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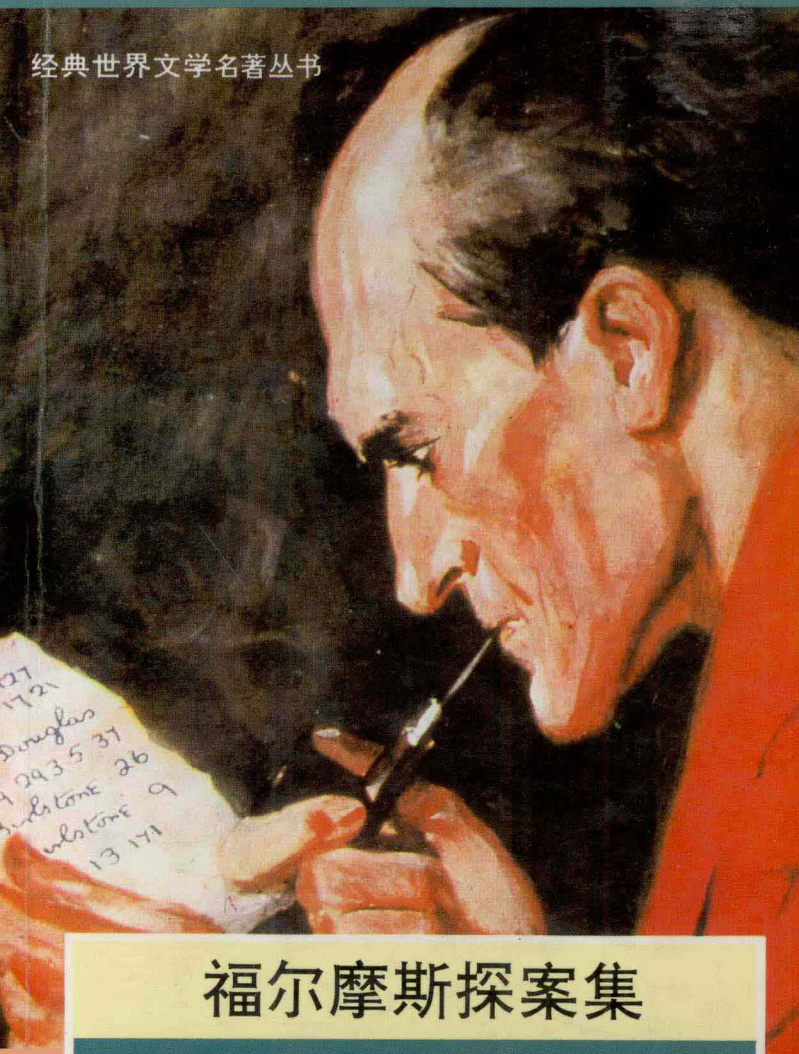

福尔摩斯探案集

SHERLOCK HOLMES

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

英语经典世界文学名著丛书

福尔摩斯探案集

SHERLOCK HOLMES

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Arthur Conan Doyle

with an Introduction by

S. C. Roberts

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Introduction

I

In the annals of publishing there are many instances of the difficult and protracted birth-pangs of what was destined to be a supremely successful book. One such example is *A Study in Scarlet*, the first recorded story of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

In the spring of 1886 Arthur Conan Doyle was a doctor in general practice at Southsea. But his ambitions were literary: he was already a contributor to the *Cornhill* and he had completed the draft of his first novel. He had also read Poe and Wilkie Collins and Gaboriau and his mind turned to the science, as well as to the literature, of detection. Literary influences apart, he remembered with peculiar vividness the methods of Joseph Bell, surgeon at the Edinburgh Infirmary, who had enlivened his instruction by encouraging his students to recognize a patient as a left-handed cobbler, or as a retired sergeant of a Highland regiment who had served in Barbados, by the simple processes of accurate observation and rational deduction. Into Conan Doyle's mind came the notion of a detective of highly scientific quality confronted by a murderer masquerading as a cabman, and out of this notion *A Study in Scarlet* was developed. After some experiment, the detective was named Sherlock Holmes and, with a novelist's instinct, Conan Doyle realized that his hero must have a foil and his story a narrator. Hence came the presentation of *A Study in Scarlet* as 'a reprint from the reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D., late of the Army Medical Department' and the opening pages of the story are in fact devoted to

that brief sketch of Watson's early career which was destined to form a basis of investigation for many later commentators.

