a.* 幸福美好的; 太平的;

② masticate *v.* 咀嚼

③ tread *n.* 脚步声; 行走

④ validity *n.* 有效(性); 正当(性)

⑤ engrave *n.* 雕刻

⑥ buff *n.* 水牛(或黄牛)皮制的坚韧柔软的)暗黄皮革

⑦ stock *n.* 原料

⑧ page *n.* 听差, 男侍

⑨ bow and scrape 打躬作揖; 奴颜卑膝

⑩ afoot *a.* 在进行中的

⑪ wiry *a.* 精瘦结实

As he removed his silk hat I noted that it was custom made^①, very much higher than is usual and possibly so made in order to give an impression of a man taller than his five feet four inches. As Billy took it, along with the expensive-looking grey greatcoat^②, equally costly-seeming jacket and trousers were revealed. At his silk stock^③ he sported a diamond-clustered^④ pin and a gold watch-chain spanned his waistcoat.

‘Lord George Sanger, I believe?’

Our caller answered Holmes in a voice that was gruff^⑤ and far from aristocratic, yet with a ring of authority. ‘Yes. Which of you is Sherlock Holmes?’

My friend said, ‘I have that doubtful honour, sir, and this is my friend and colleague Dr John Watson.’

Sanger nodded to me curtly^⑥ and occupied the chair which by gesture Holmes had indicated.

‘Mr Holmes, I am going to be completely honest with you. I am not in fact a peer of the realm.’

Holmes nodded. ‘I am aware of that, sir, for several reasons. The first that although your breeches^⑦ were made in St James’ s, you hitched^⑧ them at the knee on seating yourself.’

① custom made 定制的;非现成的

② greatcoat *n.* 厚重长大衣

③ silk stock 时髦服装

④ clustered *a.* 成簇的,成群的

⑤ gruff *a.* (说话声)低沉沙哑的,粗哑的

⑥ curtly *a.* 唐突草率的

⑦ breeches *n.* 马裤;(口)(长)裤子

⑧ hitch *v.* 急拉

Sanger started. Why should I not, it is a common-sense action to avoid one's breeches from bagging at the knee.'

Holmes smiled as he said, 'Common sense, but not an action that one associates with the aristocracy. The same can be said for your evident habit of securing all of the buttons upon your waist-coat.'

Our visitor smiled, which caused the skin on his gaunt^① face to wrinkle^②, giving him an appearance not unlike that of an Eskimo^③ or Red Indian. It was a face that had endured a lot of weather, much of it overwarm or extremely cold. It was a weather-beaten, seventy-year-old face as I now perceived, having thought him younger at a distance. What was left of his hair, and his neatly trimmed whiskers^④ had been none too skilfully dyed^⑤ and the application of this darkening agent had also been made to his eyebrows, the misapplication to one of them giving him a rather odd appearance which was completed by a rather obvious spot of rouge at each cheek. He said to Holmes, 'Well, sir, is there anything else that you can deduce from my appearance?'

Holmes smiled, more kindly, 'Not much, sir, save your long association with horses which the arrangement of callouses^⑥ upon your palms tell me. Notice, Watson, that they are caused by many years of driving a team. Oh yes, and you have shown Her Majesty

① gaunt *a.* 瘦削的

② wrinkle *v.* 皱起

③ Eskimo *n.* 爱斯基摩人

④ whiskers *n.* 八字胡

⑤ dyed *a.* 染色的

⑥ callous *a.* 老茧

some service, indicated by the V. R. ^① diamond pin at your stock. Although I'll wager you have never been listed in *Debrett's* ^②, you call yourself a lord without fear of punishment, so evidently Her Majesty is aware of your use of the title and tolerates it. The Queen does not often bestow ^③ gifts upon commoners ^④ save in the case of soldiers, sailors and inventors. I do not believe that you fall into any of these categories. However, she has been known to have a fondness for showmen and I believe you fall into that mould ^⑤. Your obvious association with horses makes me believe that you are possibly the owner of a travelling circus. '

Of course, looking back upon the incident I realize that most members of the public would have known of Sanger's Circus at the time. However, Holmes and I moved in a world that was seldom brought into contact with such an enterprise as a travelling circus. It is my view that Sanger did not believe this to be possible and therefore underestimated some of Holmes's deductions. But he said nothing on such lines ^⑥ and got straight to the purpose of his visit.

