The Bilge Pump

Vol. 12, No. 10 October, 2024

The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star

founded November, 1970

PLEASE NOTE: November 03, 2024 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on **November 03** at 1:00 pm central. I will send out the link for the meeting the week before the meeting. The story for the month is "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client".

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story of "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client". **Rich Krisciunas, ASH**, will provide us with another Canonical Law 101.

Our Special Guest Speaker will be **Barbara Rusch, ASH, BSI, MBt", who will speak on "Live Long and Prosper: Leonard Nimoy, Mr. Spock and the Sherlockian Connections."**

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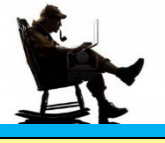

For more information concerning our society, visit: http://www.dfw-sherlock.org/

You can follow us on Twitter at: @barquelonestar

You can friend us on Facebook at: http://www.facebook.com/BarqueLoneStar

Who dunnit: 	**Third Mate** **Helmsman** **Spiritual Advisors** **Secretary** **Historian** **Webmaster**	**Steve Mason, BSI** **Walter Pieper** **Don Hobbs, BSI** **Dr. Jim Webb, BSI** **Cindy Brown, BSI** **Pam Mason** **Rusty Mason**	**mason.steve8080@gmail.com** **waltpieper@att.net** **221b@verizon.net** **jimrwebb@ix.netcom.com** **myrkrid08@yahoo.com**

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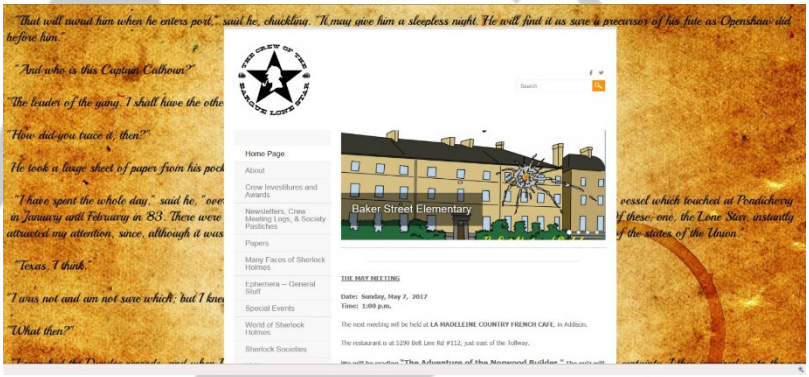


Our Facebook Page:

https://www.facebook.com/BarqueLoneStar/

OCTOBER 06 SUMMARY

Cindy Brown, BSI, ASH

There were **60** in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The meeting was opened with our traditional toast. This month given by **Steve Mason**, BSI, our Third Mate. The toast was titled My Singular Bullet, and dedicated to Killer Evans (see Page 4).

We then moved onto the quiz for this month's story, "The Adventure of the Three Garridebs."

Dr. Bob Katz, BSI, then led us in a lively discussion of the story. He began with the remark, "if you've only read the canon once, you ain't seen nothing yet." The group then went on to discuss just how many plots did Conan Doyle actually use in his 60 stories in the canon.

Announcements were as follows: The Crew of the Barque Lone Star is about to publish its ninth book titled, Mr. Holmes Neighborhood. Thirty-three people have submitted stories this year. The book should be out for purchase by Christmas.

We welcomed **Charles Blanksteen** who is a new attendee. Mr. Blanksteen has out a new book recently published. He is also writing a book titled The Complete Book of Sherlock Holmes for Cocktails.

Steve Mason announced that one of our Crew will be getting married later this month. Congratulations to **David Harnois** and his soon to be bride.

Olivia Kirkendall announced that the New Great Alkaline Plainsmen will be meeting on October 21, at 6 pm. The story for the month will be The Musgrave Ritual.

Rob Nunn announced that the Parallel Case of St. Louis will be meeting virtually on October 19, at 2 pm Eastern time. The story will be The Sign of Four.

Shana Carter noted that if you are in New York City this month, the monthly Ash luncheon has been moved from October 2 to October 19.

The Serpentine Muse will be coming out this week.

Sandy Kozinn honored us with two limericks about this month's story (see Page 4).

Rich Krisciunas, ASH, led us through Sherlockian Law 101.

We then moved onto our featured speaker for the month. **Kirk Walden** from North Carolina gave a wonderful presentation and power point on Becoming a Sherlockian.

Brad Keefauver, BSI, then did his canonical top 10 featuring things in the canon representing three, inspired by our story, "The Three Garridebs."

Shana Carter, ASH, gave a reading from the Baker Street Journal from Volume 2, number 2, from 1952. She read Writings about the Writings (see page 5).

Kirk Walden was made a Crew deck mate.

Rich Krisciunas closed the meeting with his toast to the Crew of the Barque Lone Star

Thanks to Cindy Brown, BSI, Deckmate, for keeping the minutes.

ONE OF TWO SINGULAR BULLETS

Steve Mason, BSI, ASH

It was worth a wound – it was worth many wounds – to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.

Those 4 lines may be the best illustration of the friendship between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.

The Victorian era was known for keeping a "stiff upper lip" and any display of strong emotions may have been considered a sign of weakness.

After 20 years of the duo working together on numerous adventures, this one scene provides the best example of the high regard and fierce loyalty existing between Holmes and Watson.

No weakness apply here.

So, I offer a toast to Killer Evan's bullet..

As a name Garrideb was unique,
Evans only pretended to seek.
He wanted the money,
(The money was funny.)
And his shot really raised Holmes's pique.

Sandy Kozinn, Deckmate

THE WRITINGS ABOUT THE WRITINGS

Shana Carter, ASH

From the *Baker Street Journal*, Volume 2, number 2, 1952, Editor: Edgar W. Smith

"Never," as Christopher Morley put it, "has so much been written by so many for so few."

Here, in the writings about the Writings, has been found, by those who feel the kindred urge, a bottomless well of wisdom and delight.

What is it that makes this subject inexhaustible? Why do those who read the magic tales, for all the utter satisfaction their reading gives them, insist on adding something to the lore themselves?

Whence comes the irresistible impulse to dig deeper into the meaning of things Sherlockian, and to seek a closer identification or interpretation of the truth?

There is nothing like it. to one's knowledge, in all the field of literature. Not Robinson Crusoe, nor Mrs. Pickwick, nor yet great Hamlet has been so honored by the imp of the inquisitive.

Do Alice and Don Quixote inspire long hours of research to determine the whys and wherefores of some foible they displayed. Ivanhoe and Hiawatha, Dr. Jekyll and David Copperfield, Hercules and George Babbitt – who cares if they were married once or twice. or how profound their knowledge of the Solar System may have been?
We know just where Achilles had his wound, and we let it go at that; and we know, too. what college Tom Brown attended and what kind of snake it was that Cleopatra took into her bosom. We know so very much of all the figures that move upon the literary scene, and, knowing, cease to care or question.

But Sherlock Holmes is different. Of him we know, of course, as much as any other - and yet he still remains the great enigma; the one of all the lot we fain would know as we would know ourselves. There is some kind of empathy, perhaps, that moves us to the endless search; that makes us never satisfied with what has been revealed. Or what we do in probing out the inner things is done. It may well be, in emulation of his own approach to life, and as a tribute to his master mind.

Whatever it may be, we know it will go on: we know that men and women will write of Sherlock Holmes, and what he thought and did and was, for many years to come. The surface up to now, has not been scratched."

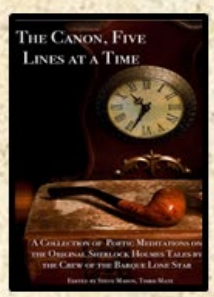
To subscribe to the Baker Street Journal, go to https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-baker-street-journal/

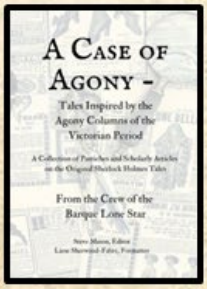
The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society has published 8 wonderful books. You may download a free copy of the books (as .pdf files) on our website...

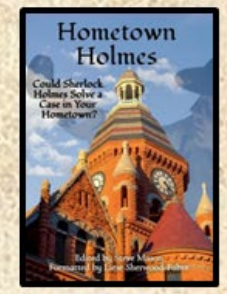
https://www.dfw-sherlock.org/society--crew-member-anthologies-pastiches.html

Or you may purchase a soft-back version of any of our books (at cost) at...

https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/the%20crew%20of%20the%20barque%20lone%20star







THE GAME'S AFOOT -- A LOOK AT SHERLOCKIAN GAMES

Tim Kline, Deckmate

Since it is October and with Halloween coming up I thought this game would be appropriate from 1981 comes Undead, a game based on the legendary battles between Van Helsing and the Vampire Hunters against Dracula. Holmes, Watson and even Moriarty are represented in the very last bottom 3 squares.

SECRETS FOR SALE

Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD, BSI, Deckmate

Although a rather recent addition to the criminal code, blackmail cases increased significantly in the Victorian period. Holmes' own cases involved several where blackmail or blackmailers were mentioned. These included *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Valley of Fear*, "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Adventure of The Yellow Face," "The Adventure of the Gloria Scott," "The Adventure of the Reigate Squire," "The Adventure of the Red Circle," "The Adventure of Lady Frances Carfax," and "The Adventure of the Three Gables." Of course, Charles Augustus Milverton deserved a special mention. This blackmailer bore a striking resemblance to another well-publicized criminal: Charles Augustus Howell. (1)

"Blackmail" originally referred to a practice by Scottish chieftains. They would demand farmers along the Scottish-English border pay them to prevent their farms' destruction. The first mention of the practice (and subsequent prosecution and beheading of the perpetrator) occurred in 1530. The Scottish word *mail*, meaning "rent," could be traced to Old Norse, meaning "discussion or agreement," or Old Icelandic, meaning "payment." Over time, the term was equated with extracting payment through a threat of force. (2)

The concept of blackmail was expanded in 1756 to include a threat in writing to accuse another of a crime and demand payment to prevent it. (3) In 1843, the law was again rewritten to add information of an embarrassing, but noncriminal, nature. (4) In other words, as Robinson, Cahill, and Bartels noted, this law made an action a crime that, if done without using the threat of exposure to coerce another, would not be illegal. For example, telling a person's spouse about the person's infidelity is not a crime in itself. Demanding payment to keep the blackmailer from telling the spouse became a criminal act. (5)

The expansion of the legal definition of blackmail in eighteenth-century England reflected a rise in such activity, creating a need for new laws criminalizing the practice. Prior to that period, only the elite had enough wealth to make such threats profitable, but their very positions protected them from scandal. When a publisher, for example, threatened the Duke of Wellington with printing his mistress's memoir if he did not pay, his response was "Publish and be damned." In other words, his position protected him from any fallout from such a disgrace. (6)

