

A SUICIDE REVISITED
A NOVELLA
BY
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Acknowledgements of the author:

The two leading characters in this tale were originally introduced to the world by the honorable Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Several other named persons in the story were living at the time the tale is set.

Nevertheless, the entire work is one of fiction and the plot is no more than the meanderings of the frenzied mind of the writer.

The author wishes to thank his son, Stephen Rex Mason, for his unflagging encouragement to undertake this challenge. Steve serves as Third Mate of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star (Dallas, Texas), a scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars.

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BY RAIL TO VIENNA

Any fellow passengers pausing in the passageway to glance through the door into Sherlock Holmes' and Dr. John Watson's compartment could have perceived the two swaying ever so gently in rhythm with the rocking of their railway coach. The pair had departed England the previous morning by boat train for Calais, and arrived in Paris in early evening. Anticipating a rather tiresome trip the following day, they chose to stay the night in the City of Light. The second day of their journey started with an early departure for the approximate thirteen hour trip to Munich and Vienna, their ultimate destination.

Now, in early afternoon they had departed Munich and were some two hours from Salzburg. The good doctor entertained himself by watching the German countryside glide by the window, while Holmes, sitting diagonally across from the doctor, was engrossed in a thick book. Watson occasionally thought of a question to ask the detective, but hesitated, not wanting to interrupt the latter's concentration on one of the Royal Observatory's latest astronomical tomes. Any person, at least one with a modicum of intelligence, can only concentrate on a landscape filled with pastures and farm animals for a finite period of time.

Thus, Watson's mind drifted back to four days earlier when this adventure took life. As he recalled, it was a Friday morning and after a satisfying breakfast, Holmes and he were depleting a second pot of tea while thumbing through two of the morning newspapers. There was a knock on the door, and Watson sitting closest, rose to answer it. From the sound he guessed it was Mrs. Hudson and his assumption proved accurate.

He said, "Good morning, madam," and she responded with, "Good morning, doctor. There is a gentleman at the front door, well dressed I noticed, and he asked to see Mr. Holmes on urgent business. He said he did not have an appointment but offered this card."

Watson glanced at the card which read, "Bernhard Holzer, Duke of Tryol, Charge'd Affairs, Austrian-Hungarian Embassy, London, England." The doctor handed the card to Holmes who, after a quick glance, looked toward his landlady and stated in a pleasant voice, "Show the gentleman up, Mrs.

Hudson, and please bring another pot of tea and servings."

A couple of minutes later the unexpected visitor walked into the flat and there were the usual introductions. The host motioned towards a chair and the Duke sat down.

The guest replied, "I will assume you have read some of the contrived articles in the news concerning our recent sadness in Vienna. Many are not only untrue but even mean spirited."

Holmes remarked it seemed papers all across the continent as well as those in London had indeed been unusually vicious in their attacks. Holzer continued, "There are a great many political leaders in Europe who would very much like to see the Austrian and Hungarian alliance fail. In other words, bring about a dissolution of our Empire." After a second's pause he continued, "You will please understand our conversation today, and any action you take in this matter, is absolutely confidential."

"It is plainly understood." came the reply. The guest spoke again, "After some admittedly contrived announcements by various agencies of our government in Vienna, our official position now is that Crown Prince Rudolf died by his own hand, probably after the suicide of his close friend, the Baroness Mary Vetsera."

"Please tell us," asked Holmes, "would it be reasonable for us to assume the Prince and the Baroness had an affectionate relationship?"

Holzer spoke, "Yes sir, I will unhappily confirm your suspicion." "Then, what do you require of us?" asked Holmes.

The Duke then explained "the Crown" was not satisfied with the current formal explanation and the report of the misfortune that was being offered the public. An investigation into the unhappy event by the famous consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes, would be greatly appreciated. He next inquired as to Holmes' detective fees. Holmes replied he would merely ask for reasonable expenses for himself and Watson, plus a very fair per diem amount if they presented acceptable results at the conclusion of the investigation. Holzer nodded in agreement and asked if the two Englishmen might be ready to travel by Monday morning. Homes and Watson both answered in the affirmative, followed by a question by Sherlock.

"Can you enlighten us as to how the Crown was even aware of our existence?"

"Easily," replied the Austrian, "someone at our Embassy bought a local periodical several months ago that contained a story of one of your investigations

as reported by Dr. Watson. It was passed around our offices and eventually sent by diplomatic pouch to the Foreign Office in Vienna.

Soon, instructions were dispatched back to London to likewise forward any future articles that might be published. Apparently at least one later article was passed from the Foreign Office to the Prime Minister, who in turn shared it with the royal palace.”

Holmes murmured, “Ah, fame.”

Then the Duke, standing up, announced, “I will have one of our experienced staff members visit you at one o’clock tomorrow afternoon. He will bring you visas for both Austria and Hungary, details of your hotel reservations in Vienna, and the itinerary for your railway reservations from London to Vienna. Also, we will provide you with the name of the individual who will meet you at the station in Vienna and accompany you to your hotel. An explanation of his position in the government will be provided. I recommend you go by rail from Paris through Munich, Salzburg, and Linz to your destination. If you consult an atlas you might think it is not the most direct route, but please trust me. Based on my experience and that of a great many colleagues at the embassy, the itinerary I am suggesting is by far the best available from a standpoint of comfort and reliability. One last piece of information: Shortly after your arrival in Vienna you will be provided another piece of background which I am not permitted to divulge at this time. Please don’t be concerned about this, it will not be of great significance to your investigation.”

Holmes thanked him in advance, the Duke shook hands with both of his hosts, and departed 221B Baker Street shortly later.

At that point in Watson’s musings Holmes yawned, closed his book and laid it on the empty seat next to himself. He then asked Watson, “Have we passed through Linz yet?”

The latter replied, “About an hour ago.”

“So,” Holmes continued, “we must have about one more hour to Vienna.”

The doctor saw his opportunity! “Please, refresh my memory concerning the affair in Vienna. With the conflicting newspaper reports I am somewhat confused.”

WATSON “CATCHES UP”

Holmes began, “You will recall I visited my brother Mycroft at his club on Sunday afternoon. Due to his club’s oppressive rule prohibiting conversation between the members, we retired to his flat. He seemed pleased to update me on the trials and tribulations of the Hapsburg family.”

“Crown Prince Rudolf was born in ‘58 to Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth. He had two sisters, one older, one younger. With no other male child issuing from Franz Joseph, Rudolf had been the heir apparent to the throne. After a not unusual childhood and a first class education, he married Princess Stephanie of Belgium when he was 22 years old. More than a few aristocrats on the Continent considered it a marriage of royal convenience.

The couple had a child two years later, a daughter they named Elisabeth. It wasn’t long after the birth of the daughter Rudolf seemed to become noticeably rebellious. There were two ‘thorns’ in his posterior; one was the political differences with his father. The Emperor was an ‘old school’ conservative monarch. He fought progressive views and liberal maneuvering at every juncture.

“His son was totally opposite. Rudolf was building friendships and personal alliances to someday allow him, after ascending to the throne, to grant the parliament more discretion and power. He also planned to give the general public more political clout, enhanced educational opportunities, and a higher standard of living. The other irritation arose from his disenchantment with his wife. They had married shortly before her 17th birthday and it became apparent as time went on she had not received nearly the training in social graces and deportment one would expect of a royal princess in 19th Century Europe. He was known, especially by the undercover police in Vienna, to frequent the more “upscale” brothels when he had state visits by young male foreign aristocrats. Also, the police knew he had an ongoing affair with one particular well known local prostitute. Mycroft seemed to believe there has been some very recent gossip concerning the wanton lady and urged me to enquire about her when we get to Vienna.