'You are correct, Mr Holmes, however you came upon that fact. I am not only the owner of a circus but, dare I say, the most famous and impressive circus in the whole of Europe, if not the world. Over the past half-century I have built my enterprise from a

① V. R. = Victoria Regina (英国)维多利亚女王

② *Debrett's* *n.* (口)英国《德布雷特英国贵族年鉴》(初版由英国出版家 John Debrett 于 1803 年编纂出版)

③ *bestow v.* 把……赠与;把……给予

④ *commoner n.* 平民

⑤ *mould n.* 类型

⑥ *on such lines* 按照这样的思路

one-man booth^① performance to a spectacle^② taking place in the largest tent^③ ever made in the British Isles, with hundreds of magnificent horses, a score of camels^④, llamas^⑤, zebras^⑥, lions, tigers and several large elephants. Add to this a group of performers who are the best of their kind and you have Lord George Sanger's Circus. Naturally, although I am honest in my business dealings, my enterprise has long created envy, jealousy even, with the traditional circus families. You see, I was not born into the circus business, for my father operated a peepshow^⑦ at the fairgrounds^⑧. Aye, and the fairground folk envy me too; yet none of these that I have mentioned would do me evil. Certainly they might over-paste my announcements or have me misdirected upon the road, but no, they would never wish me real harm...

He paused, and after some seconds I dared to enquire, 'But you have enemies who might?'

He was again silent for some seconds, then he said, 'I would like to have been able to say no, Doctor, but in the light of^⑨ recent events I cannot. It all started a few years ago when, in addition to my travelling circus, I was the owner of Astley's Theatre, just

① booth *n.* (木板、帆布等搭成的)临时窝棚

② spectacle *n.* 奇观

③ tent *n.* 帐篷

④ camel *n.* 骆驼

⑤ llama *n.* [动] 美洲驼

⑥ zebra; *n.* 斑马

⑦ peepshow *n.* 西洋镜, 拉洋片

⑧ fairgrounds *n.* 露天马戏场

⑨ in the light of 由于, 鉴于

south of the River Thames. I operated the amphitheatre^①, with its circus and horse operas there for almost twenty years. Then I started to get threatening messages, sometimes written and sometimes by word of mouth. I ignored suggestions that I should quit Astley's, but in the end I was forced to do so. The authorities, doubtless through the persistence of informers, started what seemed like a campaign of persecution^② against me. Suddenly exit doors that had been perfectly sound^③ for years were required to be replaced, gangways^④ had to be enlarged and all my careful fire precautions deemed inadequate. Animal cages, perfectly practical for their purpose, had to be rebuilt or replaced, and stables, the envy of the equine^⑤ world, were constantly criticized and all manner of changes demanded. I spent a fortune, Mr Holmes, on all these improvements^⑥ and yet still in the end they were not satisfied. Suddenly there was this new authority, the London County Council^⑦; they wanted all my improvements altered and really made it financially impossible for me to carry on. So I sold the place for a very considerable sum. Since then Astley's historic amphitheatre has been demolished^⑧ and I have reinvested the money in making my travelling circus even more magnificent.'

① amphitheatre *n.* 圆形剧场

② persecution *n.* 迫害

③ sound *a.* [律]有效的;可靠的

④ gangway *n.* 木板铺成的走道

⑤ equine *n.* 马科动物

⑥ improvised *a.* 即兴创作的

⑦ London County Council 伦敦市政会

⑧ demolished *a.* 被拆毁的

Holmes offered Sanger a cigar, from the coal scuttle^①, having observed the old-plated cutter^② which hung from the showman's watch-chain. He lit one himself also, and soon the room was filled with aromatic^③ smoke. At least it was an improvement on the Scottish mixture.

Then Holmes said, 'Unfortunately, this campaign by your enemy or enemies(if such it was) appears to have succeeded all but a decade ago. It might be that I could have helped you back in 1892, but I fail to see how I can help you now.'

This time there was no lapse of time before Sanger replied, 'But, Mr Holmes, it has started all over again. Not content with ruining me at Astley's they are now determined to do the same thing to my travelling circus!'

Holmes, interested now, leant forward in his chair and asked, 'Is history repeating itself? I mean, are you getting threatening letters followed by visits from officious^④ local authoritarians^⑤?'

The old showman shook his head, then after looking thoughtful said, 'Well, yes and no. Yes, I have received written and verbal warnings, but no, the misfortunes have been of a far more serious nature. For example, the guy ropes^⑥ of my tents have been cut, animals deliberately released from their cages, and many of my per-

① coal scuttle *n.* 煤斗

② cutter *n.* 割刀

③ aromatic *a.* 芳香的; 刺鼻的

④ officious *a.* 过分殷勤的; 好管闲事的; 强行干预的

⑤ authoritarian *n.* 独裁主义者

⑥ guy rope: *n.* (支帐篷、架设天线等用的) 支索; 拉索

formers have had accidents in the ring^① which have been engineered by a person or persons unknown. ’

I butted in^② once more, despite Holmes’s steely^③ eye. ‘Do you have any of the written threats to show us, Sanger?’