Two changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave rise to the increase in blackmail. In 1757, the definition was expanded to encompass threats to expose an "infamous crime" (sodomy) to acquire money. In 1827, the law was again revised to incorporate letters demanding payment to avoid such an accusation—regardless of any truth behind it. (7) Until 1828, sodomy was a capital offense. In that year, punishment was reduced to imprisonment. (8) Thus, the mere threat of such an accusation (accurate or not) forced many to pay. When the victim refused to pay and reported the blackmailer, both the judge and the prosecutor commonly accepted that the victim was innocent of any alleged crime. (9)

While the elite were often immune from such charges, the middle- and upper-class Victorians were not in a position to withstand such accusations. As a whole, they adhered to a strict moral code involving hard work, respectability, good manners, female virtue, and the repression of sexuality. (10) While some indiscretion was allowed (referred to as the "Victorian Compromise"), as

Friedman notes, “only in small amounts and only if discreet and under a good deal of control.” (11)

McLaren’s examination of blackmail cases during this period found most victims were men. While they could be victims, Victorian women were carefully guarded and rarely had access to funds to pay a blackmailer. Such cases, however, were much more common in fictionalized accounts. McLaren argued that this expanded role reflected Victorian concepts that inherently portrayed women as more vulnerable. (12)

In Holmes’ cases, the term “blackmail” was used interchangeably for both extortion—such as Hudson securing a position from Trevor in “The Adventure of the Gloria Scott” by threatening to reveal his criminal activity in Australia—and for demanding payment to suppress the exposure of non-criminal matters—as seen in Charles Augustus Milverton’s handling of Lady Eva Blackwell’s private letters. While extortion has deep roots, blackmail, as is commonly known today, developed as an artifact of Victorian culture and legal efforts to control private behaviors.

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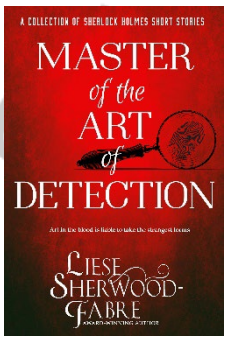
1) Dorling Kindersley, Limited, *The Sherlock Holmes Book: Big Ideas Simply Explained,* DK Publishing, New York, 2015, page 186.
2) https://www.wordorigins.org/big-list-entries/blackmail
3) https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3663&context=penn_law_review
4) https://law.jrank.org/pages/567/Blackmail-Extortion-Blackmail-extortion-by-private-person.html
5) P. Robinson, M. Cahill, and D. Bartels, “Competing Theories of Blackmail: An Empirical Research Critique of Criminal Law Theory, Brooklyn Law School, April, 2011.
6) https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/weekinreview/04schwartz.html
7) https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3663&context=penn_law_review
8) https://famous-trials.com/wilde/329-homosexual
9) Angus McLaren, *Sexual Blackmail: A Modern History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
10) https://www.iispandinipiazza.edu.it/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Victorian-Age-abr.pdf
11) Lawrence Friedman, *Guarding Life’s Dark Secretes: Legal and Social Control over Reputation, Propriety, and Privacy*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007, page 66.
12) McLaren, page 59.

Liese Sherwood-Fabre is pleased to announce that her latest book, Master of the Art of Detection—a short-story collection of more traditional Holmes and Watson Adventures—is now available at all major booksellers. You can find your favorite here: books2read.com/u/mB1W1p



A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT 'THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT'

1. Summary (Diogenes Club)

Gruner has completely infatuated Violet and has explained away all of his past love affairs (which have become public).

General de Merville has been very loyal to the crown and the king wishes to spare Violet the heartbreak which a marriage to Gruner is sure to produce, so he has Damery hire Holmes to put some sense into Violet's head so she will break her engagement.

Holmes in turn engages Johnson who turns up Kitty. Kitty and Holmes meet with Violet but Gruner has brain washed her well and Violet feels that Kitty herself caused the end of her affair with Gruner and that Kitty's fate is her own doing.

Gruner hires a pair of assassins to murder Holmes. Only Holmes' boxing/single-stick skills save his life. Holmes has his surgeon, Oakshott, and Watson tell the press that he is at death's door and his life despaired for.

Holmes learns from Kitty that Gruner has a very private diary in which he brags about all of his former love affairs. He keeps this diary in an inner study.

Gruner is also an avid collector of ancient Chinese pottery.

Damery acquires a rare piece of Chinese pottery which Holmes gives to Watson. Watson has crammed about Chinese pottery and visits Gruner pretending that he wants to sell his collection. This engages Gruner's attention long enough that Holmes can burglarize the inner study and steal the secret diary.

Gruner sees through Watson's façade, deduces that he is an agent of Holmes and enters his inner study just as Holmes is getting away through the window. Gruner attempts to follow Holmes through the window but Kitty, who has been hiding in the shrubbery, throws vitriol in his face, maiming and disfiguring him for life.

Holmes gives the diary to Damery and Violet, confronted with indisputable evidence, now sees that Gruner is truly evil and breaks her engagement. Holmes is charged with burglary and Kitty with vitriol throwing. The illustrious client gets the charges dropped against Holmes and gets Kitty off with the lightest possible sentence.

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2. Story Info Sheet (McMurdo's Camp)

- First published in:
  Collier's Weekly, November 8, 1924; The Strand Magazine in two parts, February and March 1925

- Time frame of story (known/surmised):
  Definitely stated – began on September 3, 1902
  This was a case from the latter phases of Holmes' career.

- Holmes & Watson living arrangements:
  Holmes at 221B, Watson was living in his own rooms in Queen Anne Street at the time.

- Opening scene:
  Holmes & Watson in drying room of the Turkish bath, Holmes invited Watson to 221B to help with a case.

- Client:
  Sir James Damery, whose name was a household word in society, a man of the world with a natural turn for diplomacy. He was a big, masterful aristocrat. Sir James, in turn was representing an unidentified friend of General de Merville who was concerned about the general's daughter marrying a scoundrel.
- Crime or concern:
  Worry that the love-smitten Violet de Merville would marry the dastardly Baron Gruner.

- Villain:
  Baron Adelbert Gruner, an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as a fashionable consultant, and poisonous as a cobra. He had breeding in him — a real aristocrat of crime. He had a poisonous, lying tongue that explained and soothed.
- Motive:
  Gruner had a history of using women for his own purposes, murdering or destroying them. Holmes was hired by a friend of the family to break up the romance.

- Holmes' method:

With the help of a snitch, he identified Kitty Winters, a ruined soul and a victim, who was motivated to help bring down the Baron. She was a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face, youthful, and yet worn with sin and sorrow. The terrible years had left their leprous mark upon her. Holmes intended to use her information to burgle the Baron's house and steal a tell-all diary. But Kitty was there too, and threw vitriol in the Baron's face, painfully injuring him and ruining his good looks. Holmes succeeded in stealing the book on behalf of his client.

- Policemen:

There was nothing in which Scotland Yard could act regarding the romance.
Later, an inspector of police arrived following the vitriol-throwing incident.

- Holmes' fees:

Not mentioned, but most likely a lucrative case for Holmes, unless he was still serious about the statement he made a year or two earlier, in THOR, regarding his fees, "I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether."

- Transport:

Holmes dragged Kitty into a cab to avoid a public scene.
Upon hearing of Holmes beating, Watson sprang into a hansom and went to Baker Street.

- Food:

Holmes & Watson met by appointment at Simpson's, where they sat at a small table in the front window. No mention of what they actually ate. The following evening, they dined once more there.

- Drink:

No mention

- Vices:

Holmes & Watson smoked in the pleasant lassitude of the drying-room of the Turkish bath.

- Other cases mentioned:

The Hammerford Will case. Not known if it was Holmes' case or not.
So-called "accident" in the Splugen Pass that resulted in the death of Gruner's wife.

- Notable Quotables:

"A complex mind," said Holmes. "All great criminals have that."
"Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male." – Holmes
"The wages of sin, Watson — the wages of sin!" said he. "Sooner or later it will always come. God knows, there was sin enough."
Watson on Holmes: "There was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many dramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what his exact plans might be."
"I'm a bit of a single-stick expert" – Holmes

- Other interestings:

Holmes deals with his snitch, Shinwell (Porky) Johnson, a huge, coarse, red-faced, scorbutic man.
Holmes was beaten up by Gruner's thugs, but publicly exaggerated his injuries to trick Gruner into letting down his guard.
Sir James' cell phone number was XX.31
Holmes speaks of Violet as his hypothetical daughter.

- When all is said and done:

At the end, Holmes and Watson learn the identity of the Illustrious Client, but Watson leaves it out of the story. Some believe it was King Edward VII. Could have been; we'll never know.

The incriminating diary was given to Sir James, who used it effectively. Three days later there appeared a paragraph in the Morning Post to say that the marriage between Baron Adelbert Gruner and Miss Violet de Merville would not take place.

The same paper had the first police-court hearing of the proceedings against Miss Kitty Winter on the grave charge of vitriol-throwing. Such extenuating circumstances came out in the trial that the sentence, as will be remembered was the lowest that was possible for such an offence. Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a prosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is sufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and elastic. (Holmes was not charged.)

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3. Data! Data! Data! (Frank Mentzel)

- Publishing History
  # 54 of the 60 stories

  First published in The Strand Magazine, February & March, 1925
  In the US Collier's Weekly, November 8, 1924
  Part of The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes collection by John Murray, London, 1927
  George D. Doran, New York, 1927

- Chronology
  Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Wednesday, September 3 to Tuesday, September 16, 1902 making it 53rd of the 60. This means that Holmes was 48 and Watson 50.

- Christopher Morley Says
  "The last collection of tales, the Case-Book, put the zeal of Watson lovers under some strain: a few of the dozen stories seem to show the old magic. This is one of the best: Holmes undertakes to rescue the beautiful Miss de Merville from her infatuation for the Austrian Baron Gruner, "perhaps the most dangerous man in Europe." He has "waxed tips of hair under his nose," like some other dangerous Teutons. Holmes's special agent in the underworld, Porky Shinwell, is called upon for help, and Dr. Watson masquerades as a collector of Chinese porcelain, but the dénouement comes by still another hand."

- Dummies Short Summary
  "When the daughter of a member of high society falls under the spell of the Austrian murderer Baron Gruner, an illustrious client hires Holmes to prevent the marriage. This dark tale takes Holmes and Watson into the underbelly of London life in a story of violence, sexual abuse, and revenge."

- How Many Words
  At 9,834 words ILLU has the 49th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

- Classifying This Case
  This case is one of 3 classified as fear of retribution. The others are CROO and REDC.

- The Best Of Sherlock Holmes
  1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle did not have it on his list of 12 favorites.
  1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars vote it 30th of the 56 short stories.
  1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 24th of the 56 short stories.