“Rudolf purchased Schloss Mayerling in ‘86. Of course the Germanic ‘Schloss’ translates to ‘castle’ or palace’. He ostensibly got it to use as a hunting lodge, most likely using funds from a recent inheritance. It seems from most reports Franz Joseph was not, at least outwardly, upset with his son’s acquisition.”

“He undoubtedly realized Rudolf did not intend to use the lodge primarily for ‘hunting’ holidays, but for secret rendezvous with various far-left agitators and as well as for clandestine trysts with paramours. But the Emperor could accept if the activities within Mayerling were kept secret; in other words, out of the newspapers and away from the ears of the other members of the royal family.

“The tragedy of it all occurred on the night of January 29th, a Tuesday some ten days before we received the visit from Duke Holzer. The Crown Prince and a mistress, the Baroness Mary Vetsera with whom he had kept company for several months, died at Mayerling. Their bodies were discovered on the morning of the 30th and it could not be determined with certainty if the two died before or after the previous midnight.

“Both corpses were in Rudolf’s personal suite. In total confusion, the family first reported Rudolf had died of a heart attack. That position proved untenable within a very few hours. It was then offered the Prince and a female acquaintance had died from poison after entering into a suicide pact. It quickly became apparent there were no traces of poison in the rooms. Next it was suggested the lady visiting him had killed Rudolf, with his revolver, and then taken her own life.

“Another later version had the visitor killing herself with the gun and a few hours later the Prince turning the weapon upon himself. Finally, and this is seemingly the last revelation, there seems to be unanimous agreement between the Prime Minister and the police the Prince killed the lady and a few hours later took his own life.”

“Of course Mycroft is not privy to the thoughts of the royal family, but one can easily imagine they are dismayed by the suggestion Rudolf committed both murder and suicide. It was the police who dismissed the idea of a dual suicide as there was not a final written note from either victim. My brother has heard there been a bit of a problem with the Church; the Hapsburgs are Catholic, you know. A Catholic mass and burial for a murderer who in turn commits suicide would be almost unthinkable. But within a few days the Church hierarchy determined the Crown Prince was the victim of a deranged mind. Thus, he was interred in a Catholic chapel while Mary Vetsera was buried in an undisclosed secret location.”

Shortly, their train pulled into Wien Westbahnhof (or, Vienna West Station) and Holmes and Watson prepared to disembark.

THE PRELIMINARIES BEGIN

The two English gentlemen stepped nimbly down from the railway car and then paused to glance around the platform. Almost immediately a gentleman dressed in business attire approached and addressed them:

“Welcome to Vienna. Do I have the honor of addressing Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson?”

Holmes answered, “Indeed, my dear sir. And may we assume you are Police Inspector Stefan Orr?”

Orr replied, “I am that person. How was your journey?”

Holmes reported they had enjoyed a very nice trip and Watson chimed in, “I wish we could have spent more time in Salzburg. It appeared to have very attractive sections.”

The Inspector then found a porter with a small cart onto which the luggage was stacked. Next, the three men started walking towards the front of the station with the Inspector pointing the way with a short baton he carried under his arm. He directed them to a large carriage with a driver awaiting them at the curb. A few minutes later the luggage was safely positioned on the carriage and the three passengers were seated inside.

Orr told the driver to proceed. As they started what proved to be a short ride the Inspector provided more information: “I believe you were told in London you will be staying at the Sacher Wien hotel. It was opened five years ago and the city leaders are quite proud of this addition to the city. We have arranged a suite for you -- two separate bedrooms, each with its own water closet and lavatory plus a small lounge for relaxation. There is a table with chairs in the lounge for room service, correspondence, or whatever.”

They soon arrived at the hotel and a porter took charge of the luggage. Orr told the driver to wait a few minutes to take him back to his headquarters. As they approached the front desk through an expansive lobby, the Inspector whispered to the two, almost as an aside, “By the way, the Foreign Office has assured our department they will pay your hotel bill at the end of your stay. I didn’t want you to be surprised at checkout time.”

Orr announced their names to the desk clerk, who obviously had been anticipating their arrival, and he pushed a ledger and pen in front of them. Each

entered his name and London address. There was a space for “Purpose of Visit” and Watson, following Holmes lead, carefully printed “Sightseeing.”

At this point the Inspector announced, “I have arranged a rather ambitious schedule for us tomorrow. I will pick you up here at eight-thirty.

We will proceed immediately to the office of Police Chief Baron Alfred von Krause. He will be expecting us at nine o’clock and he is a stickler for punctuality. From his office we will travel to Mayerling by special train.”

Holmes replied, “It promises to be a very interesting day. I will look forward to it.”

Watson likewise responded, “Interesting, indeed. I will even say “promising.” With an auf Wiedersehen the Inspector departed.

As they followed a porter Watson exclaimed, “Look Holmes, a modern electric lift. This is first class, indeed.” The porter soon had the baggage and the guests in the lift and he quickly whisked them to the third floor. The rooms were even more than they had anticipated. The furnishings and decorations were of very fine quality. The porter familiarized them with all of the amenities of the rooms and then departed with a generous gratuity from Holmes. The two guests then decided to go back to the ground level and find their dinner meals. They ate in the hotel’s main dining room and noted the food was well prepared and quite tasty. While dining they discussed what time they should arise the following morning. They settled on seven o’clock. With the meal finished they retired to their suite, after first advising the desk clerk of the time when they wished to be awakened. Back at their rooms, Holmes said, “Sleep well old friend.” and started for his bedroom with his astronomical book. Watson replied in kind and headed off to his bed with an English language magazine he had spied in the lobby.

Holmes and Watson were already up and about when the wakeup call was announced at their door. Shortly later they went downstairs with ample time for breakfast. Having determined the previous evening the hotel also had a coffee shop they chose to try it for their morning meal. Once seated the waiter offered each of them a menu printed in English. After he was out of earshot Watson remarked in a low voice, “They can always tell us on the Continent.” Holmes replied with a smile in his voice, “It’s our attire you know.” Then, excitedly, Watson noted they had Twining’s Breakfast Tea on the menu. So, each of them ordered tea and a Bismarck. Holmes specified melted chocolate to top his pastry; Watson chose strawberry preserves for his.

With the morning repast finished, the two friends arose from their seats and strolled back into the lobby; there they sat down in quite comfortable chairs to watch for the arrival of Inspector Orr.

As they waited patiently, Watson pulled his watch from his pocket and asked Holmes, "Have you reset your watch to Austrian time?"

"No," answered Holmes, "I prefer for my timepiece to always be in complete agreement with Big Bend. When I consult it now, I merely add one hour." Watson merely nodded, apparently to indicate he would follow suit.

Orr walked into the lobby shortly later, actually a few minutes before the agreed on time. The three exchanged salutations and then went out to the curb where a carriage awaited them. They boarded and enjoyed a pleasant fifteen minutes of sightseeing as they drove to police headquarters. Upon their arrival there Orr showed them the way to the Chief's office. The three stood for just a couple of minutes in the outer office while the secretary announced them; she returned and with a gesture of her hand stated that, "Chief Krause will see you immediately."