He said, ‘Why, yes. I have the latest one which I received yesterday morning. It had evidently been posted under the door of my caravan^④ during the night.’ He took a piece of folded paper from inside his jacket. ‘I have consigned^⑤ all the previous messages to the fire, but I realize now that I should have kept them.’

Holmes took the paper from him and crossed to the table where he spread it carefully. He read aloud,

BETWEEN THE ENTRANCE OF THE SHEEP AND THE PLACE OF
PROGRESS WILL THE NINTH LIFE BE WELCOME. PULL DOWN AND
AVOID TROUBLE.

Holmes busied himself with his lens^⑥ and then remarked, ‘It is written, or rather printed, with indian ink upon stout^⑦ paper of the kind used by artists. The words are written with a relief nib^⑧, associated more with writing than drawing, yet the ink and paper would

-
- ① ring: *n.* 圆形表演场
 - ② butt in [俚] 插嘴
 - ③ steely *a.* 冷冰冰的
 - ④ caravan *n.* 有篷大车
 - ⑤ consign *v.* 把……交付给
 - ⑥ lens *n.* 放大镜
 - ⑦ stout *a.* 牢固的;厚的
 - ⑧ relief nib 替换笔尖

have been suggestive of an artist. The paper was torn from a tablet^① by folding and scoring^② the paper between the nails of the finger and thumb. Despite being printed I think I can say that it has been written by a man rather than a woman. But let us for the moment try to decipher^③ the meaning of the message. '

Sanger rose from his seat and made as if to leave, saying, 'Very well, sir, I will leave it with you, but I wonder if I might ask you to attend a performance of my circus tonight, for you will then have a better idea of what I am up against and what I have to try and protect. Come, we are at present playing at Romford, which is a small town in Essex. This is not a very long way off and I also feel that you would enjoy the experience. '

We exchanged glances and Holmes took my expression, quite correctly, to mean that I was agreeable^④. He nodded, 'Very well, my dear Sanger, I see no reason why we should not accept your invitation. You will, I assume, provide us with transportation^⑤?' Holmes was never afraid to demand those favours to which he felt entitled.

Sanger said, 'Of course. I will send my own carriage for you at about six. The performance is at eight, so you will thus have ample time to make the journey. '

After Sanger had departed my friend spread the threatening message before him upon the table. He said, 'Little point in taking

① tablet *n.* 拍纸簿

② score *v.* 刻痕于, 划线于

③ decipher *v.* 破译

④ agreeable *a.* [口](欣然)同意的

⑤ transportation *n.* 交通车辆

any action, Watson, until we can discover what the message refers to. Sanger has no idea or he would not have brought it to me. The thing takes the form of an enigma^① or word puzzle rather than a code, I feel. The only part of it that springs at once to my mind is the mention of “the ninth life”. According to legend, a cat has nine lives, so I assume that a feline^② of some kind is involved. You are more worldly than I in matters of public entertainment, Watson; would a circus feature sheep and cats?’

I shook my head, saying, ‘I rather doubt it, Holmes. The last one I attended consisted mainly of feats performed by people and horses. There were clowns, jugglers, bareback^③ riders, that sort of thing, and a performing elephant. But I suppose other circuses could have dancing sheep and acrobatic cats.’

Holmes ignored, or seemed to, my irony and returned to his study of the threatening message. ‘Pull down and avoid trouble is of course obvious; Sanger is advised to fold up his tents and depart.’

Other problems and activities intervened so he was not much nearer to solving the puzzle by the time Sanger’s carriage arrived to take us to the circus. We decided not to wear evening dress but none the less we took suitable trouble with our appearance; Holmes in a grey frock coat^④ and I in a short black jacket and grey checked trousers. With suitable greatcoats we felt that we would show Sanger proper respect without appearing to be over-dressed. Yet

① enigma *n.* 谜语

② feline *n.* [动] 猫科动物

③ bareback *a.* 不用鞍的

④ frock coat 男礼服大衣

once we had climbed into the carriage and noted its coat of arms^① upon the door and postilion^② sitting up at the rear we began to wonder is we should not have dressed for the opera!

When we reached Romford, passing vast open meadows^③ on the way, I began to wonder if Sanger had picked the right place to hold his circus, but these doubts were dispelled^④ by the sight of several hundred people lining up outside the entrance to the vast grey umbrella of a tent. We were shown to two ringside^⑤ seats and I looked around me with interest, never having seen a circus which was on quite such a grand scale. There were, for instance, two main masts(which I would later learn to refer to as “king poles”) plus a couple of dozen lesser ones supporting this canvas^⑥ shelter which seemed capable of seating at least a thousand people, mainly upon tiered^⑦ wooden benches, plus seats like the ones that we occupied. As for the ring itself, this was about twelve yards across and enclosed by a circle of boxlike sections no more than thirty inches high, topped with red velvet. Opposite to that gap in the canvas walling through which we had entered there was a red plush^⑧ curtained entrance, rather like a small theatre, on top of which were