- What Else Happened That Year (1902)
  Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.
  Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.
  Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.
  Anglo-Japanese Treaty, for mutual defense and to maintain status quo in Far East.
  Institution of the Order of Merit for distinguished service to the state; limited to 24 holders at one time.
  Esperanto introduced to England.
  Establishment of Metropolitan Water Board, supplying London.
  Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.
  Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.
  Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) renewed to 1914.
  Italian designs on Tripoli conditionally approved by France and Austria.

Russo-Japanese Convention, Russia agrees to evacuate Manchuria in 18 months.
French work day reduced to 9 1/2 hours.
White settlement of Kenya begins.
St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.
F.A. Krupp takes over Germania shipbuilding yard at Kiel; great armaments firm develops.
Conan Doyle publishes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
Kipling publishes *Just So Stories*.
Arthur Edward Woodley Mason publishes *The Four Feathers*.
Beatrix Potter publishes *Peter Rabbit*.
Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record--154 recordings in all.
Picasso paints Nude, Back View.
Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.
Trans-Pacific Cable laid.
Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

- Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Sherlock is, of course, in residence at 221B. Watson was living in his own rooms in Queen Anne Street at the time.

- Dramatis Personae

The Illustrious Client, although never named, it is strongly inferred to be King George V (the story is dated by Watson as 1911)
Sir James Damery, agent for the illustrious client who brought Holmes into the case, procured the sample of Chinese pottery, and took Gruner's diary after Holmes obtained it.
General De Merville, father of …
Violet De Merville, fiancée of …
Baron Adelbert Gruner, a notorious collector of women. He murdered one of his wives but made it look like an accident and was never prosecuted.
Shinwell "Porky" Johnson, an ex-con gone straight who is a snitch for Holmes.
Kitty Winter, a former mistress of Gruner who is now a ruined, soiled dove because of his treatment of her.
Sir Leslie Oakshott, a surgeon who attended Holmes after he was beaten by Gruner's minions.
Lomax, librarian who got Watson information about Chinese pottery.
Dr. Hill Burton, Watson's alias when he called on Gruner.

- Quotable Sherlock

"It may be some fussy, self-important fool; it may be a matter of life or death."
"I should say that there is no more dangerous man in Europe."
"I have several opponents to whom that flattering term has been applied."
"I am sorry. I am accustomed to have mystery at one end of my cases, but to have it at both ends is too confusing. I fear, Sir James, that I must decline to act."
"A complex mind. All great criminals have that."
"Who knows, Watson? Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male."
"I thought of her for the moment as I would have thought of a daughter of my own."
"I'm a bit of a single-stick expert, as you know"
"I have my plans. The first thing is to exaggerate my injuries. They'll come to you for news. Put it on thick, Watson. Luckily if I live the week out – concussion – delirium – what you like! You can't overdo it."
"There was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many dramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what his exact plans might be."
"The wages of sin, Watson – the wages of sin! Said he. Sooner or later it will always come."
" "It is a loyal friend and a chivalrous gentleman," said Holmes, holding up a restraining hand. "Let that now and forever be enough for us."

- Holmes' Fee

No fee is mentioned in the story. Unless Holmes was still serious about the statement he made a year or two earlier, in THOR, regarding his fees, "I do not vary them, save when I remit them altogether." To me "illustrious" means "big money," therefore I bet Holmes got enough in this case to pay for that retirement place on the Sussex Downs just 2 years later.

- Unrecorded Cases
  2 more unexplained cases to drive Sherlockians craz(ier) wanting to know more.
    Charlie Peace, the violin virtuoso
    Wainwright the artist

- Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen
  This one has only been done twice.
    1965 The Illustrious Client with Douglas Wilmer as an episode in his Sherlock Holmes TV series
    1991 The Illustrious Client with Jeremy Brett as an episode in his Sherlock Holmes TV series

- Fainting In The Canon
  Baron Grunner's unnamed servant faints.

- Newspapers
  Morning Post - The oldest London newspaper. It was strongly Conservative and heavily influenced fashions of the day.

- Annotated Sherlock
  "doss-house" a common lodging-house; a flop-house
  "brand" a torch - in this case, a metaphor for a passionate woman
  "doss-house" a common lodging-house; a flop-house
  "brand" a torch - in this case, a metaphor for a passionate woman
  "lassitude" listlessness
  "mendicants" beggars
  "erysipelas" also called St. Anthony's Fire; acute disease of the skin caused by streptococcus and marked by localized inflammation and fever
  "vitriol" sulphuric acid

- Weapons
  Sticks - Which the two agents of Baron Adalbert Gruner used in their murderous attack upon Holmes.
  Stick - Which Holmes used to defend himself against the Baron's two agents.
  Vitriol (Sulphuric Acid) - Hurled into the face of Baron Adalbert Gruner by Kitty Winter, quite spoiling his devilishly good looks.
  Diary - Of Baron Adalbert Grunner, which contained all the secrets of the Baron's exceedingly disreputable life, used by Holmes to make sure that the Baron would not marry Violet de Merville.
  Arranged Accident - By way of Baron Adalbert Gruner was able to rid himself of his unwanted wife.

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4. Case Inquiries (Alexander E. Braun)

"The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" first appeared in Collier's Weekly Magazine on November 8, 1924. It ran The Strand Magazine on February/March 1925. It is part of The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes.

- Main Characters:
  Colonel Sir James Damery, a well-known discreet high society go-between who tactfully smoothes out delicate problems, now acting in behalf of an anonymous, possibly Royal, client.
  Baron Adelbert Grüner, infamous Austrian nobleman, suspected murderer, and sadistic womanizer.
  Violet de Merville, Baron Grüner's fiancée and next victim.
  Shinwell Johnson, former criminal and Holmes' spy in the London underworld.
  Kitty Winter, former mistress and victim of Grüner's.
  Sir Leslie Oakshott, surgeon.

- Notable Quotes:
  "It can't hurt now," was Mr. Sherlock Holmes's comment when, for the tenth time in as many years, I asked his leave to reveal the following narrative. So it was that at last I obtained permission to put on record what was, in some ways, the supreme moment of my friend's career.

"Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male. Murder might be condoned or explained, and yet some smaller offence might rankle."

Some people's affability is more deadly than the violence of coarser souls.

You may have noticed how extremes call to each other, the spiritual to the animal, the cave-man to the angel.

There was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many dramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what his exact plans might be. He pushed to an extreme the axiom that the only safe plotter was he who plotted alone. I was nearer him than anyone else, and yet I was always conscious of the gap between.

The same paper had the first police-court hearing of the proceedings against Miss Kitty Winter on the grave charge of vitriol-throwing. Such extenuating circumstances came out in the trial that the sentence, as will be remembered, was the lowest that was possible for such an offence. Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a prosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is sufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and elastic. My friend has not yet stood in the dock.

- The Improbable Supreme Moment

Watson opens this story by telling us that this "was, in some ways, the supreme moment" of Sherlock Holmes' career.

This is absolutely absurd, considering the overwhelmingly greater importance of some of his other cases—some of possible serious international repercussions that might have even led to war. BRUC, NAVA, SECO, and others easily come to mind. How, then, can our Biographer suggest, even in jest, that this (albeit successful) effort on our sleuth's part to prevent a thoughtless, foolish headstrong girl's marriage to a highly undesirable man does not only appear to reach the same level of those others, but perhaps even surpass them.

The argument could be made that the Good Doctor once again may not be telling us everything about this case; for example, it seems quite obvious that the Illustrious Client was no simple nobleman, but very likely a Royal—perhaps even King Edward VII himself.

From the exchange between him and Sir James, it is clear that Holmes immediately deduced the identity of this august personage:

"I have no doubt, Mr. Holmes, with your great powers you could easily trace my client back through me, but I must ask you, as a point of honour, to refrain from doing so, and not to break in upon his incognito."

Holmes gave a whimsical smile. "I think I may safely promise that."

This would shed light on some of Sir James' remarks: the client who is the possessor of an "honoured name has been in no way dragged into the matter. "His motives are, to the last degree, honourable and chivalrous, but he prefers to remain unknown." Then he adds that this mysterious client "is an old friend, one who has known the General (Violet's father) intimately for many years and taken a paternal interest in this young girl since she wore short frock." and ´cannot see this tragedy consummated without some attempt to stop it."

I think that the main clue here is the word "paternal." It was an open secret that first as Prince of Wales and afterwards as King-Emperor, Victoria's son had been the indulgent possessor of a roving eye. One need not stretch the imagination too far to consider the very solid possibility that one of the results of this proclivity might have been the birth of one Miss Violet de Merville. Had that been the case, Holmes would then have been involved in the rescue of someone who, under somewhat different social circumstances would have been a Princess Royal.

Royal bastards have never been unusual. Accommodations have always been made for these individuals born on the wrong side of a noble blanket. For instance, the Anglo-Norman surname "Fitzroy" means "son of a king" and was used by various illegitimate royal offspring and others who with considerable pride claimed to be such. This also spilled over to the escutcheons; in medieval England a bastard's coat of arms was marked with a baton sinister, proudly proclaiming that the bearer of such a charge was noble-born although his father's name was denied to him.

Having researched the matter, I have formed the hypothesis that Watson's pronouncement that this case represented the zenith of Holmes' career went deeper than that. The fact is that saving a twit like Violet de Merville from her own idiotic obstinacy would have been light-years away from what he accomplished in several other vitally more important investigations. There is nothing about this particular absurd, seemingly minor case dealing with misplaced mal de coeur to justify the importance that Watson assigned it.

Let us examine a little closer the facts that are presented to us. When Holmes tells Damery that he knows all about Grüner and wonders if it is one of his old crimes that have resurfaced, Damery's reply is quite revealing:

"No, it is more serious than that. To revenge crime is important, but to prevent it is more so. It is a terrible thing, Mr. Holmes, to see a dreadful event, an atrocious situation, preparing itself before your eyes, to clearly understand whither it will lead and yet to be utterly unable to avert it. Can a human being be placed in a more trying position?"

Damery is what we would call today a "fixer." He obviously was someone adept at confidentially resolving for those in power, in one way or another, potentially embarrassing issues. While this whole affair would have naturally been most painful for the de

Merville family, the headstrong behavior of a twit of a girl most definitely would not rise to the level of "a dreadful event, an atrocious situation" much beyond the family hearth.

In view of all this, I have concluded that Holmes did indeed save a woman for Escutheon bearing the baton sinister. whom King Edward VII had a powerful emotional attachment: his legitimate daughter, Princess Victoria Alexandra Olga Mary. She was the king's fourth child and second daughter, the younger sister of the future George V.

Although Baron Grüner was eliminated as a dangerous liaison, it would seem that she never recovered from whatever spell he had held her under. Even though she had a number of noble suitors, the most famous of them being King Carlos I of Portugal, unlike the rest of her siblings Princess Victoria never married and had no children. For a Royal, she led a retiring life, choosing to dedicate her life to her parents, becoming her mother's constant companion.

When Queen Alexandra died in 1925, Princess Victoria withdrew to a house she had at Coppins, Iver, in Buckinghamshire, and devoted herself to the village's life, becoming the honorary president of the local horticultural society.