The Inspector and his visitors walked into the Chief's inner office. Baron Alfred von Krause rose from his chair and came around his desk to meet the Englishmen. Orr handled the introductions with a bit of flair and the Chief suggested they please be seated. Three chairs had been previously arranged in a semi-circle in front of the large desk.

Krause commenced the conversation by asking, "Did Duke Orr mention in his meeting with you in London you would be told about another facet of this grim affair after your arrival in Vienna?" Holmes answered in the affirmative. The other man continued, "This is going to be a bit complicated but it is essential you are aware of it. It is now the firm opinion of this department Crown Prince Rudolf killed his lady friend and then shortly later took his own life with his revolver. There is nothing concrete to indicate otherwise. The Church has concluded the Prince was mentally deranged at the time of both of the deaths and was consequently not morally responsible. But now comes the very sensitive part: the Empress Elisabeth can simply not countenance any talk of mental illness. Her uncle, King Ludwig of Bavaria, became delusional a few years ago and finally died by drowning himself in Lake Starnberg near the castle where he was residing in Bavaria. The medical doctor who was attending him drowned in that body of water at the same time.

“Since that sad occurrence, every member of the aristocracy, every member of the gentry, and every member of government here has known one absolutely never mentions mental illness within earshot of the royal couple. The Empress doted on Rudolf from his birth on, and he might have inherited some genetic mental defect through her was totally unthinkable. So, gentlemen please understand it was the Empress who insisted on our asking you to come to Vienna to undertake an unbiased investigation.”

Holmes had been quiet to this point, but now asked, “May I pose a question regarding the case?”

“Of course,” was the reply. Holmes continued, “Somewhere I heard mention of a Viennese prostitute who had in recent months enjoyed the Prince’s company. Do you think she should figure into this investigation in any way?”

Krause, with a rather forlorn look, answered, “How I wish no one had ever heard of that despicable woman. I feel I owe you gentlemen a complete explanation of her small part in this affair.

“It was some two or three months ago she came to this headquarters. I so wish I had recorded the exact date. She came through the public door into the reception area which is under the supervision of one of our senior sergeants. After she demanded to see the ‘Chief of Police’ the sergeant explained to her citizens off of the street do not merely ‘go in to see the chief’ without having been summoned. She was persistent and disruptive. After thirty minutes or so the sergeant summoned the lieutenant who is his supervisor. Eventually even this second man despaired and came to my office. He told me what had transpired in the reception area and asked if I would please see her for at least a few minutes. I reluctantly agreed. She was escorted into my office a few minutes later and introduced to me as one ‘Mitzi Caspar.’ I recognized the name immediately; she is a well known ‘lady of the night’ who plies her trade over a wide range of the city. I suggested she sit down, and proceed with her issues.

“She said she had first commenced a relationship with Crown Prince Rudolf several weeks before and as time went on his insistence on clandestine meetings became more frequent. Furthermore, in each of their two most recent rendezvous he had demanded they enter into a joint suicide pact.”

“Such an undertaking did not fit into her plans at all. And now she was afraid he might force such an action.”

Krause continued, “I assumed she had concocted the story thinking if she brought it to us, perhaps she could curry favor. I, with some dishonesty, assured

her I would pass her report along to the proper authority and she should worry no longer." She left and I thought that disruption had been brought to a timely end. But, and it truly saddens me to inform you of this, Mitzi Caspar was back here the same day news of the Prince's death hit the newspapers. She told me she had gone to Mayerling on Monday at Rudolf's invitation.

"In other words, on the 28th, the day before Mary Vetsera arrived at the lodge. And, she said once again the Prince had insisted on a dual suicide and once again she had refused to take part. After spending the night, she hastily departed early the following morning."

Holmes interrupted with a question, "And your investigators had not before learned Caspar had been there only one day before the fatal night?"

"They had not," responded Krause. "I immediately ordered them to bring Johann Loschek, Rudolf's long time personal valet, to me for questioning.

They had the valet here in a couple of hours. Under my questioning he verified Caspar had been at Mayerling on the night she had indicated. However, he had not mentioned it to the investigators for obvious reasons. He reminded me people "in service" to the aristocracy are constantly aware of their obligation to not reveal any private details of their employer's lives.

Also, he did not consider the Caspar visit to be of any importance to the investigation at hand inasmuch as she left the property several hours before the Baroness Vetsera arrived and well before the deaths."

Krause then placed one hand to his forehead and with a pained expression said, "I hadn't even notified the Royal Physician of her first visit and that revelation. Oh, how I wish now that I had done so!"

"Two more things come to my mind," offered Holmes. "Both still bother me. One is the details of any handwritten notes which either of the deceased might have left behind. The other is the exact cause of Mary Vetsera's demise."

Krause went on, "I can certainly help you with each of these matters.

First, there were no 'suicide notes' as such. During the initial investigation one of the inspectors found five notes in the drawer of a writing table in Rudolf's suite. One was addressed to the Empress, one each to his sisters, and one each to Johann Loschek and Mitzi Caspar. The inspector dared not open them, but he did ask the valet if he recognized the handwriting that addressed them. Loschek said he was sure it was by the Crown Prince's hand. The notes to the valet and Caspar proved to be inconsequential. Let me remind you, we are under the benevolent guidance of a strong monarchy; we cannot just ask to read correspondence that

was within the Royal family. However, the Emperor did detail to Prime Minister Taaffe the nature of the notes. We were told they were undated and were simple messages of undying affection and respect.

There was absolutely no hint of suicide. The Emperor believes his son was writing them in advance of any possible unforeseen death, for example by illness or accident. His royal highness also suggested perhaps there was not such a note for himself simply because the Crown Prince was planning to write it last and hadn't had time to do so."

The Baron continued, "You asked about the cause of Vetsera's death. When the police first got into the suite, they noticed there had been massive bleeding in the area of the forehead of each victim. The blood had clotted and matted, and was quickly drying. They also noted a revolver at Rudolf's feet. I am sure you will want to consider this at length when you visit Mayerling this afternoon, but the entry door to the suite as well as all of the suite's windows, were locked from the inside. And they soon assumed, with some justification, both persons had died from gunfire. When the medical examiner arrived, he was able to see what appeared to be a bullet entry wound in the forehead of the Crown Prince, but he could not actually detect such a wound on the lady. Later, back at his surgery with the blood carefully cleared away, it was determined no entry wound was present on Mary Vetsera. Finally, the medical examiner was able to declare the front of Vetsera's skull was badly shattered, most likely by a blunt instrument. We have not yet determined with certainty the exact instrument that was used. Perhaps, you will be able to help us in that regard."

Holmes rose to the challenge, "We will certainly explore every possibility!"

At that time there was a lull in the conversation and Inspector Orr spoke, "Well, gentlemen, our special train awaits us. If your questions have been satisfied, then may I suggest we move on to Mayerling?"

The Chief then directed a question to Orr, "Who are you taking with you and who will meet you at the lodge?"

Orr replied, "I have arranged for Inspector Schober to accompany us. Also, I have instructed Johann Loschek, of members of the household staff, and the groundskeeper to be there when we arrive. Of course, detaining the train there for an undetermined length of time would be impractical, so I settled with the owner of a local livery stable he will be ready this afternoon with a fresh team and a carriage to return us to the city."