-
- ① coat of arms (盾形) 纹章, 盾徽
 - ② postilion *n.* (载客马车的) 左马驭者
 - ③ meadow *n.* 草地, 牧场
 - ④ dispel *v.* 驱散
 - ⑤ ringside *n.* (马戏表演场的) 台边区
 - ⑥ canvas *n.* 帆布
 - ⑦ tiered *a.* 阶梯式的
 - ⑧ plush *n.* 长毛绒

half a dozen uniformed^① bandmen^②, each with a brass instrument. They played well enough to satisfy the public on the benches yet badly enough to produce the odd wince^③ from Sherlock Holmes when a particularly strident^④ discord^⑤ was produced.

Then, just as boredom was beginning to affect me, there was a shrill blast^⑥ from a whistle and a top-hatted man in a pink hunting coat entered brandishing^⑦ a long whip. He cracked the whip as he raised his silk headgear^⑧, and Sanger's Circus began!

I suppose it is true to say that having seen the performance so many times since, it is difficult to be subjective concerning my impressions of it on that first occasion. The circus is of course essentially an equestrian^⑨ and equine affair and has been since Philip Astley started it all, back in the late eighteenth century. But whilst Astley was the "father of the circus" George Sanger was one of the pioneers^⑩ of its travelling version. In half a century Sanger had gradually taken his circus from being a fairground sideshow^⑪ to its position as the circus in the British Isles. Only his brother, John Sanger, had an attraction on anything like the same scale. During

① uniformed *a.* 穿制服的

② bandman *n.* 管乐队(或军乐队)成员

③ wince *v.* 皱眉蹙眼

④ strident *a.* 刺耳的

⑤ discord *n.* 不谐和和弦

⑥ blast *v.* 吹奏

⑦ brandish *v.* 挥舞

⑧ headgear *n.* 头饰

⑨ equestria *n.* 马术家, 骑马者; equestrienne *n.* 女马术家, 骑马者

⑩ pioneer *n.* 开创者

⑪ sideshow *n.* (马戏演出中的)穿插表演

John's lifetime the brothers had co-operated to make it possible for both of them to make a handsome living. Since John's demise^① in 1889 his descendants^② had proved less friendly, and a fierce rivalry between the two Sander circuses had sprung up.

However, all of this I would learn in the fullness of time and I must return to describing my impressions gained upon that night at Romford, so many years ago.

The ringmaster^③ having cracked his whip there entered into the ring no less than eight cream-coloured ponies. These were directed by their trainer, who wore a French military uniform, to break them into smaller groups, twos and threes, and perform various gyrations^④ and pirouettes^⑤. The ponies placed their forefeet upon the ring fence and circled it, repeating the manoeuvre with their hind hooves upon the fence. Finally, in turns they reared up onto their hind legs and slowly backed out. The act was striking, with the ponies in a minimum of harness^⑥ (simply pale blue bridles^⑦, bearing reins and waistbands^⑧). The audience enjoyed this lively opening to the evening. Next came a satire of the number, with an extremely amusing clown in a spangled^⑨ motley^⑩ and pointed white hat, who

-
- ① demise *n.* 死亡
② descendant *n.* 后代, 子孙
③ ringmaster *n.* (常兼报幕的) 马戏演出指挥
④ gyration *n.* 旋转
⑤ pirouette *n.* 单脚着地旋转
⑥ harness *n.* 马具; 挽具
⑦ bridle *n.* 马笼头
⑧ waistband *n.* 腰带, 裤带
⑨ spangled *a.* 闪烁发光的
⑩ motley *n.* 彩衣, 小丑衣

presented a comedy horse of the kind which has two people inside it. This creature burlesqued^① everything which the ponies had done, including the backward hindleg walk which resulted in a calculated collapse of the two persons inside the horse skin.

After he had chased the horse out of the ring, the clown indulged in a whirlwind display of tumbling which quite took one's breath away, though seemingly not his. Then the band ceased playing for the first time since the circus had started and the ringmaster and the clown exchanged dialogue:

'I say, Mr Clown, you will have to go now. I want you to leave!'

'Then want must be your master!'

'Master? I *am* your master, master of the circus.'

'If you are my master, what am I?'

'What are you? Why you are a mere nobody.'

'Fine job you have got. . . master of nobody!'

'You are a fool.'

'Yes? Well, you are another!'

'What did you say?'

'I said, how's your brother, all right?'

'I must introduce the next act. Monsieur Duval, the famous contortionist^②, the world's greatest boneless wonder.'

'I know an even greater boneless wonder. . .'

'What is that?'

'A sausage!'

① burlesque *n. v.* 模仿

② contortionist *n.* 柔体杂技演员