If these are indeed the facts, then Holmes most definitely did shine by preventing what at best would have been at best a scandal and at worse the intrusion of an Austrian blackguard into the very heart of the King-Emperor's family.

- The Detective and the Satanic Baron

From whatever perspective one considers the situation, it is impossible not to question Holmes' judgment when he decided to cross swords with Baron Grüner, particularly considering that he had not yet heard from Shinwell Johnson. It would have hurt nothing to wait; in fact, there was a possibility that Johnson might have unearthed a valuable piece of information that our sleuth might have used against the Baron. Why the Great Detective chose to deliver this superfluous and dangerous shot across the bows to the villain is not immediately obvious.

As it was, Johnson located Kitty Winter, who in the end permanently halted the notorious Austrian's career, although not as envisioned. Holmes' decision to confront the man smacks more of hubris than planning, even if it was obvious that the Grüner would naturally expect that he would be consulted on the matter. As it turned out, tickling the dragons' tail resulted in almost fatal consequences for Holmes and solved nothing.

Baron Grüner is surely one of the Canon's worst criminals. Aside from the fact that through his actions and behavior he gleefully and purposefully charted a course that left nothing but a wake of misery and death behind him; despite of the fact that he was an extremely well-educated man who was sensitive to the finer things in life he acted as a devil's spawn. One would have thought that an intellectual of the first water who had written a definitive and scholarly work about a complex subject, which must have re-Princess Victoria Alexandra Olga Mary. quired considerable research and much thought, would have deported himself in a more ethical and moral fashion. Although he certainly well understood what love was, albeit through a mirror darkly, he chose to degrade others by using it as a weapon.

Grüner sneeringly tells Holmes that one of the reasons—if not the main one—behind Violet de Merville's unbreakable attachment to him is the result of a post-hypnotic suggestion. One must wonder why Holmes did not have look more deeply into this. While Watson was not an alienist, he surely would have had at least a passing acquaintance with some of the renowned Jean-Martin Charcot's work. By 1887, 15 years before this case, the French neurologist and professor of anatomical pathology had already done considerable work on the application of hypnosis in the treatment of mental problems, and there was no shortage of experts in the field. Sigmund Freud had also contributed to the field. The Good Doctor could have told his friend that in such a case what is done can be undone.

Once beyond Grüner's routine influence, in time at least part of her feelings for him would have faded. Regardless of what is depicted in The Manchurian Candidate, post-hypnotic suggestions tend to dissipate over time; they must be periodically reinforced or they tend to weaken. With all the resources available to the Illustrious Client, obtaining expert professional help would not have proven difficult.

In any case, Grüner's romantic and hypnotic bond on Miss de Merville had resulted in her utter refusal to face facts. At this point, it is possible that even if she were to read his "Lust Book," this would not have had the desired effect—a simple protestation on Grüner's part that it had been manufactured imitating his handwriting would have seemed perfectly plausible to her. It should not be forgotten that he had already "forgiven" him many things that took place in his past—including a possible murder.

With such a vague moral compass, regardless of the fact she had come of age, here could have been other solutions. It would have been a relatively simple matter for her father, with the help of a doctor recommended by perhaps the Illustrious Client, to place her out of danger. All that would have been required would have been to discreetly commit her to some private hospital as a patient suffering from one of the many "hysterical" disorders that proper young ladies of the time often had to endure.

- == A Nemesis Called Kitty ==

Some have viewed Watson's interesting comment about Kitty Winter, that "There was an intensity of hatred in her white, set face and her blazing eyes such as a woman seldom and man never can attain," as a reflection of the "deadlier than the male" Victorian concept. If that was the case, this may not have been too far from the mark.

Undoubtedly, both sexes are equally as capable of deep hatred; however, the kind of deceit and outrage that sometimes can be inflicted upon a woman is like nothing that a male could ever experience. Thus, in her sad case Kitty truly was capable of a hatred that no man could have matched.

Kitty is one of the more interesting women in the Canon. One wishes that Watson had told us a little more about her. We know little about her past; that is, what happened to her once she was dumped by Grüner. An easy assumption is that she took to the streets and became a prostitute, but that might not have necessarily been the case. It is highly unlikely that she was someone that Grüner had picked from the streets to begin with—she certainly had not been a prostitute something that is revealed by her claim that the Baron had seduced her. As she put it, "What I am Adelbert Grüner made me."

Watson's introduction of her describes someone who, at first glance would be attractive: "a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face." I imagine her as a petite redhead. Then the Good Doctor painfully—almost in a heartless or perhaps unfeeling clinical manner—amends this by adding that the years of sin and sorrow that she had spent since had left a "leprous mark upon her." He is describing someone—possibly consumed with TB—who might be facing a perhaps short life, were it not for her "fierce energy," energy which we are left without a doubt regarding its powerful dark source: pure distilled hatred.

It has been speculated, particularly by the scholarly Christopher Redmond, that Grüner may have not just indulged his sexual proclivities with Kitty, but might have also enjoyed physically abusing her, possibly by whipping her.

Unlike what was pictured in the Granada version of the story, Watson gives no indication that she bore any permanent bodily marks as a result of that mistreatment. However, it is often the case that the mental anguish that inevitably results from such treatment surpasses any physical damage.

Whenever I read Watson's account of this case, I fail to understand why Holmes would have brought her with him to the Baron's house. She had already told him where she had seen Grüner keep the "Lust Book" he was after. Had he changed the place where he had kept it during Kitty's time, she would have known nothing about it and would have been of no use.

It may be that I read too much into this, but I have always been unable to shake off the gnawing suspicion that realizing that as far as Violet de Merville was concerned the game was lost, Holmes— perhaps out of a subconscious hope—brought Kitty along. The lady was clearly a ticking time bomb. One would think that Holmes would have realized that her unpredictable behavior might seriously endanger the mission that he and Watson were upon.

Deep inside, I've always harbored the possibly baseless suspicion that our sleuth expected her to attack Grüner in some way, perhaps not with vitriol, but possibly with a revolver or a dagger, bringing the situation to its sole certain solution. After all, he did observe the little package that she was carrying, and made no inquiry about it.

He would have also deduced that, whatever she did, Damery would see to it that she was protected from the legal consequences of her act.

And he would have been correct, as Watson explained:

The same paper had the first police-court hearing of the proceedings against Miss Kitty Winter on the grave charge of vitriol-throwing. Such extenuating circumstances came out in the trial that the sentence, as will be remembered, was the lowest that was possible for such an offence. Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a prosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is sufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and elastic. My friend has not yet stood in the dock.

- A Reasonable Alternative

Just as is the case now, back then those in power could arrange certain matters discreetly and secretively. One must wonder why the Illustrious Client would not have given Sir James a version of King Henry II's "Will no one rid me of this troublesome priest?" and have someone tactfully arrange a deadly "accident" for the Baron. Such an action would have been straightforward and would have considerably simplified matters. It may have been that something like that was being planned and Grüner suspected it; hence his sudden decision to leave for the United States aboard the SS *Ruritania*.

While it is true that the matter ended satisfactorily regardless, it was Miss Winter's unerring vitriol-tossing that brought the situation to a satisfactory conclusion, not Sherlock Holmes.

- A Short Aside

One of the things that always strike me as odd is why, under the circumstances—i.e., they are going to confront the evil baron—Watson would have been carrying his medical bag. Yet, when the moment arose he was able to very quickly (and one might add expertly) attend to the injured man. Certainly, while it is true that the oil and cotton-wool with which he treated Grüner could have been items available in Grüner's household, whence came the morphia hypodermic?

Did he take it away it from Holmes and just dropped it into his pocket? Whatever the circumstances, it certainly came in quite handy.

- What else happened in 1902:

Empire

First celebration of Empire Day (renamed "Commonwealth Day" in 1959).
Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.
Anglo-German fleet seizes Venezuelan fleet to recover debts and reparations.
Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.

Britain

Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.
Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designs Liverpool Cathedral.
Institution of the Order of Merit for distinguished service to the state; limited to 24 holders at one time.
Anglo-Japanese Treaty, for mutual defense and to maintain status quo in Far East.
British Academy granted Royal Charter.
Education Act abolishes School Board system. Local control goes to town and county councils.
Secondary Education authorized out of rates.
Esperanto introduced to England.
Establishment of Metropolitan Water Board, supplying London.
Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.

World

Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.
Failure of second Belgian General Strike.
Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, and Italy) renewed to 1914.
F.A. Krupp takes over Germania shipbuilding yard at Kiel; great armaments firm develops.
Italian designs on Tripoli conditionally approved by France and Austria.
Russo-Japanese Convention, Russia agrees to evacuate Manchuria in 18 months.
French work day reduced to 9½ hours.
Public Health Act in France improves artisan living conditions.
White settlement of Kenya begins.
St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.
Abdul Hamid gives Germany concessions to build railway to Baghdad; rail system to stretch from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf.
Tientsin Sanitary Police established; first Chinese public health measure.

Art

Conan Doyle publishes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
Kipling publishes *Just So Stories*.
Arthur Edward Woodley Mason publishes *The Four Feathers*.
Beatrix Potter publishes *Peter Rabbit*.
Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record—154 recordings in all.
Gauguin paints *The Call*.
Debussy composes *Pelléas et Mélisandé*.
Picasso paints *Nude, Back View*.
Elgar composes *Coronation Ode*.

Science and Technology

Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.
Trans-Pacific Cable laid.
Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

5. Selected Chronologies

a.	The Original Story by Arthur Conan Doyle	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
b.	William Baring-Gould	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
c.	H.W. Bell	Saturday, September 13, 1902
d.	Roger Butters	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
e.	Jay Finley Christ	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
f.	Jean-Pierre Crauser	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
g.	D. Martin Dakin	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
h.	Bill Dorn	Tuesday, September 16, 1902
i.	Henry Folsom	Friday, October 3, 1902
j.	John Hall	Friday, October 3, 1902
k.	Craig Janasek	Wednesday, September 3, 1902
l.	Brad Keefauver	Wednesday, September 03, 1902
m.	Toshio Suzuki	Wednesday, September 3, 1902
n.	June Thomson	Wednesday, September 3, 1902
o.	Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler	Saturday, September 13, 1902

6. Canonical Queeries (Ralph Edwards, BSI)

- Why a 22-year wait to publish this case?
- In what way was this the supreme moment of Holmes' career?
- Are drying room couches customary?
- Was the Hammerford Will a Holmes/Watson case?
- Was Damery a fop or a fashion plate?
- In what cases was Watson linked to violence?
- Is there an explanation for Damery wearing his gloves indoors?
- Why both Carlton Club and XX.31?
- Was "your fashionable consultants" a dig at Watson?
- Was the marriage really a danger to Gruner?
- What are color cards?
- Are iron wills subject to hypnosis?
- What were the visible signs of sin and sorrow?
- How many "terrible years" were there?
- Are hatred and blazing eyes limited to females?
- How did Kitty know that Holmes' only started that morning? Was she correct?
- Do Holmes's references to church, abbess, and bishops suggest a current interest in religious matters?