All four gentlemen rose from their chairs and the Baron shook hands with and said farewell to the English visitors. The visitors and Orr then left that office and went back to the reception room. The officer asked them to wait a few minutes while he fetched Inspector Schober. He quickly returned and introductions were performed once more. Then the four went out to the sidewalk where the same carriage from earlier awaited them. The drive to the station was pleasant and under fifteen minutes.

As soon as they saw the train Watson exclaimed, "Look Holmes, it is one of those modern tank locomotives. There is a water storage tank running on each side of the engine, above the drive wheels. And also, a fuel bunker just behind the cab. It is perfect for marshaling yard tasks and shorts runs like the one we are embarking on today. It does not need to pull a separate tender behind it." They then noticed there was only one passenger coach, rather smaller than usual, and no attached caboose.

At that point, Orr suggested Holmes and Watson climb aboard. He stated he and Schober would talk to the engineer for a few minutes. The engineer and fireman had told Orr the boiler was "hot"; they merely needed to open the drafts on the firebox and they would have a full head of steam in just a few minutes.

Seated inside the coach by themselves Watson said to Holmes, "I thought when the Chief mentioned mad King Ludwig you might bring up the investigation you conducted in Bavaria before the King's death. A case that also centered on that woman."

Holmes gave Watson a rather stern look and said, "Have you forgotten I said I never wanted to discuss that case again? Not with you, not with anyone."

Somewhat chagrined, Watson merely replied, "Now I do."

EXAMINING THE SCENE

Rolling along towards Mayerling, Orr addressed the others, “It is of course slightly early for a noon meal, but I know of an acceptable tavern just a moderate walk from the lodge. They serve delicious beef sandwiches with sauerkraut plus Bavarian potato dumplings. We might eat and then have time for our investigations without a lunch interruption.”

The others immediately agreed. After debarking from the train the group strolled to the roadside tavern. As they were walking along, Inspector Schober noticed the small leather satchel Holmes was carrying; he asked, “Do you have the tools of your trade in that bag?”

Sherlock replied, “Indeed, some small sections of linen, a few clean test tubes with stoppers, some sturdy paper envelopes, a tape measure, and a large magnifying glass.”

Orr’s enthusiasm for the tavern proved justified. Probably due in part to the earliness of the hour they were quickly served and later left the establishment with their appetites satisfied.

As the group walked toward Mayerling, they rounded a bend in the road and saw the lodge in full view in front of them. Holmes and Watson did not need to be told what they were viewing.

“Magnificent for a hunting lodge!” was the doctor’s first observation. The valet, Johann Loschak, had obviously been watching from a window for their arrival and came out to greet them. After the perfunctory introductions, Holmes asked if they could do a cursory examination of the structure on all sides before they entered the main building.

As they circled the perimeter of the main building Loschak pointed out the three second floor windows which served the Crown Prince’s suite.

Finished with the survey, they entered Mayerling via the front door and into a large foyer. Straight ahead was a well appointed great room with an enormous fireplace, numerous pieces of heavy furniture, and several stuffed game heads on the wall. There were also smaller taxidermy items on the tables: game birds, a small fox, and a hare. Then, still on the first floor, they quickly

glanced at the dining room, kitchen, library, and two of the guest bedrooms. Finally, they ascended the curved stairway to the second floor.

Before they entered Rudolf's suite, Holmes asked how much disruption had occurred in the rooms since the fateful morning when the bodies were found. Orr and Loschak agreed there had been a bare minimum of interference with the suite or its contents.

Once inside Holmes asked if he might assign some areas of concentration in order to avoid duplication and all agreed. Orr and Schober started a detailed search of the bookcases and their contents, including a quick thumbing through the pages of each volume. Loschak searched all of the drawers of the cabinets, tables, dressers, and bureaus.

Meanwhile, Watson removed each picture from the walls and carefully studied the reverse sides for hidden documents. Holmes busied himself by carefully examining the floor under the rugs for removable boards and investigating all of the walls for hidden panels that might lead to secret passageways. Having satisfied himself on those counts, he removed the large magnifying glass from his satchel and commenced an examination of the lock on the door that had been broken open to gain entrance on the morning the bodies were discovered. Nothing appeared unusual about the lock, so he then turned to the windows.

The windows were of the casement variety; rectangular (with the height greater than the width), hinged on one side, a latch on the other side. They had been constructed to open inwardly, possibly for ease of cleaning. On the first window, the detective paid particular attention to the caulking of the single pane and to the hinges and latch. He repeated the investigation on a second window and then a third.

It was on this latter one he exclaimed, "Everyone, come and look at this!" After the other four had gathered at his side, he explained, "I call your attention to this strand of thread hanging from the top of the window. It appears to be protruding from the crack between the frame and the jamb. I suspect it hadn't been noticed in the earlier searches for two reasons: it is only about three inches long and probably not too much attention was given to the door and windows since they were locked from the inside. Now I propose to carefully open the window and examine it further."

Holmes turned the latch to the open position and gently pulled the window towards himself by a handle on the frame just below the latch.

He then observed, "Just as I imagined. The thread had been cut, or broken, right at the crack where it jammed on the exterior of the window. I think most likely it was cut because it does not appear ragged as it might if it was pulled into."

"And now look at this," he continued. There is a definite fresh mark in the caulking near the top of the frame. See here, on the side."

"It looks as if a sharp object had been firmly implanted fairly recently as the narrow hole is not filled with dust or dirt. It looks very much like the imprint of a sharp knife blade.

"And now I will explain my present hypothesis as to how the perpetrator committed this violent deed. We will address the part pertaining to Mary Vetsera a little later; but let's now talk about the culprit's escape while we are still here at the window. When it was time for him to beat a departure he opened the window fully. He then climbed out on the ledge. You will notice the ledge is rather wide and if this person carefully turns his feet there is adequate space to stand. Then he places his right hand atop the window frame. I believe he took a three or four foot length of thread outside in his left hand. He next wrapped perhaps one or two loops around the handle of the latch. He would have done it in such a manner as to leave roughly equal lengths of the remaining thread leading away from the latch. Still with his left hand he holds the ends of the thread up loosely near the top of the jamb."

"With the thread in place he starts carefully closing the window, working his right hand to the left as the remaining crack gets smaller and smaller.

When there is no longer room for the fingers of his hand he lays the loose ends of the thread across the top of the frame. Consider, if he lost his balance he could always push the window open and grab the jamb. Now he carefully removes a knife from one of his trousers' pockets and opens the blade; then jabs it securely into the caulking as we see here. He uses the knife to pull the last couple of inches to close the window. He does not pull the window tightly against the jamb, but instead leaves just a tiny crack.

"And now the magic. He slowly pulls gently and evenly on both strands of thread that extend from the frame. And doing so turns the handle to the locked position. The thread could not slip off of the handle as the pivot would prevent it from doing so. He then tests the latch with a gentle push on the frame. If it was indeed locked, he would have then applied a more firm tug with the knife and a final sharp pull of the thread ends. Now to retrieve the evidence, so to speak. He

starts pulling on just one strand of the thread, making the sure the other strand is loose. As the thread unwinds from the handle, the entire length is being pulled to the outside. But then disaster!

The loose thread moving from the outside to the interior slides slightly laterally between the jamb and the frame, encountering a tight spot in the crack, and becomes hopelessly jammed.”

