

# The Return of SHERLOCK HOLMES

By A. CONAN DOYLE,  
Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes,"  
"The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign of the Four," "A Study in Scarlet," Etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY F. D. STEELE

That angular shadow up yonder was the bait, and we were the hunters. In silence we stood together in the darkness and watched the hurrying figures who passed and repressed in front of us. Holmes was silent and motionless, but I could tell that he was keenly alert and that his eyes were fixed intently upon the stream of passersby. It was a bleak and boisterous night, and the wind whistled shrilly down the long street. Many people were moving to and fro, most of them muffled in their coats and cravats. Once or twice it seemed to me that I had seen the same figure before, and I especially noticed two men who appeared to be sheltering themselves from the wind in the doorway of a house some distance up the street. I tried to draw my companion's attention to them, but he gave a little ejaculation of impatience and continued to stare into the street. More than once he flung with his feet and tapped rapidly with his fingers upon the wall. It was evident to me that he was becoming uneasy and that his plans were not working out altogether as he had hoped. At last as midnight approached and the street gradually cleared he paced up and down the room in uncontrollable agitation. I was about to make some remark to him when I raised my eyes to the lighted window and again experienced almost as great a surprise as before. I clutched Holmes' arm and pointed upward.

"The shadow has moved!" I cried.

It was indeed no longer the profile, but the back, which was turned toward us.

Three years had certainly not smoothed the asperities of his temper or his impatience with a less active intelligence than his own.

"Of course it has moved," said he.

spring before I realized that he had no idea of our presence. He passed close beside us, stole over to the window and very softly and noiselessly raised it for half a foot. As he sank to the level of this opening the light of the street, no longer dimmed by the dusty glass, fell full upon his face.

The man seemed to be beside himself with excitement. His two eyes shone like stars, and his features were working convulsively. He was an elderly man, with a thin, projecting nose, a high, bald forehead and a huge grizzled mustache. An opera hat was pushed to the back of his head, and an evening dress shirt front gleamed out through his open overcoat. His face was gaunt and swarthy, scored with deep, savage lines. In his hand he carried what appeared to be a stick, but as he laid it down upon the floor it gave a metallic clang. Then from the pocket of his overcoat he drew a bulky object, and he busied himself in some task which ended with a loud, sharp click, as if a spring or bolt had fallen into its place. Still kneeling upon the floor, he bent forward and threw all his weight and strength upon some lever, with the result that there came a long, whirling, grinding noise, ending once more in a powerful click. He straightened himself then, and I saw that what he held in his hand was a sort of a gun with a curiously misshapen butt. He opened it at the breech, put something in and snapped the breechlock.

But his eyes were fixed upon Holmes' face with an expression in which hatred and amazement were equally blended. "You fiend," he kept on muttering, "you clever, clever fiend!"

"Ah, colonel," said Holmes, arranging his rumpled collar, "journeys end in lovers' meetings," as the old play says. I don't think I have had the pleasure of seeing you since you favored me with those attentions as I lay on the ledge above the Reichenbach fall."

The colonel still stared at my friend like a man in a trance. "You cunning, cunning fiend!" was all that he could say.

"I have not introduced you yet," said Holmes. "This gentleman is Colonel Sebastian Moran, once of her majesty's Indian army and the best heavy game shot that our eastern empire has ever produced. I believe I am correct, colonel, in saying that your bag of tigers still remains untrapped?"

The fierce old man said nothing, but still stared at my companion. With his savage eyes and bristling mustache he was wonderfully like a tiger himself.

"I wonder that my very simple stratagem could deceive so old a shikari," said Holmes. "It must be very familiar to you. Have you not tethered a young kid under a tree, lain above it with your rifle and waited for the bait to bring up your tiger? This empty house is my tree, and you are my tiger. You have possibly had other guns in reserve in case there should be several tigers or in the unlikely supposition of your own aim falling you. These," he pointed around, "are my other guns. The parallel is exact."

Colonel Moran sprang forward with a snarl of rage, but the constables dragged him back. The fury upon his face was terrible to look at.

"I confess that you had one small surprise for me," said Holmes. "I did not anticipate that you would yourself make use of this empty house and this convenient front window. I had imagined you as operating from the street, where my friend Lestrade and his merry men were awaiting you. With that exception all has gone as I expected."

Colonel Moran turned to the official detective.

"You may or may not have just cause for arresting me," said he, "but at least there can be no reason why I should submit to the gibes of this person. If I am in the hands of the law let things be done in a legal way."

"Well, that's reasonable enough," said Lestrade. "Nothing further you have to say, Mr. Holmes, before we go?"

Holmes had picked up the powerful air gun from the floor and was examining its mechanism.

"An admirable and unique weapon," he said, "noiseless and of tremendous power. I knew Von Herder, the blind German mechanic, who constructed it to the order of the late Professor Moriarty. For years I have been aware of its existence, though I have never before had the opportunity of handling it. I commend it very specially to your attention, Lestrade, and also the bullets which fit it."

"You can trust us to look after that, Mr. Holmes," said Lestrade as the whole party moved toward the door. "Anything further to say?"

"Only to ask what charge you intend to prefer?"

"What charge, sir? Why, of course the attempted murder of Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

"Not so, Lestrade. I do not propose to appear in the matter at all. To you and to you only belongs the credit of the remarkable arrest which you have effected. Yes, Lestrade, I congratulate you! With your usual happy mixture of cunning and audacity, you have got him."