- Did Holmes usually carry a stick?
- Could Porky not have located the assailants?
- Why didn't Watson learn about Chinese pottery by reading Gruner's book?
- Would it be first growing dark at 8:30 PM in mid-September?
- Would a "precise tidy cat of a man" have to "rummage furiously" in order to find a weapon in a drawer?
- Did Holmes need Kitty Winter (who hadn't been in Gruner's house in over a year) to advise him where the diary was kept?
- Compare "Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male" and "Women of the De Merville type do not act like that."
- Why didn't Gruner "hypnotize" Violet to regard the diary (if discovered) as a forgery?
- What extenuating circumstances were there?
- Why wasn't Holmes prosecuted?

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7. 17 Steps (Brad Keefauver, BSI)

1. The Ever-Persistent Watson

"'It can't hurt now,' was Mr. Sherlock Holmes's comment when, for the tenth time in as many years."

What was it about this case that had Watson asking to publish it on an annual basis? Did he find Gruner so loathsome that he wanted to punish him further in print? Did he want to remind Violet de Merville of her foolishness? Was he so fond of his chance to play the role as Dr. Hill Barton? Or was he trying to gain sympathy for poor Miss Kitty Winter? Or some other reason?

2. The Club Secretary Or The Club As Secretary?

The Carlton Club writes Holmes a letter saying, that Sir James "trusts, therefore, that Mr. Holmes will make every effort to grant this interview, and that he will confirm it over the telephone to the Carlton Club."

Did a man's club serve as his social secretary, making appointments and accepting RSVPs for him? Or was this a special situation, demonstrating some special position Damery held in the club?

3. Was This An Untold Case Or Not?

"You may remember his negotiations with Sir George Lewis over the Hammerford Will case," Holmes says to Watson, only moments after asking him, "Do you know anything of this man Damery?"

If the Hammerford Will case was indeed one of Holmes's cases that Watson should remember, the good doctor would certainly know something of him, wouldn't he? Or was the Hammerford Will case just a prominent matter in the papers, in which case we have to wonder how great a job Sir James did of keeping it out of the papers?

4. The Case Of The Irish Aristocrat

"Frankness shone from his gray Irish eyes, and good humour played round his mobile, smiling lips. His lucent top-hat, his dark frock-coat, indeed, every detail, from the pearl pin in the black satin cravat to the lavender spats over the varnished shoes, spoke of the meticulous care in dress for which he was famous. The big, masterful aristocrat dominated the little room."

Not to be slurring the Irish, being a good part the same myself, but my impression was always that Ireland's native sons and daughters were the common folk of the Empire. Were there many Irish aristocrats moving among the swells of London in those days?

5. Shaking Hands With Danger

"If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran, then he is indeed worth meeting," Holmes says. (Though if you think about it, most of us are more dangerous than a dead Moriarty and a jailed Moran.)

Did Holmes mean he actually enjoyed meeting dangerous criminals, outside of matching wits with them? Would he have enjoyed sitting outside Hannibal Lechter's cell, conversing with the fictional serial killer? Or having Lizzie Borden for tea? (There was that winning woman who poisoned her kids he spoke so highly of.)

6. Retiring To England To Escape Publicity

"Who could possibly have read what happened at Prague and have any doubts as to the man's guilt!" Holmes says of Gruner. "I knew, also, that he had come to England and had a presentiment that sooner or later he would find me some work to do."

Could a man tried for murder in Prague come to England and mingle with high society free of any stigma? While Holmes tracked European crime, how many other Londoners might have even been aware of Gruner's trial?

7. The Man Behind The Curtain

"It is important that I should be able to assure him that his honoured name has been in no way dragged into the matter. His motives are, to the last degree, honourable and chivalrous, but he prefers to remain unknown."

What consequences might this tale's mystery client have seen if he were to have hired Holmes himself to stop the Gruner-De Merville wedding? Or was he afraid of Gruner himself?

8. Her Accomplishments Were Many

Sir James explains, "He has a daughter, Violet de Merville, young, rich, beautiful, accomplished, a wonder-woman in every way."

What might Violet have done to make herself an "accomplished" woman of the age? Education? Social reform? Business success? Would her wealth have been all her own, or is Sir James speaking of her father's wealth?

9. The Upper Crust Cruise Line

"It was on a Mediterranean yachting voyage. The company, though select, paid their own passages. No doubt the promoters hardly realized the Baron's true character until it was too late."

Were the promoters of this trip members of high society themselves? Did the best travel agencies arrange exclusive "invitation only" cruises? Or did one put in one's name for a cruise only to be rejected if one's credentials weren't up to snuff?

10. Well, Maybe She's Not A Wonder Woman ...

Of dear Violet we hear: "To say that she loves him hardly expresses it. She dotes upon him; she is obsessed by him. Outside of him there is nothing on earth. She will not hear one word against him."

The amazing Miss Violet has a couple major flaws, it seems: obsessing over her man and being "indescribably annoying," as Holmes tells us later. Would a woman truly as accomplished and strong as Damery portrays become that wildly obsessed with any man? Wouldn't she be used to good-looking dandies who were not all they seemed? Were there aspects of her character Sir James had missed completely, as demonstrated by the ease with which Gruner captivated her? (Especially if he was portraying himself as the innocent in numerous public scandals that just happened to arise around him.)

11. The Beaten Member Of The Family

"I could deceive you by saying so, Mr. Holmes, but it would not be true. De Merville is a broken man. The strong soldier has been utterly demoralized by this incident. He has lost the nerve which never failed him on the battlefield and has become a weak, doddering old man, utterly incapable of contending with a brilliant, forceful rascal like this Austrian."

Did De Merville's daughter's poor choice in men really ruin the general all by itself? Or did Gruner do something to General De Merville, unbeknownst to Violet, to keep the old man out of it? Could Gruner have applied some threat or humiliation to tame his future father-in-law ahead of time? Wouldn't a general have his own backstage resources for dealing with an unwanted blackguard?

12. One More Number In His Personal Directory

Damery tells Holmes, "The Carlton Club will find me. But in case of emergency, there is a private telephone call, 'XX.31.'"

Holmes then notes it in his memorandum-book, continuing to smile after deciding to take the case with a mystery client. Does the collection of a private phone number to such a man as Sir James Damery please Holmes? Might he be thinking of some future favor he can call in from this man who usually screens his calls through the Carlton Club?

13. The Friends Of One's Youth

"My old friend Charlie Peace was a violin virtuoso," Holmes quips.

Sure, he's probably speaking figuratively, but what are the chances that Sherlock Holmes actually met Charlie Peace before Peace's death in 1879?

14. The Phases Of The Consulting Detective

Watson writes: "I have not had occasion to mention Shinwell Johnson in these memoirs because I have seldom drawn my cases from the latter phases of my friend's career."

What's Watson talking about when he says "latter phases"? If one looks at the dates of Watson's chronicles, they seem pretty evenly spread across Holmes's active years of practice, even during the later years. Was there a phase of Holmes's business that we

know nothing of? Did Watson stick to Holmes-Watson partnership cases when the detective agency had grown far beyond two employees just because he'd established the formula early on? Were the 1890s more of a time for teamwork at the Holmes agency?

15. The Career Of Shinwell Johnson

"Had Johnson been a "nark" of the police he would soon have been exposed, but as he dealt with cases which never came directly into the courts, his activities were never realized by his companions."

Was Johnson the reason Holmes held Watson back from publishing this case for so many years? Did the underworld agent remain active in the decade when Holmes retired to Sussex, perhaps even rejoining Holmes for the set-up to "His Last Bow"?

16. Let's Call A Moustache A Moustache

"The Baron has little waxed tips of hair under his nose, like the short antennae of an insect," Holmes says. But I have to ask: was there any fashion in male facial hair other than a moustache which fits Holmes's description?

Is Holmes impugning Gruner's manliness by refusing to call his moustache by that name? (Especially compared to Watson's macho sub-nasal brush.)

17. She Sounds Like She's From "Falmouth"

"Hell, London, gets me every time," Kitty Winter says, "Same address for Porky Shinwell."

Where exactly is the "Hell" section of London? Would Watson's Victorian readers have been shocked by Miss Winter's statement?

18. Regular Customers At Simpson's

"I did not see Holmes again until the following evening when we dined once more at our Strand restaurant."

Two nights in a row at Simpson's. What it a handy point between Queen Anne Street and Baker Street? Was Mrs. Hudson refusing to cook for Watson now that he had moved out? Or had the landlady's cook continued her reading of the Family Herald when she should have been improving her skills, to the detriment of Baker Street diners?

19. She's So High Above Them, She's A Problem

"Miss Winter's advent rather amazed her, I think, but she waved us into our respective chairs like a reverend abbess receiving two rather leprous mendicants. If your head is inclined to swell, my dear Watson, take a course of Miss Violet de Merville."

Wouldn't an abbess be nicer to leprous mendicants? Is Holmes's "leprous" line a subconscious reference to some disease Kitty Winter might have been afflicted with of the social sort?

20. Newsprint Of The Victorian Age

"There, black upon yellow, was the terrible news-sheet ..."

Did Victorian newspapers start out yellow, and just get yellower with time? Or was this news-sheet a specially colored paper?

21. Escaping Holmes Or Violet?

The evening papers say that "among the passengers on the Cunard boat Ruritania, starting from Liverpool on Friday, was the Baron Adelbert Gruner, who had some important financial business to settle in the States before his impending wedding to Miss Violet de Merville, only daughter of, etc., etc."

Why was Gruner, a man so self-assured and so dangerous, running off to America? Was he a believer in "absence makes the heart grow fonder"? Did he need to put some distance between him and his fiancée to make a few sexual conquests before his wedding day? (Here's a guy whose bachelor party I want to see -- from a safe distance, of course.)

22. First Thurston, Now Lomax

"Finally I drove to the London Library in St. James's Square, put the matter to my friend Lomax, the sublibrarian, and departed to my rooms with a goodly volume under my arm."

Where might Watson have met a sublibrarian? Would a fellow in that line of work be a club man?

23. Is This A Great Story Or What?

Sure, it's not a whodunnit, but does any other tale in the Canon feature such a wealth of colorful characters and details as "Illustrious Client"? It's not often that the "17 Steps" run into overtime and I have to actually shut them down, but this case certainly brought it out. Anyone wanting to jump in on dynasties of pottery or any other parts of the story I didn't get to, feel free.

8. View Halloas (Rosemary Michaud)

As Spring turns to Summer, the Hounds turn to the Case Book, that strange territory where professors go ape, vampires and jellyfish invade Sussex, and Sherlock Holmes writes his own stories. But first, Holmes has to survive a case where he must try to prevent a crime without any cooperation from the intended victim. And what a villain! Baron Gruner, the Austrian murderer, who could take his place with pride beside Professor Moriarty and Grimesby Roylott as one of the Canonical bad guys we most love to despise. I trust that all good Hounds will bone up on their Chinese pottery and join us as we discuss the case of "The Illustrious Client."