Conan Doyle finished the story in April and sent it to James Payn, editor of the *Cornhill*. Payn was personally delighted with it, but returned a verdict with which all publishing houses are familiar: 'too long for a story, too short for a book'. Frederick Warne and Arrowsmith were then approached, but returned the manuscript unread. Ward Lock & Co. were slightly more responsive: they could not publish the story immediately, but if the author liked to leave it with them they would include it, with some other light pieces, in *Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887*. So, in the year of Jubilee, the first instalment of the Reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D., appeared, with illustrations by D. H. Friston and in company with 'two original plays for home performance'—*Food for Powder* by R. André and *The Four-leaved Shamrock* by C. J. Hamilton. *Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887*, as is the way of Annuals, was quickly sold out and few copies were preserved. (Collectors, as Mr. Michael Sadleir would say, will have trouble with *A Study in Scarlet*.) But, at the time, one copy was read by the editor of *Lippincott's Magazine*, who thought well enough of it to invite Conan Doyle to write another story of Sherlock Holmes. Hence came *The Sign of Four*, which was published in 1890 in both the English and American editions of *Lippincott's* and later in the same year by Spencer Blackett in book form. The book drew little attention and had to wait two years for a second edition. Today, the first edition is quoted as an example of those books 'which owe their rarity . . . to the instability of their original publishers'.

INTRODUCTION

Early in 1891 Conan Doyle, who had already devoted himself to the writing of historical novels, decided finally to abandon medical work and to live by his pen. The inauguration of the *Strand Magazine* offered a suitable medium for a series of half a dozen shorter stories of Sherlock Holmes, and when *A Scandal in Bohemia* appeared in the July number of the *Strand* Holmes and Watson were quickly and firmly established in the literary tradition of the English-speaking race. These first six stories (*A Scandal in Bohemia*, *The Red-Headed League*, *A Case of Identity*, *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, *The Five Orange Pips*, and *The Man with the Twisted Lip*) immediately captured the affection, as well as the interest, of the reading public. Furthermore, after two false starts, the iconography of Holmes and Watson was established. In the frontispiece to the original edition of *A Study in Scarlet* Holmes, though properly equipped with an Inverness cape and a magnifying glass, is represented with mutton-chop side whiskers and a nose that does not suggest the 'thin, hawk-like' quality of Watson's description; again, in the frontispiece to *The Sign of Four* (1890) Holmes, as depicted by Charles Kerr, looks like a melodramatic villain and Watson like a startled archduke. But with the first series of *Strand* stories came the invaluable co-operation of Sidney Paget as illustrator. There, at the opening of *A Scandal in Bohemia*, is the 'tall, spare figure' of Holmes standing before the Baker Street fire-place and looking down upon Watson in his 'singular introspective fashion'; there, in an interlude of the excitement of pursuing the villains of the Red-Headed League is Holmes, with lowered eyelids, seated in the stalls at St. James's Hall, enwrapped in the music of 'violin-land, where all is sweetness and

delicacy and harmony and there are no red-headed clients to vex us with their conundrums'; there, on their way to unravel the Boscombe Valley mystery, are Holmes and Watson in the railway-carriage with Holmes wearing his long grey travelling-cloak and the deer-stalker cap; there, seated on a 'sort of Eastern divan' is Holmes in his blue dressing-gown at the end of the all-night sitting occasioned by the problem of the Man with the Twisted Lip, a vigil which involved the consumption of precisely one ounce of shag. These are the visual images which, perfectly harmonizing with the spirit and the atmosphere of the narrative, combined to impart a physical realism to No. 221B Baker Street and its famous lodgers.