“A frightful predicament. The perpetrator pushes firmly against the window with no success; it is tightly locked. In desperation he jerks as hard as he can with the thread wrapped around his palm. And as might be anticipated, the thread breaks. Not at the handle, but higher, as you see from the bit we have just recovered.”

Watson could hold his tongue no longer, “But really Holmes, should we believe the killer brought thread with him that night to facilitate his escape?” The valet, Loschek, spoke up immediately, “I was not surprised to notice a few spools of thread, a pin cushion with needles, a thimble, and pair of scissors such as used for sewing in the upper drawer of that bureau across the room.”

Watson, still not satisfied, rebutted, “So we should believe the Crown Prince sewed in his spare time?”

It was again the valet’s turn and he explained in detail, “From the time of the Prince’s early childhood the Emperor insisted that the boy start military training as soon as possible. Early on his father bought him toy lead soldiers which were unpainted. One of the tutors was instructed to purchase artists paints and brushes for the lad. Finally, at about age twelve as I recall, someone gave him even larger scale wooden soldiers with arms and legs that pivoted, as did the heads. But rather than painting them, the Crown Prince said he wanted to make uniforms for them. In spite of the Emperors mild objections, the Empress won the day and a governess was dispatched to gather cloth swatches from one of the fashionable dress makers. These first pieces of cloth were in colors much like the military uniforms. You know, greens, blues, tans, and etcetera. The necessary tools were provided him.

This project soon grew to larger pieces of cloth, not just leftover scraps from the dress makers’ cutting room floor. Even as an adult the Prince would often make one of his toy soldiers a new uniform.”

Holmes took charge again. “Please show us the spools of thread.” Loschek lead them to the bureau and opened the appropriate drawer.

Holmes selected a spool with thread which seemed to match that from the window frame. "Notice," he said, "this thread is of the type usually used to attach buttons to heavy coats. It is stronger than ordinary thread." He then took two small envelopes from his satchel; he wrote "Window" on one and "Spool" on the other. He put the small piece of thread from the frame into the appropriate envelope, then cut a couple of feet of thread from the spool and placed that sample in the other one.

Holmes spoke, "Gentlemen, please come with me to the lawn below the windows. Mr. Loschek, please ask the groundskeeper to join us."

Some five minutes later they were all gathered below as directed.

Holmes commenced by asking the groundskeeper, "Please tell us why the soil seems to be banked so high against the stone wall of the lodge."

The man replied, "Shortly after the Crown Prince bought Mayerling we had a series of hard rains. And then the Prince noticed an inch or two of water standing in the cellar which is located below. He was dismayed as he had intended to use the cellar for storage."

He continued, "The Crown Prince knew a building engineer in Vienna and he asked him to come out to lunch and take a look at the situation. The engineer noted the prevailing wind driven rains beat against this wall of the lodge. And the rainwater simply flowed down the wall and foundation to seep into the cellar. He encouraged the Prince to have fill dirt hauled in to pile against the entire length of this wall. Eventually the dirt reached nearly two additional feet up the wall and sloped gently downward away from the wall. This new fill was composed of loamy soil with no clay or rocks. Grass was planted and I carried gallons of water that summer to ensure rapid growth."

Holmes smiled and replied, "You obviously have a green thumb. This grass is indeed lush. But notice it was allowed to grow rather tall before the first heavy frost last fall. So, as you would expect, the grass then turned brown and fell over. Thus, gentlemen, our leaping culprit was aided by the slightly decreased distance from his perch to the ground, and by this nice pad of dead grass laying on relatively soft soil. He probably had his legs bent slightly at the knees as he descended, allowing his leg muscles to absorb much of the impact. He would have rolled forward so as to allow his arms to protect his upper body. Then he simply stood up, bushed himself off, and hurried out through the woods before finally turning back to the road."

Watson, while listening intently, had also been studying the lushness of the grass. And suddenly he announced, "Look, there is something shiny in the grass here," while at the same time pointing to a spot about eight feet or so out from the wall. Holmes and the two inspectors quickly moved to Watson's side.

Seeing the shiny object, Orr used the tip of his baton to gently part the grass and announced, "It appears to be a knife."

Holmes, now very interested, said, "Please allow me." He then pulled a handkerchief sized cloth from his satchel. He spread the cloth over the knife, then picked it up with the cloth covering it. Holding it in his left palm, he carefully peeled back the cloth for all to have a good look.

Holmes could not resist offering an explanation for this find, "Recall me saying the murderer probably rolled forward immediately upon impacting the round? The knife very likely slid from his trousers' pocket as his forward movement halted abruptly. And with all that was occupying his mind, he didn't miss the item from his pocket for at least several minutes. By then he did not dare go back to look for it as the bodies may have been discovered and he must not be seen on the property."

Holmes asked Orr if it would be acceptable for Holmes to carry the knife back to Vienna in his satchel. Orr acceded immediately to the request. Then the latter asked, "Does everyone agree our inspections here will probably be completed within the next hour?"

Holmes responded with, "I certainly believe I can conclude my searches in that length of time." Watson and Schober nodded agreement.

Orr then turned to the grounds keeper and said, "My good man, please walk to the village and go to the livery stable. Ask the proprietor there to come, as soon as practical, to Mayerling, and bring the transportation we agreed upon. If your duties here will permit, then you might choose to wait there a few minutes and ride back here in ease!"

The grounds keeper indicated he would be pleased to handle the task and then turned and started off.

At that point Holmes suggested, "Then let us return to the upstairs suite where I believe we can wrap this up in short order. I am anxious to share my vision of what occurred that fateful night."

SUMMATION AT MAYERLING

The group moved quickly back into the lodge and ascended the stairs. Once they were all assembled in the Crown Prince's suite Homes began by saying, "I have three more questions of Mr. Loscheck before I proceed with my revelations."

Johann Loschek smiled and stepped slightly closer to the detective.

Holmes started, "Inasmuch as it is mid-winter, I assume there were fires in the fireplaces that night. Am I correct?"

The valet replied, "Yes sir. When I checked with the Prince just before retiring he asked me to lay fires that would last the night. I added more solid logs in each, but did not bank the fires because I thought he wanted additional heat."

Next Holmes asked, "Did the Prince, to your knowledge, ever entertain anyone without involving your service or that of the household staff? In other words, allow anyone into the house, perhaps by a side door, and take them to his suite without informing you or the staff he had a visitor."

Loschek hesitated several seconds. Then he replied rather hesitantly, "There were a few occasions when such events took place. I assumed each of these visitors was a member of one or another of the radical political movements with which the Prince was regrettably involved. He would undoubtedly have not wanted me to be aware of these callers and would have most certainly not wanted the Emperor to hear of them."

Holmes continued, "One more question. I realize this query will be extremely delicate for all of us, but it is very important to my investigation. Did the Crown Prince and Mary Vetsera appear to you to be heavily indulging in alcoholic spirits that last night?"

At that point Watson noticed an audible gulp in the valet's throat. And there was a pregnant pause before the answer finally came forth.

Loschek, speaking now in a lower voice, said, "You must be aware Mr. Holmes if you reveal to anyone what I say here, and then my reputation will be destroyed. I will never again be employed in service anywhere in Europe."

Holmes replied, "You have my word as a gentleman what you say now will never be revealed. And I am sure these other gentlemen give their assurances, also."