Handle with care: Holmes's appointment with Sir James Damery was made by a note written in the third person. Who wrote the note? Sir James? A secretary? The illustrious client?

Sir James instantly connected the presence of Dr. Watson with the possibility of violence. Did Watson have such a reputation for handling the rough stuff? Why? Was this an early hint that the illustrious client didn't much care what might happen to Baron Gruner, just as long as he was prevented from marrying Violet de Merville?

Why did Holmes visit Gruner at home? He must have known it would be useless to threaten or persuade him from his marriage plans. Did he simply want to see Gruner and the layout of his house? Did he accomplish anything else from this visit?

I don't blame Lomax, the sublibrarian, and since brainwork wasn't Watson's department, I don't really blame Watson either. The only person left to blame is Holmes, and so I will ask: Why didn't Holmes tell Watson to study Chinese pottery from Gruner's own book? Did his headache prevent Holmes from thinking straight, or did he have his own reasons for making Watson's difficult situation even worse?

Flame and Ice: It was Watson who first suggested that Holmes might visit Violet de Merville. Then Holmes jumped to the conclusion that Watson meant for him to try to talk some sense into her. But was that actually Watson's idea? What else might Watson have had in mind as a reason to see the lady in person?

Concerning that visit, Watson wrote that Holmes's "hard, dry statement needs some little editing to soften it into the terms of real life." How so? Did Holmes actually make a big fool of himself in front of Miss de Merville? Did Watson have to clean up the account because of the bluntness with which Holmes expressed his warnings? Or was editing actually necessary because Kitty Winter's remarks couldn't be repeated verbatim in a family magazine?

Holmes's interviews with Baron Gruner and Violet de Merville attained similar results of annoyance and frustration. Were the engaged couple opposites, as Holmes said, or were the two actually a pretty good match in terms of their personalities?

What sort of girl was Kitty Winter before Gruner got hold of her? We think of her as lower class because of her slang, but did she merely learn such speech patterns after her ruin? How old was she at the time Gruner got his hands on her?

How much is Holmes to blame for Kitty's attack on Gruner? Was he simply careless, or was this a case of his silent endorsement of "private revenge?"

What do you think became of Gruner? Did he sail for American as planned? Did he ever catch up with Kitty Winter? Would his deformity inspire him to be even more vicious in the future?

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9. Delicate Questions (Chris Redmond, BSI)

Baron Gruner is, by general consent, among the worst of the villains whom Sherlock Holmes encounters.

Is it only the whiff of kinky sex in this story that makes him so, or is there something else about him — his nationality, perhaps — that makes him the man Sherlockians love to hate?

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10. Additional Thoughts (Steve Clarkson)

Colonel Sir James Damery was well-known for his tact and discretion, but even so, it was difficult for him to persuade Sherlock Holmes to enter a delicate matter because Sir James was sworn not to reveal the identity of the client on whose behalf he was working. When Holmes learned that a beautiful young woman of high social position was at risk at the hands of a predatory wife-killer, however, he agreed to take the case…even though it cost him a severe beating and put him at risk of being charged with burglary.

This is a sordid story with a sordid ending, and every time I read it I want to hurry through and get on to something a bit brighter. But one character in particular strikes me as interesting: Miss Kitty Winter. Her diction and choice of words seem to vary between the gutter and something higher. I find myself wondering, "Could she have been a person of breeding — not of noble birth, perhaps, but of middle-class stock?" Then there is the imagery of the sponge: In ILLU Watson likens the transformation of the

handsome and refined Gruner's face to the effects of a foul sponge which left him hideous almost beyond words. In TWIS, a sponge also effected a transformation, from the hideous Hugh Boone to the sad-faced and refined Mr. Neville St. Clair.

In describing Miss Violet de Merville, Holmes said she was "as inflexible and remote as a snow image on a mountain." Mount Rushmore aside, a "snow image on a mountain?" What could Holmes have had in mind? In any case, could hypnosis instill a fixation such as Miss de Merville had for Baron Gruner?

"By the Lord Harry, he won't!" cried Holmes. Who was "Lord Harry?" A euphemism, perhaps? In his subsequent instructions to Watson, Holmes told him to tell Shinwell Johnson to get Miss Winter out of harm's way and to study up on Chinese pottery. How did Watson know to get in touch with Johnson? And why didn't it occur to either Holmes or Watson that the best way to study for an interview with Gruner was to read Gruner's book on Chinese pottery? And that failing, why didn't Lomax think to offer it to Watson as the latest and one of the more authoritative books on the subject?

Kitty Winter wanted to drag Gruner down into the mire where she resided, into "Hell, London," but did she really attain her objective? Without a doubt she exacted a terrible revenge with her vitriol, but is it likely that she lowered his social position to the degree desired? IMHO, she did not. After the attack, Gruner still had two things going for him: wealth and gender. Given what we have seen of the man's psyche, it is likely that once he had recovered to the extent possible from his maiming, he would have redoubled his efforts to locate her and punish her for her actions. And Holmes would not have been safe, either. After all, Gruner was able to accomplish what no other enemy of Holmes could do — he physically injured Holmes, rather severely at that. Even Professor James Moriarty was unable to attain that objective.

Poor Dr. Watson must have had some uneasy moments over his part in the debacle in Gruner's house. If Holmes had been called into the dock, he would have been the only witness, and would have faced a true Hobson's choice: To lie under oath; or to identify the burglar as his intimate friend Sherlock Holmes. And why wasn't Holmes prosecuted for burglary? Why was he not charged as an accomplice in the vitriol-throwing, since he brought Kitty Winter to the scene? We must conclude that it was the prestige and wealth of the Illustrious Client which intervened on his behalf and rendered the British law more elastic.

As I said at the beginning, this is a sordid tale indeed.

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11. Questions & Comments (Sonia Fetherston, BSI)

Two very different women whose destinies are tied to one very dreadful man — our next tale is, of course, The Adventure of the Illustrious Client. My questions and comments this weekend:

Why is the note to Holmes written in the third person?

Many Hounds disapprove of characters who exact their own vengeance. Kitty Winter is one of those characters — but honestly now, don't we love her for it?

Did Gruner make those snapshots himself or was there another photographer?

Holmes is confounded by Violet and that "something indescribably annoying in the calm aloofness and supreme self complaisance" of her manner. Could it be she's the mirror of his own annoying, aloof and self-complaisant side?

The Half Moon Street where Dr. Hill Barton was supposed to reside is located off Picadilly, not far from Buckingham Palace. Half Moon Street was a smart Regency address, and it still is a tony area. The street and its environs have a pleasing literary pedigree. In its heyday, Hazlitt, Shelley, and Boswell are said to have had addresses in Half Moon Street. Laurence Sterne and Richard Sheridan lived nearby. Oscar Wilde strolled past it almost daily, and his "Picture of Dorian Gray" was set a short distance away.

Dorothy Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey lived around the corner from Half Moon Street, and the area was also home to Wooster and Jeeves. Paul Theroux celebrated it in a couple of short stories collected under the title "Half Moon Street," which were adapted into a mid-1980's film by that name starring Michael Caine. Say…wasn't that the same Michael Caine I saw a couple of years later, in "Without A Clue," playing Sherlock Holmes?

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12. 56 Stories in 56 Days (Charlotte Anne Walters)

The best part of this story has to be the fiery and fabulous Miss Kitty Winter, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

At last, a feisty, strong and determined woman who we can really believe in. Kitty Winter is my favourite minor character in all the stories and she even played her part in inspiring the protagonist in my own novel. She is a raw and honest woman of ill-repute who storms into the lives of Holmes and Watson, brought along by Holmes' underworld agent Shinwell, to help persuade a highly-duped society woman against marrying the evil Baron Gruner. Kitty herself was duped into loving him once and came to know his evil secrets before being tossed aside. She is hungry for revenge and full of spirit – a revenge she ultimately gets in a very dramatic fashion.

Holmes has been commissioned by an illustrious client who is not named (via an agent) to prevent Miss Violet de Merville from marrying the evil Baron who murdered his first wife and is a prolific philanderer, even keeping a little book with pictures and details of all his conquests. The silly young girl has fallen for all his lies and will not listen to reason.

Holmes takes Kitty around to see her in the hope that her testimony will make her see reason but despite the passionate words Kitty delivers, Miss Merville remains steadfast.

Here again we see Holmes resort to burglary to achieve results, as he breaks into the Baron's house to snatch the book while Watson keeps the Baron occupied by pretending to be an expert in Chinese pottery. The Baron spots Holmes and rushes to stop him but Kitty jumps out and throws acid in his face, her perfect act of revenge.

The baron's beautiful features which he has used to ensnare many vulnerable women melt before their eyes.

Holmes has got the book and it is passed on to Miss Merville, prompting her to swiftly call off the engagement.

I do love this story; it's silly, fantastical, a bit over-the-top but great fun and a real page turner. It does leave me with unanswered questions though such as – who was the illustrious client? Do we really care anymore when we have become used to Holmes working for royalty and the Prime Minister? Why was the Baron so intent on marrying this woman? It can't have been simply for money as he had plenty of his own. Was it for respectability or was it simply because he could? And why has Watson moved out of 221B to take rooms at Queen Anne Street? Has he re-married?

As this is the first story in The Case Book, we are treated to a preface written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. This is a rather strange piece in which he makes it clear that he has had enough of Sherlock Holmes, only brought him back from the dead due to public pressure, and sees the work as somewhat inferior to his other more lofty endeavours such as historical writings, poetry and psychic research. Don't get me wrong, he doesn't exactly come out and state all this but the inferences are clear. For me, this makes for a rather negative start to The Case Book which is a shame as the first story is such an enjoyable one.

For Kitty and wronged women everywhere – The Illustrious Client gets 9 out of 10.

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13. Observance of Trifles (Brian Keith Snell)

I won't lie--I'm *not* a big fan of **The Adventure Of The Illustrious Client**.

Sorry. I know that's not much of a lead-in. No deep thoughts, no underlying metaphors, no discourses on what the story tells us about Victorian/Edwardian society.

To a large extent, that's because we have *already* covered this story before. On a fundamental plot level, Illustrious Client is the *exact* same story as **Charles Augustus Milverton**. Except it's not as good.

In both tales, Holmes is hired to protect an upper class woman from the mechanizations of an evil, evil man. After a meeting with the villain that proves Holmes has nothing in his detective arsenal to thwart the villain, Sherlock resorts to burglarizing the bad guy's home. He succeeds, but is almost caught, when a former female victim shows up and physically neutralizes the villain.