Naturally, the editor of the *Strand* asked for more. Conan Doyle was unresponsive; when pressed, he asked for £50 a story—a price that he felt to be prohibitive. But the editor knew better; he asked simply for the quick delivery of 'copy'. So followed the second series of six stories, beginning with *The Blue Carbuncle* and ending with *The Copper Beeches*, and in 1892 the first twelve stories were published as a book, dedicated by the author to Joseph Bell and produced in a format similar to that of the *Strand Magazine*. Still the editor was not satisfied; again Conan Doyle named what seemed to him a preposterous sum—£1,000 for a dozen stories—and again the fee was thankfully paid. *Silver Blaze*, the first story of the new series, appeared in the *Strand* in December 1892 and the twelve stories were published in book form as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* in 1894. This time Conan Doyle really determined to make an end, as Trollope had made an end of Mrs. Proudie—but for an entirely different reason. It was not the readers, but the creator, that had grown tired of Sherlock Holmes,

and in 1893 Sidney Paget was commissioned to depict the dramatic moment at which Holmes and Moriarty, locked in a deadly embrace, fell together into the swirling torrent of the Reichenbach; Watson, in his bleak loneliness, rounding off the story of the 'final problem' with a tribute taken almost verbatim from the last lines of the *Phaedo*.

The reading public was not only sorrowful, but furious. 'You brute' was the opening of one of the many protests addressed to the author. Conan Doyle himself had many other irons in the fire and was weary of the very name of Sherlock Holmes; but when in 1901 he listened to a friend's account of some of the legends of Dartmoor, he conceived a mystery-story about a family haunted by a spectral hound and decided to present it as an earlier adventure of the now world-famous detective. So *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, illustrated by some of Sidney Paget's best work, appeared in the *Strand* in 1901–2 and was published in book form in the latter year. Though the mortal remains of Holmes himself were still supposed to lie at the bottom of the Reichenbach Falls, the publication of this earlier adventure on Dartmoor had revived hope in the minds both of publishers and of readers and in 1903 Conan Doyle reluctantly consented to explain how Holmes, thanks to his knowledge of baritsu, had contrived to come out alive from his duel with Moriarty. The details of this remarkable escape, as recounted by Holmes to the astonished Watson, are recorded in *The Empty House*, the adventure which inaugurated the stories grouped under the title *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905). Two more collections followed—*His Last Bow* (1917) and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927). Finally, the whole saga was brought together in two 'omnibus'

volumes: the *Short Stories* in 1928 and the *Long Stories* in 1929.

II

So much for an outline of the bibliographical history of the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. But for the latter-day enthusiast bibliography is not enough; it is biography that he demands. 'I am lost without my Boswell', said Holmes in a famous passage and while it must be admitted that Watson's narrative cannot wholly justify the claim:

> Quo fit ut omnis
> Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
> Vita senis

the life and character of Sherlock Holmes can nevertheless be reconstructed with a fair measure of probability.

In his family background the two most important elements were his descent from a long line of country squires and the fact that his grandmother was a sister of Horace Vernet (1789–1863), the third of a line of French painters. Holmes's tastes and habits were, indeed, so far removed from those of the squirearchy and Watson is so frequently at pains to emphasize the Bohemian character of life in Baker Street, that we are apt to forget how naturally and easily Holmes adapted himself to the country-house scene. With the Trevors at Donnithorpe or with the Musgraves at Hurlstone Manor or in Colonel Hayter's gun-room Holmes was completely at home; nor did he betray the slightest self-consciousness in dealing with such clients as the Duke of Holdernesse or the illustrious Lord Bellinger. But it was the Gallic side of Holmes's ancestry that more strongly influenced his way of life. 'Art in the blood', as he remarked to Watson, 'is liable