Watson, Orr, and Schober each nodded vigorously and mumbled their attestations.

Reluctantly, Schober recalled, “The last time I was in the presence of the Crown Prince and Mary Vetsera there was much evidence of heavy indulging. The Prince seemed rather brusque, a trait he often showed as he was approaching intoxication. I had a glimpse of Miss Vetsera through the open bedroom door and she seemed to be staggering and nearly falling as she walked towards the sitting room. I felt a sense of relief my duties seemed to be concluded for the day and I was excused for the evening.”

Holmes picked up the conversation again, “Thank you, Mr Loschek. I will now detail what I think happened here on that fateful night. I believe it is highly probable the Crown Prince expected a visit from one of his firebrand acquaintances. Sometime, after Johann went to his rooms, the Prince admitted the person into the lodge at a prearranged time. The two of them came straight up to the suite. The Prince and the visitor argued in the sitting room while Mary Vetsera drifted back and forth between sleep and more imbibing. The conversation between the two men then became more heated, probably to the point of vicious anger. From what I have read in various newspapers, it is fair to assume the visitor had planned on the Prince being the titular head of an uprising in Hungary, and later to be named king of Hungary after the coup was accomplished. But the Prince had finally starting to get ‘cold feet.’ And although he had once entertained thoughts of being in the vanguard of such a political revolt, his regard for his position and responsibilities, including his duties to his wife and daughter, had reversed his thinking. The visitor had invested much time and risked his reputation with the left-leaning political factions of the Empire; he was not going to simply turn and walk away.

“Let’s assume that after more arguing, and drinking, the Prince eventually passed out, at least for a short interval of time. The visitor went into the bedroom where Mary Vetsera lay asleep. He knew if he was going to kill the Prince then Vetsera must also die; to leave her alive would seal his fate with the authorities. The lady was laying on her back and vulnerable; the assailant took the rather heavy poker from the fireplace rack and with a carefully measured blow he crushed her skull. One strong swing of the tool would have killed her instantly and caused the severe fragmentation of the bone which the examiner later observed. With the deed done, the killer placed the business end of the poker in the red hot coals of the fireplace and then returned to the sitting room.

“The Prince was still asleep but the perpetrator knew he must act before the other man awoke. With Vetsera having been killed, there was only one possible action left. Dispatch the Crown Prince to his eternal rewards. He easily found Rudolf’s revolver in a nearby cabinet. Perhaps he spread a small rag or towel over the Prince’s head to reduce the blood splatters; then he fired a round point blank into his forehead. Like Vetsera, Rudolf died instantly. The culprit dropped the gun at Rudolf’s feet to mimic suicide, then removed the cloth from his head and shoved it in one of his pockets. He may have gone to the water closet to wash the blood from his hands.

“Now, the killer turned his thoughts to escape. Perhaps his first idea was to simply bolt down the stairs and out the door, but there was too much risk of encountering one of the household staff or our friend Loschek. He examined the windows and formulated a plan for latching the window from the outside if he just had some stout thread. He quickly located just what he needed in the bureau drawer. Cutting off a few feet of it, he wrapped the strand around his hand. Finally, he started looking around the suite to ensure he was not leaving any evidence of his having been there. Back in the bedroom he removed the red hot poker from the fire and returned it to its proper position in the rack of tools. Of course not even the tiniest traces of blood or human tissue could be seen on the charred poker. He would have then collected his hat, gloves which he pocketed, and any other personal belongings and confronted the casement window. And you gentlemen know the rest of this gruesome tale. Out the window and off through the woods.”

The assembled group was speechless for several seconds; then the doctor was first to break the silence. “Holmes, you have outdone yourself again. Your logic and deductive reasoning is without equal. Please accept my congratulations on another mystery resolved.”

Orr, Schober, and Loschek were fast to follow Watson’s lead in heaping praise on Holmes. It was a fitting finish to one of Holmes’ most challenging investigations, at least to-date. All that was left now was to hopefully identify the killer. What the world had assumed was a murder-suicide now seemed almost certainly to be a double murder.

Shortly later Holmes and Watson, plus the two police inspectors, were riding in a coach back to Vienna. Their conversation was limited compared to the morning journey in the opposite direction.

Holmes broke the silence, “Please tell us Orr, do you have an officer schooled in forensic science?”

The inspector answered, “I am proud to say we have a very capable officer who trained in Stuttgart in this discipline, an Inspector Kohl.”

Holmes spoke again, “Then may I suggest after dropping the doctor and me at the Sacher Wien, you turn the envelopes with the thread samples and the knife over to your expert. We will stop by at mid-morning tomorrow and if Kohl has had time to study this evidence we will be anxious to hear his analysis.”

Orr indicated complete agreement with that plan. With all in the party totally satisfied with the day’s efforts, Holmes and Watson were let out at their hotel and the two police officials continued on to their headquarters carrying the evidence collected at Mayerling.

The Englishmen went to their suite to refresh themselves and rest for a few minutes. Shortly later Watson suggested he pull the bell cord and when the porter responded he would order each of them a bottle of Bavarian beer. Holmes readily agreed to this suggestion. Later, in fine moods, they decided to dine at an Italian restaurant, one which was only two blocks distant and which was highly recommended by the hotel concierge. The Café Roma Squisito proved to be as fine as its reputation. Both of the Englishmen had cups of minestrone and small tossed salads, followed by a main dish built around veal and pasta, accompanied by a bottle of Chianti, and then topped off with very flavorful cups of coffee.

They returned to their suite tired and anxious to retire. They looked forward to the next day, but not daring to hope it would be as fruitful as the one now ending. Yes indeed, a day to remember!

IDENTIFYING THE CULPRIT

Having no firm appointments, Holmes and Watson still arose at their usual times, but dressed and groomed at a slightly more leisurely pace. They decided to breakfast in the main dining room. Service was prompt as it had been in the coffee shop the previous day. While they were eating a somewhat more substantial meal from the day before, they noticed one of the desk clerks talking to the Maître d', as a young lad stood by. The Maître d' quickly walked over to the pair's table and explained the young man was a messenger and wished to deliver a note to them if that was agreeable.

Homes said, "Of course. We will accept it now. Please send him over." The Maître d' made a motion with his hand and the lad was there in seconds. Holmes took the proffered envelope, opened it and remarked there was a note from Inspector Orr.

He read a portion of it aloud, "Inspector Kohl has nearly finished his examination of the small amount of evidence we provided him. He and I can plan to meet with you here at 11:00 this morning. Please let me know as soon as practical if this will be convenient for you."

Watson responded, "It sounds splendid to me."

Then Holmes advised the messenger if he would wait just a couple of minutes there would be a reply. Next Holmes scribbled a short, positive answer to Orr on the same note paper, put it in the envelope, and paid for the return service. He also tipped the lad for delivering the original in a very timely manner.

Their meal complete, the two wandered into the lobby. Watson consulted his pocket watch, mentally added one hour, and advised Holmes, "We have nearly two hours before we meet Orr and Kohl. Any suggestions as to how we should occupy this free time?"

Holmes replied immediately, "I have my pipe and Arcadia tobacco in my coat pocket. I intend to walk into that small city park across the street from this hotel, find a bench, and smoke at least one pipe full... maybe two if time permits."