Yes, there are some differences. But these are basically the same stories. You'll recall that I wasn't fond of the Milverton story as a **Sherlock Holmes** story, and Illustrious *repeats* many of those missteps. There is no mystery to solve--we know who the bad guy is, there's never any question about that. There's no *whodunnit*, *howdunnit* or *whydunnit*. ****, unlike Milverton, there's not even a crime being committed. Sherlock makes *no deductions* in either story, and the greatest detective of all time simply resorts to blunt force breaking and entering to "*solve*" the case. An outside party steps in to settle the villain's hash.

On another level, Illustrious Client just seems to be, well, a *seedier*, *seamier* story. If you disregard the speculation over the identity of the client, you're left with a tale that could as well come from some *penny dreadful*. Holmes is hired not to solve a crime, but to break up an engagement. He's a *fixer*, not a detective!! **Baron Gruner** may be murderer, but his chief interest seems to be using and discarding woman. He keeps a *"lust book"*: *"Snapshot photographs. names, details, everything about them. It was a beastly book -- a book no man, even if he had come from the gutter, could have put together."* We get precious few details about the women he has "*ruined*," but one of those victims throws acid in his face, and we spend several paragraphs in a rather *grisly* description of the resulting injuries.

Yuck.

Yet, ironically, I found I wanted far *more* detail about one character in particular: **Miss Kitty Winter**. She's obviously of great importance in the tale--she tells Holmes about Gruner's diary; she goes with Holmes to try and convince **Violet de Merville** that her fiancé was a snake; Holmes grabs her to help find the diary in his study; and of course she gains her vengeance by tossing vitriol on him. She's feisty, she's likable (well, at least until the acid-throwing), she's the most colorful and vital and interesting character in the story.

But we need more details to make her character work *within the story*. Perhaps it was due to **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's** Victorian

prudishness, but we never learn exactly *how* the baron wronged Kitty. He clearly didn't murder her. He pretty clearly didn't rob her of any family fortune, as the story (and both of the TV adaptations) portray her as lower class.

What then, *did* Gruner do to Miss Winter to make her a raving maniac whenever his name comes up? We never find out. When she has her confrontation with Violet, Kitty neglects to say *a single word* about what the baron did to her--negating the reason she came in the first place!! She merely comes across as a madwoman because of that, constantly raving and *never* explaining, which weakens her position in the narrative. It's hard to take sympathy with someone's cries from justice, when we *never* know what the injustice was to begin with.

When tried for the "*grave crime of vitriol-throwing,*" "*Such extenuating circumstances came out in the trial that the sentence, as will be remembered was the lowest that was possible for such an offence*." *What* extenuating circumstances? Why aren't we told at any point in the story what actually happened to her?

Clearly Gruner did more than "*love her and leave her*," or cheat on her, because that certainly doesn't seem like it would be extenuating enough to let her off lightly for what could have been charged as an attempted murder.

Did he leave her with child, or force her into an abortion? Make her participate in some particularly degrading sexual acts? Did he prostitute her? Did he beat her? The **Granada** adaptation showed us that Gruner had *scarred her neck and chest with acid* himself, which makes her fury more understandable, and her acid-throw at him seem at least somewhat justified.

But in the printed story, we have *no idea* of what motivates Kitty Winter, unless there are some coded words and phrases in the story which made sense to a **1920s** fan that now escape the modern reader.

But I think Doyle was just being *too delicate* and discreet--a gentleman shouldn't write of such things! Yet by eliding past any actual explanations, he weakens the character, and makes us question the justice of her actions.

Holmes also treat Miss Winters very oddly. After Gruner's goons attack him, he insists that Watson get her out of town, because she is danger:

Tell Shinwell Johnson to get that girl out of the way. Those beauties will be after her now. They know, of course, that she was with me in the case. If they dared to do me in it is not likely they will neglect her. That is urgent.

But just six days later, Holmes drags Kitty along *to Gruner's residence!!* How unbelievably callous--"*you're in grave danger from this man, now come with me to his house?!?*" No wonder she brought acid!! Holmes' reason, "*But I had to be sure of the position of the book, and I knew I had only a few minutes in which to act...therefore I gathered the girl up at the last moment*" makes little sense. In their first meeting, Kitty had told Holmes, "*How can I tell you where [the book] is now? It's more than a year since I left him.*" It seems a very slender thread upon which to justify bringing the woman along, risking both her safety and her arrest for abetting a felony, when the lust book might not even be in the same location.

So, as promised, no particularly deep thoughts. It's just a story I don't particularly like, and the most interesting character, who could have tied everything together much better, is underdeveloped to the point of actually harming the narrative.

OTHER TRIFLES AND OBSERVATIONS:

**For what it's worth, Sir Arthur was quite pleased with this story, telling a friend in a letter that he considered it among the top six Sherlock Holmes stories.

Well, I'm a terrible judge of my own writing, too.

Holmes tells **Watson that *"it can't hurt now"* to write up this adventure.

"*Now*" would seem to imply that earlier it hadn't been all right to tell it. Since the tale occurred in 1902, and was published in 1924, obviously something--or several somethings--had *changed* in the intervening 22 years.

Edward VII, most people's choice for the *"illustrious client,"* had of course died in 1910. So there could be no fear of upsetting him--although certainly his part in tale can only make him look good, unless he were embarrassed as having been seen interfering in a society wedding. Or perhaps, given tales of Edward's past, there is a deeper reason--perhaps he is *really* Violet's father?!?

If Baron Gruner were still alive, some of what Watson recorded here might seem actionable--actually accusing him of a murder, assaulting detectives and of "ruining" young women, at the least. So perhaps he had passed.

The only other person who might care would be Violet de Merville, for being made to look like such a fool. She probably wouldn't be too happy that the circumstances of the breaking of their engagement be made public. Surely she had actually married by this point. Perhaps she had left the country, or maybe she had passed in the intervening decades, as well...

**"*Both Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish bath*." Do they even have Turkish baths anymore? There don't seem to be any in my neck of the woods...

**A number of commentators suggest that the following is Sherlock Holmes snidely tweaking an upper class twit:

...said Holmes with a smile. "Don't you smoke? Then you will excuse me if I light my pipe.

See, **Sir James Damery** had not taken off his elegant gloves, and he was a bit of a dandy, so Holmes asking him if he wanted to spoke was supposedly the detective's way of subtly criticizing him for not having taken off his gloves to shake hands with them, and...

No, I really *don't* see that, sorry. And neither the **1965 BBC** adaptation nor the Granada version do anything with that either--they show not a trace of Sherlock taking umbrage or making merry.

No, if you want a suggestion of Holmes' being so insolent, you really have to go to his reading Damery's missive: "*It may be some fussy, self-important fool; it may be a matter of life or death...*"

Of course, Holmes hadn't met Damery yet, and only knew of his reputation as a "fixer" and high society diplomat.

And to be honest, Damery *isn't* a twit at all. He doesn't take issue with Watson joining in. He doesn't talk down about people from lower classes, or from America. He shows ample respect for Holmes' power, acknowledging that Holmes could easily deduce Damery's patron if he tried. He makes sure that Holmes will "*have a free hand*." He listens with "*deepest attention*." Damery certainly comes across as much more likable and friendly than, say, **Lord Cantlemere** in **Mazarin Stone** or **Lord St. Simon** in **Noble Bachelor**. Really, the *only* reason Holmes could have to subtweet Damery as folks claim is that Holmes objected to his being a clothes horse.

No, if Doyle is having Holmes take the piss with Damery, it's far too subtle for *me* to see (or understand why).

**Despite my misgivings about the story as a whole, Watson's *(and Holmes'!*) character descriptions are amazing, deep and rich. When they first meet Colonel Damery.

...many will remember that large, bluff, honest personality, that broad, cleanshaven face, and, above all, that pleasant, mellow voice. Frankness shone from his gray Irish eyes, and good humour played round his mobile, smiling lips. His lucent top-hat, his dark frock-coat, indeed, every detail, from the pearl pin in the black satin cravat to the lavender spats over the varnished shoes, spoke of the meticulous care in dress for which he was famous.

Again, Watson doesn't seem to be tweaking him, either, unless *"meticulous care in dress*" is a subtle shot. But this reads to me like an approving assessment of the man, not a criticism at him.

**Damery on Gruner: "I *should say that there is no more dangerous man in Europe*."

Holmes seems a bit dismissive: "*If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran, then he is indeed worth meeting.*"

Of course, Gruner does a good job of having the crap kicked out of Holmes by minions...and Holmes is not able to outwit him. So Damery's description seems *apt*.

**Damery: "*To revenge crime is important, but to prevent it is more so.*"

Of course, what Gruner is doing is no crime. As distasteful as it might seem, a cad marrying a well-to-do woman *isn't* illegal--even if his previous wife came to a bad end.

**Damery: Gruner "*has been fortunate in some rather shady speculations and is a rich man, which naturally makes him a more dangerous antagonist.*"

So, wait--he made his money from "shady" investments? He didn't murder his first wife for her money? Than *why* did he kill her?

And if he is *already* well off, why is he so insistent on marrying Violet? For more money? For the sheer sadism? Or...does he *really love her?*

**Holmes doesn't like anonymous clients: "*I am accustomed to have mystery at one end of my cases, but to have it at both ends is too confusing*."

**Ah, the mysterious client.

I will credit Doyle for this much--the use of this device helps *disguise* how much this story is merely a re-run of Milverton.

If Damery himself had been the client--or **General de Merville**--we wouldn't be so wrapped in speculation, deduction and argument over the identity of the "illustrious" gentleman. And without those "*bookends*" around the story, we might notice its weaknesses more easily.

Perhaps its just because I'm an American, but I get no particular thrill over pondering *which* high-born noble person is secretly Holmes' patron in this case. One prince or baron or king is as good as another to me.

Of more interest is why, exactly, King Edward (or whomever) was so adamant that "*his honoured name has been in no way dragged into the matter*," that his *"incognito not be broken."* Perhaps there was some social/class taboo; perhaps a reigning monarch simply couldn't be seen to interfere in non-royal matters. Or, as I asked above, perhaps there's some secret relationship between the monarch and the maid...

Then again, since Holmes' detection abilities were *never* used in this case, it is interesting that the **Emperor of The British Empire** didn't have someone available for burglary and undercover dirty work, without involving an outsider an commoner and risking the story getting out. "*007, we have as job for you...*"

**And one very important point about the plot device of the secret, illustrious client?

Sir James carried away both it and the precious saucer. As I was myself overdue, I went down with him into the street. A brougham was waiting for him. He sprang in, gave a hurried order to the cockaded coachman, and drove swiftly away. He flung his overcoat half out of the window to cover the armorial bearings upon the panel, but I had seen them in the glare of our fanlight none the less. I gasped with surprise.

Seriously, bro, if you want to keep your client's identity a secret, *you don't drive around in a carriage bearing his coat of arms!!!!!!!!!!* Good gravy, that's a really stupid and amateurish bit of business...