to take the strangest forms' and he attributed both his own and his brother Mycroft's achievements in the art of detection to their Vernet descent. Whether, as a small boy, he ever met his great-uncle it is almost impossible to conjecture; but it is at least probable that from his early years onwards he was familiar with some of Horace Vernet's better-known pictures —for instance, with *L'Atelier d'Horace Vernet*, a graphic delineation by the artist of the motley company which gathered in his studio: 'Celui-ci, à demi couché sur une table, souffle dans un cornet à pis ton . . . un jeune homme lit à haute voix un journal, deux des assistants font des armes, l'un la pipe à la bouche, tenant de la main gauche une palette et un appuie-main; l'autre vêtu d'une grande blouse écrue: c'est Horace Vernet lui-même!'[1] Here, surely, is something two generations back which accords with the blue dressing-gown, the taste for fencing, the tobacco in the Persian slipper, the pistol-practice in the sitting-room, and other elements of a Bohemianism which sometimes went even beyond Watson's generous limit.

While little or nothing is known of Holmes's relations with members of his family in France or elsewhere (except, of course, for his occasional association with Mycroft), it is noteworthy that he seldom neglected the opportunity of investigating a French problem. As early as 1886 his practice had extended to the Continent. François le Villard, a rising French detective, translated several of Holmes's pamphlets, including that on the varieties of tobacco-ash, into French and was loud in his praise of Holmes's help in a difficult will case—*magnifique, coup de maître*, he wrote in his enthusiasm. In 1887 Holmes was engaged in foiling the 'colossal schemes' of Baron Maupertuis

[1] C. Blanc, *Histoire des Peintres* (*École Française*), tom. iii

and Watson hurried out to find him in a state of exhaustion in the Hôtel Dulong at Lyons; there followed an intricate problem at Marseilles and the case of the unfortunate Madame Montpensier, and in the winter of 1890–1 Holmes was retained by the French Government in a case of 'supreme importance'; finally, in 1894, he was responsible for bringing the Boulevard assassin, Huret, to justice—a triumph which brought him a personal letter from the President of the Republic and the Order of the Legion of Honour. It is not without significance that Holmes accepted the Order; when he was offered a knighthood in 1902, he refused it.

But, to return to the background of Holmes's upbringing, very little can be inferred about his early education. If, like Watson, he had been at one of the well-known public schools, it is difficult to believe that Watson's narrative would not have included some chance allusion to it. It is, indeed, clear that Holmes had little interest in, or knowledge of, the manly sports and exercises which delight the heart of the normal Englishman. His entire ignorance of famous rugby footballers astonished the simple soul of Cyril Overton ('sixteen stone of solid bone and muscle'), who found it hard to believe that anyone in England could be unfamiliar with the name of 'Godfrey Staunton, the crack three-quarter, Cambridge, Blackheath and five Internationals'. At the same time, Holmes admitted that amateur sport was 'the best and soundest thing in England' and he was himself a decent fencer, a good shot with a revolver, and definitely proud of his own proficiency in 'the good old British sport of boxing'.

That Holmes went to a university is, of course, quite definitely known. He told Watson that he was

not a very sociable undergraduate, spending most of his time working out his own methods of thought, and that Victor Trevor was his only friend at college. The friendship was formed in a peculiar way, Trevor's bull-terrier 'freezing on' to Holmes's ankle one morning as he went down to chapel. Much legitimate, and some extravagant, inference has been drawn from this incident. Bull-terriers are not allowed within college precincts, so the attack must have occurred in the street. Therefore, it has been argued (and notably by Miss Dorothy Sayers[1]), Holmes was living out of college in his first year; and therefore, as this was a distinctively Cambridge custom in those days, Holmes must have been at Cambridge. But the argument is not wholly conclusive; it is at least reasonable to suppose that it was a Sunday morning service to which Holmes was on his way, and he may well have stepped into the street to buy a newspaper just before going to chapel. Or again, Trevor's dog may well have been tied up in the college porch, in accordance with Oxford custom.[2] Apart from this, the tone of Holmes's commentary throughout the story of *The Missing Three-Quarter* makes it impossible to believe that he was a Cambridge man. What Cambridge man talks of 'running *down* to Cambridge'? Or, again: 'Here we are, stranded and friendless, in this inhospitable town.' This, surely, is the voice of a critical stranger, not of a loyal *alumnus*.