Watson countered, "Then I am going to visit the gift shop down the street. I will meet you back here in the lobby at 10:15." With a cheery wave of their hands they parted.

Later, as planned, they took a horse drawn cab to police headquarters. Holmes and Watson had visited Chief Krause's office the previous day but had not been to Stefan Orr's domain. Upon their arrival at the headquarters they explained to the sergeant in charge of the reception area they had an appointment with Inspector Orr but were unaware of his office's location. The sergeant dispatched a young uniformed officer to lead them to it. Upon entering Orr's room the inspector stood up from his chair and came around the desk. The three exchanged morning salutations. Orr then said, "Let me show you the way to Inspector Kohl's office. Well, to be honest the rooms also double as his laboratory." The way led up one flight, but it was still just a short distance. Upon entering Kohl's world the forensic expert arose from his stool at a counter to greet them. Orr did the introductions with his usual style and grace. Holmes, in advance, thanked Kohl for examining the material he, Watson, and Orr had provided.

Kohl went straight to his informal report. He mentioned the two strands of thread first. He said the two specimen were identical in color, texture, and weave. He noted the shorter strand seemed to have one end cut by a sharp instrument, such as a pair of scissors or knife; the other end of the same strand seemed to have been pulled from another length of thread. Also, he said both strands could have certainly come from the same spool. But then he cautioned, both strands could have originated from any of several hundred identical spools in Austria.

Next Kohl turned to the knife. He had rewrapped it in Holmes' white cloth after his earlier examination and now he again unwrapped it. His first comment was the knife must have been produced by a very fine manufacturer, perhaps in Sweden, as the Swedes were known for producing the best cutlery steel; this one had a superior blade. He then noted the polished steel end caps, one of which Watson had seen glistening in the sun the previous afternoon. Kohl felt certain the caps were made from coin nickel, an excellent choice for that use. Lastly, he noted the handles on each side of the knife's frame. It seemed they might well be formed from some type of ivory, especially considering their very hard, dense structure. He also called attention to the exceeding careful fit of the handles to the frame and the end caps, and the exquisite riveting that held the handles to the frame. He opined it was the finest pocket knife he had ever encountered.

Holmes then asked the obvious question, "Can you suggest who might have sold this knife in Vienna or in this general area?"

Kohl replied, "Sorry, I cannot."

Orr then offered a suggestion, “Vienna has one large shop which is exclusively devoted to knives. It is ‘Himmer’s Knife Store’ on Gymnasium Street and it has everything from machetes to pen knives. Why don’t we go there and make an enquiry?” Holmes and Watson agreed, so the three thanked Kohl and bid him adieu.

As they left the police headquarters building Orr offered another idea. He remarked he had not yet eaten lunch. Neither had Holmes or Watson. Orr then explained there was a hofbrau he liked which would not be out of their way. A few minutes later, they were seated in this very pleasant establishment eating pastrami and accompaniments. From the café to Himmer’s was but a short walk and they were blessed with a nice winter sun.

The proprietor of the knife store, Hans Himmer, was a few years senior to Orr and the other two, and displayed remarkable cordiality. When the three walked through the entrance Himmer recognized Orr immediately and greeted him with a big smile. The inspector introduced Holmes and Watson as fellow investigators from England. And then he told Himmer they wanted him to see a knife and to tell them if he might have sold it from his shop.

Orr took the knife from his pocket, unwrapped it, and laid it on the counter. Himmer picked up the item, turned it over in his hand, and studied it carefully.

Then he spoke, “I have never had such a knife in my stock. However, I think I recognize it. One moment please.” He then turned to a drawer near where he stood. Opening it he picked up a jewelers loop and returned to the previous counter. Next he fully opened the blade. Placing the loop in front of one eye, he studied the blade carefully in the area of the hinge. “Yes,” he exclaimed, “my mark is here.” Then he explained. When a knife is left with him for repairs or sharpening he uses a jewelers’ metal scribing tool to engrave a very tiny “H” near the base of the blade. He did this to preclude any later disagreement as to if he had worked on any particular knife. So, he had handled this one previously.

The owner of this knife asked if Himmer could sharpen the blade. The latter assured him he could put a fine edge on it if it was left with him for an hour or so. Now, Himmer pleasantly surprised his visitors with a revelation.

He said that he asks his customers who are leaving merchandise in his care, at least those that he does not know personally, to enter the date, their name, and their home city or province in a ledger he keeps. A complete address is not required. He remembered this knife because of its remarkable quality. The

customer stated he would be back in an hour or two, then asked if Himmer could recommend the best walking route to the offices of Moritz Szeps, the newspaper publisher. Himmer gladly obliged.

Orr then asked, "Do you think that visitor signed the ledger?" "Certainly, was the answer?"

Orr again, "Then, could we see the book?" "Is it an official inquiry?" asked Himmer.

"Yes", Orr responded. Himmer then excused himself for a minute to go to a back room and retrieve the previous year's ledger. When he returned he laid the book on a counter and mentioned he was rather sure the visit had been in the summer. He then started thumbing the pages and running his forefinger down the columns in that time frame. It only took him several seconds to announce, "This is it! August 9, 1888. Ernst Mueller. Budapest." After a short interval Himmer added, "I remember it was a Thursday."

Holmes then asked, "When this Mueller returned for his knife did he mention if he had talked to Moritz Szeps?"

Himmer answered, "I asked him if he had been successful and he told me the short time with Szeps had been very unsatisfactory; he said the editor had been disdainful! I did not pursue the matter further."

Watson then found his voice and suggested they try to see this newspaper fellow. Of course Holmes and Orr agreed whole heartedly; they warmly thanked their gracious host and departed his premises.

Outside Orr said, "I know exactly how to get to Szeps' office. If you think the three of us can fit into a cab, we can be there in ten minutes."

They did try a cab and they fit the one bench seat comfortably for the short trip. On the way Orr told his London acquaintances not to expect the warmth from Szeps with which they were received at the knife shop. He said Szeps was a known radical liberal; he had even hinted in an edition of his newspaper a few days earlier the Emperor might have been responsible for the Crown Prince's death! The federal government had earlier threatened to shut down his publication for inciting riots and labor unrest. Police officers were not welcome in Moritz Szeps premises.

At Szep's building, Orr knew the way and found the right offices immediately. Orr presented himself to the receptionist as a Police Inspector and asked if they could see Mr. Szeps for a few minutes on important business. The lady checked with her employer and escorted the three into Szeps' inner office

immediately. Szeps obviously recognized Orr and the Inspector introduced Holmes and Watson as associates from London.

Then Orr popped the question: Did Mr Szeps know an Ernst Mueller from Budapest?

Without hesitation Szeps replied, "I know no one by that name, from Budapest or elsewhere."

Then trying tact, Orr reworded his question, "I know you meet a great many people in your profession, from all walks of life and all levels of society.

Do you think the name Ernst Mueller might have just slipped from your memory?"

Szeps replied with a slight edge in his voice, "I told you I have never heard of that person and that is the end of it!"

The three visitors thanked the gentleman for taking the time to see them and departed the offices and the building.

Back on the sidewalk Watson spoke first, "Well Inspector, the reception was much as you predicted."

Holmes said, "I truly believe that man was lying. I could tell it by his eyes and his body language."

Orr took his turn, "I am not surprised Szeps denied knowing our suspect. He would have been totally mindful of the Crown Prince's recent death and would have deduced it would not be a good time to admit knowing a radical revolutionary.