"Got him! Got whom, Mr. Holmes?"

"The man that the whole force has been seeking in vain Colonel Sebastian Moran, who shot the Hon. Ronald Adair with an expanding bullet from an air gun through the open window of the second floor front of 427 Park lane upon the 30th of last month. That's the charge, Lestrade. And now, Watson, if you can endure the draft from a broken window I think that half an hour in my study over a cigar may afford you some profitable amusement."

Our old chambers had been left unguarded through the supervision of Mycroft Holmes and the immediate care of Mrs. Hudson. As I entered I saw, it is true, an unwonted tidiness, but the old landmarks were all in their place. There was the chemical corner and the acid stained, deal topped table. There upon a shelf was the row of formidable scrapbooks and books of reference which many of our fellow citizens would have been glad to burn. The diagrams, the violin case and the pipe rack—even the Persian slipper which contained the tobacco—all met my eyes as I glanced round me. There were two occupants of the room—one, Mrs. Hudson, who beamed upon us both as we entered; the other the strange dummy which had played so important a part in the evening's adventures. It was a wax colored model of my friend so admirably done that it was a perfect facsimile. It stood on a small pedestal table with an old dressing gown of Holmes' so draped round it that the illusion from the street was absolutely perfect.

"I hope you preserved all precautions, Mrs. Hudson?" said Holmes.

"I went to it on my knees, sir, just as you told me."

"Excellent. You carried the thing out well. Did you observe where the bullet went?"

"Yes, sir. I'm afraid it has spoiled your beautiful bust, for it passed right through the head and fattened itself on the wall. I picked it up from the carpet. Here it is!"



OUR UNFORTUNATE CLIENT ROSE, WITH A GHASTLY FACE.

"Am I such a careless bungler, Watson, that I should erect an obvious dummy and expect that some of the sharpest men in Europe would be deceived by it? We have been in this room two hours, and Mrs. Hudson has made some change in that figure eight times, or once in every quarter of an hour. She works it from the front, so that her shadow may never be seen. Ah!" He drew in his breath with a shrill, excited intake. In the dim light I saw his head thrown forward, his whole attitude rigid with attention. Outside, the street was absolutely deserted. Those two men might still be crouching in the doorway, but I could no longer see them. All was still and dark save only that brilliant yellow screen in front of us with the black figure outlined upon its center. Again in the utter silence I heard that thin, sibilant note which spoke of intense suppressed excitement. An instant later he pulled me back into the blackest corner of the room, and I felt his warning hand upon my lips. The fingers which clutched me were quivering. Never had I known my friend more moved, and yet the dark street still stretched lonely and motionless before us.

But suddenly I was aware of that which his keener senses had already distinguished. A low, stealthy sound came to my ears not from the direction of Baker street, but from the back of the very house in which we lay concealed. A door opened and shut. An instant later steps crept down the passage—steps which were meant to be silent, but which reverberated harshly through the empty house. Holmes crouched back against the wall, and I did the same, my hand closing upon the handle of my revolver. Peering through the gloom, I saw the vague outline of a man, a shade blacker than the blackness of the open door. He stood for an instant, and then he crept forward, crouching, menacing, into the room. He was within three yards of us, this sinister figure, and I had braced myself to meet his

standing clear at the end of his foresight. For an instant he was rigid and motionless. Then his finger tightened on the trigger. There was a strange, loud whizz and a long, sly sly thrill of broken glass. At that instant Holmes sprang like a tiger on to the marksman's back and hurled him flat upon his face. He was up again in a moment, and with convulsive strength he seized Holmes by the throat, but I struck him on the head with the butt of my revolver, and he dropped again upon the floor. I felt upon him, and as I held him my comrade blew a shrill call upon a whistle. There was the clatter of running feet upon the pavement, and two policemen in uniform, with one plain clothes detective, rushed through the front entrance and into the room.

"That you, Lestrade?" said Holmes.

"Yes, Mr. Holmes. I took the job myself. It's good to see you back in London, sir."

"I think you want a little unworldly help. Three undetected murders in one year won't do Lestrade. But you handled the Molesey mystery with less than your usual that's to say, you handled it fairly well."

We had all risen to our feet, our prisoners breathing hard, with a stalwart constable on each side of him. Already a few loiterers had begun to collect in the street. Holmes stepped up to the window, closed it and dropped the blinds. Lestrade had produced two candles, and the policemen had covered their lanterns. I was able at last to have a good look at our prisoner.

It was a tremendously virile and yet sinister face which was turned toward us. With the brow of a philosopher above and the jaw of a sensualist below, the man must have started with great capacities for good or for evil. But one could not look upon his cruel blue eyes, with their drooping, cynical lids, or upon the fierce, aggressive nose and the threatening, deep lined brow without reading nature's plainest danger signals. He took no heed of any of

(To be continued.)

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GRACE EPISCOPAL—Low celebration, 8:30 a. m. Sunday school, 10:30 a. m. Preaching, 11:30 a. m. Evening service, 8:30 p. m. St. Andrew's Brotherhood, second Tuesday of each month. Daughters of the King, second Tuesday of each month. Ladies Guild, second Wednesday of each month. REV. W. A. CASH, Rector.

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