The scene of *The Three Students* is laid in 'one of our great university towns'. The case involved a 'painful scandal' and Watson is at pains to conceal

[1] *Baker Street Studies*, pp. 10–13. Miss Sayers's further effort to identify Sherlock Holmes with the T. S. Holmes who was admitted to Sidney Sussex College in 1871 is unfortunate. T. S. Holmes became Chancellor of Wells Cathedral.

[2] 'In the porch of the College there were, as usual, some chained-up dogs.'—Beerbohm, *Zuleika Dobson*, p. 88.

any clues by which the college of 'St. Luke's' might be identified. But it is significant that Holmes talks naturally of 'the quadrangle', a word unknown in the vocabulary of Cambridge. In *The Creeping Man* Watson, following the unfortunate lead of Dean Farrar, tantalizingly describes the university as 'Camford' and here we find Holmes affectionately reminiscent: 'There is, if I remember right, an inn called the "Chequers" where the port used to be above mediocrity, and the linen was above reproach. I think, Watson, that our lot for the next few days might lie in less pleasant places.' Here, and here alone, is the note of authenticity, and it is abundantly clear that Holmes was a 'Camford' man. 'More and more', wrote Monsignor R. A. Knox in an early treatise which has now become a classic of exploratory criticism, 'I incline to the opinion that he [Holmes] was up at the House'. It is an inclination at which no Cambridge man can cavil.

It was the father of his friend Trevor who recommended Holmes to make a profession out of what had previously been 'the merest hobby', and during the later part of his time at the university his fame spread amongst a small circle of undergraduates. Coming down from college, he took rooms in Montague Street near the British Museum and, as clients were few, he filled in time by a study of the various branches of science that were relevant to his prospective career. One of his earliest cases (*The Musgrave Ritual*), which may reasonably be dated about 1878, arose out of one of his rare undergraduate friendships, and early in 1881 came the famous meeting in the laboratory at Bart's, when young Stamford unconsciously acted as one of the great go-betweens of history and Holmes and Watson made their plans for the joint *ménage*

in 221B Baker Street. In his account of the first adventure of the partnership (*A Study in Scarlet*) Watson introduces the character-sketch of his fellow lodger which must provide the basis of any biographical estimate—his late breakfasts, his alternating energy and torpor. his curious patches of ignorance (of Thomas Carlyle, for example, and of the Solar System), his violin-playing, his magazine article, 'The Book of Life'. . . . Some of Watson's early impressions naturally need qualification. As has been more than once remarked, a man who quotes Hafiz and Horace, Flaubert and Goethe, cannot fairly be described as totally ignorant of literature, and one play of Shakespeare's (*Twelfth Night*) appears to have been his particular favourite since he twice quotes a line from it in very different contexts. Holmes, indeed, was very far from being a mere calculating machine. Watson was deeply, and properly, impressed by the compilation of 'the great index volume' which served as Holmes's home-made encyclopaedia, but it was a volume which showed some curious lapses. Under the letter V, for instance, there appeared not only 'Vigor, the Hammersmith Wonder' and 'Vittoria, the circus belle' but 'Voyage of the *Gloria Scott*' and 'Victor Lynch, the forger'—exasperating entries for anyone wanting information about the *Gloria Scott* or Lynch. However, Holmes, no doubt, knew his own methods and by 1887, as has already been noted, he had become an international figure. The exceptional labours involved in the Maupertuis case had a serious effect upon his health, but he recovered in time to tackle the problem of the Reigate Squires and many others. Then came *The Sign of Four* and Watson's marriage (his first marriage) to Miss Mary Morstan For a time the partnership was broken and it was only