Holmes then asked, "So, what shall we do next?" Orr suggested he get back to his office as there was a little time left in the business day. He went on to explain he had a counterpart in Budapest, an inspector Kern, with whom he worked well with. Orr would send him a telegram and ask if Kern knew of Mueller, and if he might be able to question him in regard to his whereabouts on January 29th and 30th. Holmes said if Kern could arrange such a formal interview, he and Watson would like to be in a position to quietly hear what transpired during questioning. Orr said they could address that request later. He also suggested Holmes and Watson drop by his office in late morning of the following day to see if he had received a reply from Budapest. So the two Englishmen found a cab and headed to their hotel and Orr went to complete his chore.

Back at the Sacher Wien, Watson said he was going to the newsstand he had noticed down the street. They had not seen an English newspaper since they had departed on Monday, and it was now Thursday. Perhaps he could find a

Tuesday London Daily Times or Daily News. Holmes said he would sit and relax in the hotel lounge for the doctor's return.

Watson was back in ten minutes and announced, "I splurged. They had both the Times and the News, and I bought both. Which one will you peruse first?"

Holmes said, "The Times if you please, since I have been given such a nice choice." Within about an hour they both felt satisfactorily up to date!

They decided to next try the hotel bar; they had not yet even had a peek into it. They entered through the massive door and found a very attractive room with a large curved bar, tables of various sizes, and booths on two walls.

They checked with the bartender and learned a variety of draft beers were offered; Holmes hoisted a pilsner and Watson a lager. While quaffing their beers they discussed dinner. They recalled the hotel dining room had been quiet satisfactory their first night in Vienna, so why not try it again.

After dinner Holmes once again took his pipe for a walk in the park, while Watson remained in the hotel lounge and enjoyed a couple of cups of coffee. After Holmes returned, they again took the lift to their floor and made an early night of it.

THE SURPRISE

The two English travelers were up, dressed, shaved, etcetera by 8:30. They were discussing where they might breakfast when there was an unexpected knock on the door. Watson answered the call and was rather shocked to see Inspector Orr standing at their room. Of course the doctor immediately invited Orr to come in. The inspector exchanged a “Guten Tag” with Watson and then Holmes and then immediately launched into detailing a shocking revelation. His Budapest counterpart, Inspector Kern, had sent Orr a telegram at about 7:00. He reported his department had been trying to keep undercover surveillance on Ernst Muller for several months, but he often slipped their net.

As it transpired, an apartment neighbor of Mueller had heard a dreadful racket emitting from Mueller’s apartment four days earlier. This concerned citizen finally hurried down the street and located a police constable. The two of them hurried to the apartment building. The PC knocked on Mueller’s door but no one answered the knock. The PC then discovered the door was unlocked, and he and the other man entered. They found a dead body on the floor of the living room. A later autopsy and medical examiner’s findings showed Ernst Mueller had been garroted, apparently after a vicious struggle. They believe a rope was the most likely tool used, with a short, stout iron rod or wooden stick to tighten the rope as one would a tourniquet. He probably succumbed within a few minutes. Kern asked if there was any more he could do for them.

Holmes and Watson appeared dumbstruck for a few minutes. Then Watson asked quietly, “Do they have any idea why he was killed?”

Kern responded, “You must understand Ernst Mueller was the leader of a very radical revolutionary faction. His wasn’t the only game in town. Between the

socialists, the communists, and the anarchists there is continuing undeclared, covert warfare. Each believes if their gang of hooligans has the upper hand after the coup, then they will rule both the proletariat and the aristocracy.”

At that point Holmes asked, “Will you gentlemen please excuse me for a few minutes?”

Watson and Orr continued a subdued conversation while Holmes stood at a window overlooking the street. He quietly watched the delivery wagons, carriages, and cabs on the busy thoroughfare. Also, the people on the sidewalks as they scurried along.

Finally, Holmes returned to the other two and said, “I see our position like this. I am referring to Watson’s and my position. I believe we have fulfilled our commission. We have demonstrated, without any doubt, Crown Prince Rudolf committed neither murder nor suicide. We believe we know who committed the ghastly double murder, but that is of no consequence now. The scoundrel who committed these vile acts is now beyond the reach of mortal man or the dominions of his laws. Furthermore, there will be no formal report for Watson or me to prepare. In London we gave our oaths that anything we discovered would not be shared with outside parties. Now, you Inspector Orr, or your superior Chief Krause, can pass on to Prime Minister Taffe what we ascertained and that we now give our assurances that the Crown Prince committed no crimes. Not crimes of passion or otherwise. The PM or whomever can also provide these same assurances to their highnesses, the Emperor and Empress. They, especially the Empress, can now be secure in the knowledge that her son was not a brigand!”

Orr then indicated that he was in complete agreement with Holmes’ assessment of the case. Holmes next remarked, “With our business concluded, the doctor and I might start for London today.” Orr, in reply, stated, “You have missed the morning train to Paris via Munich. But there is one that leaves Wien Westbahnhof in late afternoon. This one has sleeping berths. And it will get you into Paris early tomorrow morning. You can catch a boat train for Calais in late morning and be to London tomorrow night.

Holmes said that sounded fine and they would start packing. He asked Orr to tell Chief Krause how much they had enjoyed meeting him and how they had appreciated his careful background briefing on the Mayerling tragedy. Holmes and Watson both warmly thanked Orr for his friendly treatment while they were in Vienna, and insisted he come to visit them if should happen to be in London at a future date. And then they all said Auf Wiedersehen and Orr departed the room.

As they had hoped, Holmes and Watson were on the Paris train that afternoon. Later, during dinner, Holmes asked Watson, "You never mentioned if you made a purchase in that gift shop yesterday?"

Watson replied with a grin, "Actually, I did. I bought two rather fine silk handkerchiefs with fancy Austrian lace trimming. They will be my small gift to Mrs. Hudson."

Holmes, with a smirk, said, "Doctor, you are a rascal."

Then Holmes noted he had some small souvenirs also. He said he had a dozen or so Austrian twenty-Heller coins in his trousers' pockets. Each was the approximate equivalent of the British tuppence coin. He would parcel them out to his Baker Street Irregulars.

He laughed as he said, "They may not be able to exchange them at the Bank of England, but they are rather attractive and it will give the lads bragging rights all of the way from Marylebone Road to Lancaster Gate."

Later, still over dinner, Watson spoke again, "You know Holmes, I am thinking about vacationing in Scotland in late spring for some trout fishing. Perhaps three or four weeks. Do you think you might care to join me?"

Holmes hesitated for a second, then with a shy grin asked, "Tell me. Do you think I could attach my spare flies to my deerstalker cap?"

Watson rather dryly replied, "I recommend a straw hat."

After a few more seconds Holmes responded again, "A capital idea Watson. Definitely a capital idea!"

Then, just as they were preparing to leave the table, Holmes asked, "Tell me Watson, do you think it would be acceptable for me to smoke just one pipe in my sleeping berth?"

Watson answered without even the slightest hesitation, "No Holmes! You might set your bedding on fire and then the resulting conflagration might incinerate the entire sleeping car!"

With a smile Holmes conceded, "You know, Doctor. That is why I have come to rely on your judgment; you always have the astute answer!"

Charles "Rex" Mason
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