**Baron Gruner is a ladies' man:

The fellow is, as you may have heard, extraordinarily handsome, with a most fascinating manner. a gentle voice and that air of romance and mystery which means so much to a woman. He is said to have the whole sex at his mercy and to have made ample use of the fact.

**He also, apparently, does a brilliant job of *inoculating* his "victims" against anyone telling bad stories about him:

The cunning devil has told her every unsavoury public scandal of his past life, but always in such a way as to make himself out to be an innocent martyr. She absolutely accepts his version and will listen to no other.

Gee, if I had known it was that easy to make a woman forgiving of my flaws, well, a lot of my relation ships might have gone differently...

This story is the first, and sadly only, appearance of **Shinwell Johnson:

During the first years of the century he became a valuable assistant. Johnson, I grieve to say, made his name first as a very dangerous villain and served two terms at Parkhurst. Finally he repented and allied himself to Holmes, acting as his agent in the huge criminal underworld of London and obtaining information which often proved to be of vital importance. Had Johnson been a "nark" of the police he would soon have been exposed, but as he dealt with cases which never came directly into the courts, his activities were never realized by his companions.

With the glamour of his two convictions upon him, he had the entree of every night-club, doss house, and gambling den in the town, and his quick observation and active brain made him an ideal agent for gaining information.

And Holmes:

"Johnson is on the prowl," said he. "He may pick up some garbage in the darker recesses of the underworld, for it is down there, amid the black roots of crime, that we must hunt for this man's secrets."

In other stories in the **Case-Book**, Watson has mentioned "*agents*" that Holmes used in his latter days. Shinwell is one of the few we ever actual meet.

It's an intriguing set-up, but Johnson doesn't actually *do* anything in the story except find Kitty Winter and introduce her to Sherlock, which seems to be considerably beneath the talents that Watson and Holmes lay out in his description.

**Watson's description of Shinwell: "*a huge, coarse, red-faced, scorbutic man, with a pair of vivid black eyes which were the only external sign of the very cunning mind within.*"

**Holmes: "*Woman's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male. Murder might be condoned or explained, and yet some smaller offence might rankle*."

Well, that's maybe *a little bit* sexist, Sherlock...

**Holmes description of Gruner:

He is an excellent antagonist, cool as ice, silky voiced and soothing as one of your fashionable consultants, and poisonous as a cobra. He has breeding in him -- a real aristocrat of crime with a superficial suggestion of afternoon tea and all the cruelty of the grave behind it...Some people's affability is more deadly than the violence of coarser souls.

**Holmes' attempts to sway Gruner are *particularly* ineffective:

No one wants to rake up your past and make you unduly uncomfortable. It is over, and you are now in smooth waters, but if you persist in this marriage you will raise up a swarm of powerful enemies who will never leave you alone until they have made England too hot to hold you.

The baron calls his bluff rather easily, and Holmes is no more effective than he was against Milverton.

**Gruner on his power over women: "*You have heard of post-hypnotic suggestion. Mr. Holmes. Well you will see how it works for a man of personality can use hypnotism without any vulgar passes or tomfoolery*."

Some have taken that to mean that Gruner actually did use some form of hypnosis to enchant Violet.

How silly--it's *obviously* a metaphor.

**Watson, after hearing of Gruner's threats against Holmes: "*Must you interfere? Does it really matter if he marries the girl?*"

My thoughts exactly. It's not as if she's being forced, and if she wants to be a ****ed fool despite the efforts of everyone in her life, well, it's a free country.

**Watson's description of Miss Winter: "*a slim, flame-like young woman with a pale, intense face, youthful, and yet so worn with sin and sorrow that one read the terrible years which had left their leprous mark upon her."*

**Nice turn of phrase: *"If I can help to put him where he belongs, I'm yours to the rattle."*

**Having called out Holmes for sexism, I feel obliged to point out Watson's take on the difference between men and women: "*There was an intensity of hatred in her white, set face and her blazing eyes such as woman seldom and man never can attain.*"

**Holmes' description (as transcribed by Watson) of Violet:

I don't quite know how to make her clear to you, Watson. Perhaps you may meet her before we are through, and you can use your own gift of words. She is beautiful, but with the ethereal other-world beauty of some fanatic whose thoughts are set on high. I

have seen such faces in the pictures of the old masters of the Middle Ages...she waved us into our respective chairs like a reverend abbess receiving two rather leprous mendicants. If your head is inclined to swell. my dear Watson, take a course of Miss Violet de Merville.

Sounds charming, doesn't she?

That's a difficulty with the story, and any adaptations: if you portray Violet as a young, flighty thing--the type you'd think might easily fall for a bad man--than the hold Gruner has on her really isn't such a big deal. We've probably all known someone like that who fell in love with the wrong man.

But you have to be careful not to *overcorrect*. Yes, build up Miss de Merville so Gruner's ability to enchant her is impressive. But don't make her such an unpleasant--and I hate to use the term--"ice queen" that she becomes an unsympathetic character. Unfortunately, that's how far Doyle took it. Her voice is "*like the wind from an iceberg.*" No one *"could not bring one tinge of colour to those ivory cheeks or one gleam of emotion to those abstracted eyes."*

"There was something indescribably annoying in the calm aloofness and supreme self-complaisance of the woman whom we were trying to save."

Now, in fairness, these were all Sherlock's descriptions. Perhaps, had Watson met her, her might have found *warmer*, more charitable words to draw her picture. Then again, when Sherlock Holmes says that you're being frosty and unemotional, well, he knows what he's talking about!!

When the hero of your story tells us the woman they're trying to help is icy and aloof and haughty and, well, unpleasant, it really dispels any sympathy the audience might have for her plight, and instead leaves us thinking that she probably deserves Gruner.

**So besotted is Violet, and so arrogant, that she actually believes that she is heaven's agent: "*If his noble nature has ever for an instant fallen, it may be that I have been specially sent to raise it to its true and lofty level."*

Oh, barf.

**I had noted this above, but it's worth mentioning again. When Kitty has her chance to tell Violet everything that Gruner had done to her...she doesn't mention a *single* thing. *Not one*. Instead, she harangues Violet, insulting her, and ultimately physically attacking her. No wonder the gambit failed!

**It's an indication of Sherlock's fame at this point in his career that an attack on him rates as front page news.

It's also fun to see that--as in **The Six Napoleons**--Holmes has mastered using the press to confuse his foes.

**Watson is a medical doctor, right? He seems all too willing to listen to news reports and other doctors' reports, rather than actually taking a look for himself. It's difficult to believe that Watson didn't insert a line of two along the gist of "*my experience told me Holmes was right, and the injuries looked worse than they were*" or some such.

**"*There was a curious secretive streak in the man which led to many dramatic effects, but left even his closest friend guessing as to what his exact plans might be*." Or, translated: Sherlock Holmes is a jerk!

**Watson:

The same evening papers had an announcement which I was bound, sick or well, to carry to my friend. It was simply that among the passengers on the Cunard boat Ruritania, starting from Liverpool on Friday, was the Baron Adelbert Gruner, who had some important financial business to settle in the States before his impending wedding to Miss Violet de Merville, only daughter of, etc., etc.

That does seem a little intrusive, for the press to be printing up the comings and goings of people, and passengers lists for ships, and the like. Certainly, an American would bemoan the invasion of privacy (well, at least pre-9/11).

It is mighty convenient, though. Had they not printed that notice, Holmes wouldn't have known to act in time...

**The whole gambit regarding Watson posing as an expert and connoisseur of Chinese pottery *fails* to work *as a story element* for two separate reasons.

First, we were told early in the story that Gruner had written a book on the subject. Now, it's either not credible, or extraordinarily foolish on Watson's part, to believe that during his 24 hour cram session on the subject, *he didn't read Gruner's book*. Either way, it makes it ridiculously easy for Gruner to disbelieve Watson's story.

Secondly, *not once* does Watson actually use any of that knowledge he stuffed into his head. *Not once*. Oh, sure, he name drops a bunch of things earlier in his narration. But go reread his meeting with Gruner--not once does he bring up *a single fact* that he had learned. The entire conversation would play *exactly* the same had Watson *never* picked up a single book on Chinese pottery. Watson evades, deflects or ignores every one of Gruner's queries and tests. Considering that he was playing for time, this is inexcusable. John might as well have spent that 24 hours napping.

And just how hard would it have been to come up with a vaguely plausible provenance for the Ming saucer? "*The father of one of my patients had served in the Opium Wars, and when he died he left this box full of plundered antiquities to his son. Knowing my interest in such things...blah blah blah.*" At least that would have Gruner off guard for a few more minutes, rather than instantly being suspicious.

So, either we are to believe that Watson is *a complete dunce*, or that Sir Arthur did a particularly *poor* job writing that gambit.

**Watson's description of Baron Gruner:

He was certainly a remarkably handsome man. His European reputation for beauty was fully deserved. In figure he was not more than of middle size, but was built upon graceful and active lines. His face was swarthy, almost Oriental, with large, dark, languorous eyes which might easily hold an irresistible fascination for women. His hair and moustache were raven black, the latter short, pointed, and carefully waxed. His features were regular and pleasing, save only his straight, thin-lipped mouth. If ever I saw a murderer's mouth it was there -- a cruel, hard gash in the face, compressed, inexorable, and terrible. He was ill-advised to train his moustache away from it, for it was Nature's danger-signal, set as a warning to his victims.

His voice was engaging and his manners perfect. In age I should have put him at little over thirty, though his record afterwards showed that he was forty-two.

**Sherlock really isn't a very good burglar, is he?

Then something struck upon [Gruner's] ear, for he stood listening intently...Beside [the window], looking like some terrible ghost, his head gin with bloody bandages, his face drawn and white, stood Sherlock Holmes. The next instant he was through the gap, and I heard the crash of his body among the laurel bushes outside.

Holmes didn't get away cleanly while breaking into Milverton's crib, either...

**Again, Doyle goes a bit *grand guignol* here, devoting 4 long paragraphs to the effects of the acid thrown in Gruner's face.

Yuck.

**This story does a better job than most Holmes' tales of giving us some resolution.

Still, I can't help but feel cheated by not seeing Violet receiving and reading Gruner's diary. Not chivalrous of me, I know...but Doyle does such a fine job of making her unbelievably arrogant, I'd love to see her get her comeuppance.

***Sherlock Holmes was threatened with a prosecution for burglary, but when an object is good and a client is sufficiently illustrious, even the rigid British law becomes human and elastic. My friend has not yet stood in the dock.*

In other words, the fix was in, and The Man got Sherlock off the hook. In effect, he had been granted His Majesty's *License To Burgle*.

Still, not matter what a scumbag Baron Gruner was, or how "*good*" the cause is, it really doesn't show British law in a very good light when you can burgle a man's home and maim him with acid and no one pays any real penalty. Vigilante justice, sponsored and protected by The Crown. That's more the hallmark of a despotic regime than a just democracy...