by hearsay that Watson knew of Holmes's summons to Odessa to investigate the Trepoff murder and of his mission on behalf of the Dutch Royal House. But the lure of 221B was strong and in 1888 the partnership was intermittently resumed, Mrs. Watson frequently encouraging her husband to respond to a tentative summons from his old friend. Thus Watson found himself engaged in the case of *The Five Orange Pips*, *The Naval Treaty*, *The Man with the Twisted Lip*, and many other famous adventures. What was described by Watson, in good faith, as *The Final Problem* belonged to the year 1891. But while Watson in the next few years was wistfully, and 'with indifferent success', attempting to apply his friend's methods to the solution of the criminal problems of the time, Holmes was in fact travelling through Tibet and other distant countries. He spent some days in Lhasa with the head Lama, then went through Persia, paid a brief visit to Mecca, and secured some useful information for the Foreign Office, probably at Mycroft's request, as the result of his interview with the Khalifa at Khartoum. Finally, he was engaged for some months in research into coal-tar derivatives in the laboratory at Montpelier. The dramatic 'Return' to Baker Street occurred in 1894, and the years that followed were busy ones indeed. Watson more than once refers to the year 1895 as 'memorable' and by the spring of 1897 the 'constant hard work' was beginning to tell upon Holmes's iron constitution. One of his last cases (*The Creeping Man*) occurred in 1903 and shortly afterwards he retired from active work and settled in Sussex. In a lonely house on the southern slope of the Downs 'commanding a great view of the Channel' the great detective lived a placid life with his housekeeper and his beehives. A great change

had come over him with the passing of the years. In his record of an early adventure (*The Cardboard Box*) Watson had noted that neither sea nor country held any attraction for Holmes and that among his many gifts appreciation of Nature found no place. But by 1907 Holmes had not only come to love the Sussex cliffs and downlands, but had convinced himself that he had always aspired after a country life, solemnly referring to 'that soothing life of Nature' as something for which he had yearned during the long years spent in London. Such is the power of Time to dull even a mind like that of Sherlock Holmes into forgetfulness—or was it just another Gallic touch, a *Recherche du temps perdu*?

But if Holmes fell into a mood of sentimental self-deception about his yearnings after Nature in his early days, there can be no doubt about the genuineness of his enjoyment of the Sussex downs and the Sussex coast, especially when, after a Channel gale, all Nature was 'newly washed and fresh' and he would stroll along the cliff after breakfast and relish the 'exquisite air'. Nor was he idle. To the 'little working gangs' of bees he devoted the same intensive observation and analysis which he had before expended upon the criminal world of London, and it was with legitimate pride that he described his *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen* as the *magnum opus* of his latter years.

About 1912 this happy absorption in apiculture was dramatically interrupted. At that time the activities of Von Bork, *facile princeps* amongst the secret agents of the Kaiser, were causing grave anxiety at Cabinet level. Strong pressure was brought upon Holmes to return to active service, and the gravity of the

situation was emphasized by his receiving a visit not from an under-secretary but from the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister himself. Holmes could no longer resist. He set off for Chicago, contrived to join an Irish secret society at Buffalo, and had some trouble with the police at Skibbareen. It was two years before the net was finally, and tightly, drawn and the full story of the capture of Von Bork in August 1914 is told in *His Last Bow*.

Of Holmes's way of life after 1914 no record survives. Whether he was ever again induced to emerge from his downland retreat seems doubtful. His many admirers can but await the rumoured celebration of the centenary of his birth in 1954.

III

Such is the broad biographical pattern that can be woven with threads drawn from the records of various adventures.

Why should it be deemed worth while to attempt such weaving? The answer is simple: the personalities of Holmes and Watson took such universal hold upon the hearts and imaginations of readers and have retained that hold so tenaciously over a period of sixty years, that their lives, their habits, and their characteristics have become an object of greater interest than the adventures which they shared.

'The truth is', wrote Johnson in a highly disputable passage in the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare, 'that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players.'

Of the drama of Sherlock Holmes the very reverse is the truth. The spectators are not always in their