

*The Memoirs of
Sherlock Holmes*



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of*

**SHERLOCK
HOLMES**

ARTHUR CONAN
by **DOYLE**

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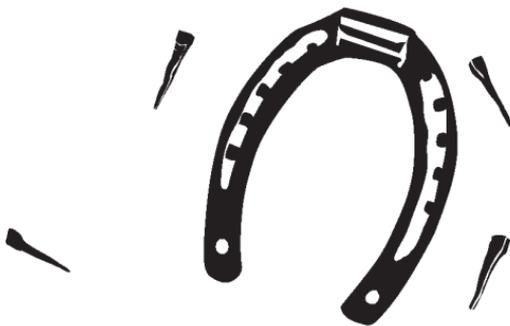
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Contents

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes	1
<i>Silver Blaze</i>	3
<i>The Yellow Face</i>	33
<i>The Stockbroker's Clerk</i>	55
<i>The Gloria Scott</i>	77
<i>The Musgrave Ritual</i>	101
<i>The Reigate Squires</i>	125
<i>The Crooked Man</i>	149
<i>The Resident Patient</i>	171
<i>The Greek Interpreter</i>	195
<i>The Naval Treaty</i>	217
<i>The Final Problem</i>	259
Notes	282
Extra Material for Young Readers	285
<i>The Writer</i>	287
<i>The Book</i>	289
<i>The Characters</i>	291
<i>Great Fictional Detectives</i>	299
<i>Test Yourself</i>	301
Glossary	304

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SILVER BLAZE

“I AM AFRAID, WATSON, that I shall have to go,” said Holmes, as we sat down together to our breakfast one morning.

“Go! Where to?”

“To Dartmoor – to King’s Pyland.”

I was not surprised. Indeed, my only wonder was that he had not already been mixed up in this extraordinary case, which was the one topic of conversation through the length and breadth of England. For a whole day my companion had rambled about the room with his chin upon his chest and his brows knitted, charging and recharging his pipe with the strongest black tobacco, and absolutely deaf to any of my questions or remarks. Fresh editions of every paper had been sent up by our newsagent, only to be glanced

over and tossed down into a corner. Yet, silent as he was, I knew perfectly well what it was over which he was brooding. There was but one problem before the public which could challenge his powers of analysis, and that was the singular disappearance of the favourite for the Wessex Cup, and the tragic murder of its trainer. When, therefore, he suddenly announced his intention of setting out for the scene of the drama, it was only what I had both expected and hoped for.

“I should be most happy to go down with you if I should not be in the way,” said I.

“My dear Watson, you would confer a great favour upon me by coming. And I think that your time will not be mispent, for there are points about this case which promise to make it an absolutely unique one. We have, I think, just time to catch our train at Paddington, and I will go further into the matter upon our journey. You would oblige me by bringing with you your very excellent field glass.”

And so it happened that an hour or so later I found myself in the corner of a first-class carriage, flying along, en route for Exeter, while Sherlock Holmes, with his sharp, eager face framed in his earflapped travelling cap, dipped rapidly into the bundle of fresh papers which he had procured at Paddington. We had left Reading far behind us before he thrust the last of them under the seat and offered me his cigar case.

“We are going well,” said he, looking out of the window and glancing at his watch. “Our rate at present is fifty-three and a half miles an hour.”

“I have not observed the quarter-mile posts,” said I.

“Nor have I. But the telegraph posts upon this line are sixty yards apart, and the calculation is a simple one. I presume that you have already looked into this matter of the murder of John Straker and the disappearance of Silver Blaze?”

“I have seen what the *Telegraph* and the *Chronicle* have to say.”

“It is one of those cases where the art of the reasoner should be used rather for the sifting of details than for the acquiring of fresh evidence. The tragedy has been so uncommon, so complete and of such personal importance to so many people that we are suffering from a plethora of surmise, conjecture and hypothesis. The difficulty is to detach the framework of fact – of absolute, undeniable fact – from the embellishments of theorists and reporters. Then, having established ourselves upon this sound basis, it is our duty to see what inferences may be drawn, and which are the special points upon which the whole mystery turns. On Tuesday evening I received telegrams, both from Colonel Ross, the owner of the horse, and from Inspector Gregory, who is looking after the case, inviting my cooperation.”

“Tuesday evening!” I exclaimed. “And this is Thursday morning. Why did you not go down yesterday?”

“Because I made a blunder, my dear Watson – which is, I am afraid, a more common occurrence than anyone would think who only knew me through your memoirs. The fact is that I could not believe it possible that the most remarkable horse in England could long remain concealed, especially in so sparsely inhabited a place as the north of Dartmoor. From hour to hour yesterday I expected to hear that he had been found, and that his abductor was the murderer of John Straker. When, however, another morning had come and I found that, beyond the arrest of young Fitzroy Simpson, nothing had been done, I felt that it was time for me to take action. Yet in some ways I feel that yesterday has not been wasted.”

“You have formed a theory, then?”

“At least I have a grip of the essential facts of the case. I shall enumerate them to you, for nothing clears up a case so much as stating it to another person, and I can hardly expect your cooperation if I do not show you the position from which we start.”



THE STOCKBROKER'S CLERK

SHORTLY AFTER MY MARRIAGE, I had bought a connection in the Paddington district. Old Mr Farquhar, from whom I purchased it, had at one time an excellent general practice, but his age, and an affliction of the nature of St Vitus's dance from which he suffered, had very much thinned it. The public, not unnaturally, goes upon the principle that he who would heal others must himself be whole, and looks askance at the curative powers of the man whose own case is beyond the reach of his drugs. Thus, as my predecessor weakened, his practice declined, until when I purchased it from him it had sunk from twelve hundred to little more than three hundred a year. I had confidence, however, in my own youth and energy, and was convinced that in a very few years the concern would be as flourishing as ever.



THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL

AN ANOMALY WHICH OFTEN struck me in the character of my friend Sherlock Holmes was that, although in his method of thought he was the neatest and most methodical of mankind, and although also he affected a certain quiet primness of dress, he was none the less in his personal habits one of the most untidy men that ever drove a fellow lodger to distraction. Not that I am in the least conventional in that respect myself. The rough-and-tumble work in Afghanistan, coming on the top of a natural bohemianism of disposition, has made me rather more lax than befits a medical man. But with me there is a limit, and when I find a man who keeps his cigars in the coal scuttle, his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper and his unanswered correspondence transixed by a jackknife into the very centre of his wooden



THE REIGATE SQUIRES

IT WAS SOME TIME BEFORE the health of my friend, Mr Sherlock Holmes, recovered from the strain caused by his immense exertions in the spring of '87. The whole question of the Netherland-Sumatra Company and of the colossal schemes of Baron Maupertuis is too recent in the minds of the public, and too intimately concerned with politics and finance, to be a fitting subject for this series of sketches. It led, however, in an indirect fashion to a singular and complex problem, which gave my friend an opportunity of demonstrating the value of a fresh weapon among the many with which he waged his lifelong battle against crime.

On referring to my notes, I see that it was on the 14th of April that I received a telegram from Lyons, which informed me that Holmes was lying ill in the Hôtel Dulong.

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