



INEFFABLE TWADDLE



"It is my business to know what other people don't know."

—*The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*

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A Study in "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" from The Return of Sherlock Holmes

By: "Kap" Kaplowitz, Friend of The SOBs

Source: Blogpost for April 13, 2022, <https://kaplowitz.blogspot.com/2022/04/a-study-in-adventure-of-six-napoleons.html>

The Adventure of the Six Napoleons by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was first published by Collier's (U.S.), then by the Strand Magazine (U.K.), in 1904. **SPOILERS AHEAD!** According to the chronology of Baring-Gould, it takes place in the year 1900. Also, while reading this article, please pronounce in your head "mafia" in the same manner as does Gordon Ramsay pronounce "pasta."

What we have here is an early Edwardian Era mafia story. But mainly what we have here is an insightful look into the now fully-evolved relationship between Holmes and Lestrade. We have moved on from the official police questioning Holmes' tactics, right into accepting them enough so as to let Holmes dictate a nabbing. And it's not just that relationship in which we see further development take place. Watson has progressed from reading the great detective's hands, all the way to and through his poker face, and into his true machinations. "I who knew him so well."

But I get ahead of myself. Let's find some semblance of order, shall we?

We'll begin where the game is truly afoot—with Holmes rousing Watson from bed and instructing him to get into their waiting cab. Oh, and there's coffee set out on the table. I wonder as to the logistics of this. Since they reached their destination in half an hour, it seems improbable that Watson sat there and drank his joe. So he must have taken said joe to go. Upon a Starbucks 'Tall' amount of research, I see that Sir James Dewar invented the vacuum flask in 1892. So, the tech was there to keep a cuppa warm. However, I like to imagine the good doctor's coffee sloshing dreadfully about from his lovely cup. Jangling against its saucer as they sped toward Pitt Street.

Now the murder. A dead man grotesquely killed and left in so grizzly a state as to emotionally scar. His throat has been gashed and his personal effects include "an apple, some string, a shilling map of London, and a photograph."

In my headcanon, this string is a garrote—a weapon well-known to the mafia. Just ask Luca Brasi, who sleeps with the fishes. In any event, the photo introduces us to Beppo. Beppo who is quite ugly and also quite unlucky beyond that. His face is of a "Simian" and his luck is staggeringly bad, if only he'd just busted any of the correct first four busts, we'd have no story here at all and he'd have the Black Pearl of Borgias. And Holmes would not have been able to put a former case which he could shine no light on, finally to bed.

Prior to that, the case had already hit a pivotal point and also offered a somewhat interesting sidebar, each when we meet one Dr. Barnicot, an "Enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon." From the mouth of Lestrade, "Doctor Barnicot's bust of Napoleon was broken not far from his red lamp." The red lamp, at those times, was associated with the presence of a physician. Interestingly enough, red lamps, or lights, as in a Red-light district were in use since at least 1882. Those districts consisted of their own red lamps and about every form of debauchery you could think of—famously prostitution. Sting even sang a song about it. I'd imagine this dual use of red lamps and lights made for some...very...funny stories of a Sitcom varietal.

Kramer shows up at a red lamp with a toothache and winds up in a long-term relationship with a woman of ill-repute. LOL!

As we go on, two things seem quite different to me in this tale as opposed to many if not all others. First, we see a slew of parts of London in a whirlwind yet unfamiliarly-so glanced-over and detached way. "In rapid succession, we passed through the fringe of fashionable London, hotel London, theatrical London, literary London, commercial London, and, finally, maritime London." I'm aware they are speeding through but that coldness of description is elsewhere and when did Doyle ever need more than a couple/few syllables to add texture or depth? ...



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Zoom Meeting ★ Sunday, May 15, 2022 ★

12:00 (Noon) to 12:30 p.m. Pacific time
Social Time!!

12:30 p.m. Pacific time—Structured meeting
with discussion & quizzing on “PRIO”



Says Program Chair Sunny,

“*The Adventure of the Priory School*” contrasts two very different characters: one we identify with; the other, not so much. I speak of Dr. Huxtable vs. the Duke of Holderness, of

course. I found this portrayal of a British aristocrat—Conan Doyle’s most detailed to date—very interesting. While the school master is frantic over the loss of Lord Saltire (*doesn’t the kid have a real name?*), the boy’s own father remains demonstrably unmoved. Conan Doyle lets us know the Duke is a very important statesman, “completely immersed in large public questions, and rather inaccessible to ordinary emotions.” ♦ Let’s take a moment to understand his biography: KG, or Knight Companion, the most senior order of knighthood and one of only 24 appointed by the sovereign at any given time, awarded in recognition of extraordinary national contribution....; “PC, or one of the Queen’s Privy Council, her formal body of advisors; and “Lord of the Admiralty” (there were several in the late 1800’s so maybe he wasn’t actually the First Lord). ♦ Okay, I get it—he has a lot on his plate. But his young son, a small vulnerable child, has been kidnapped! As the story unfolds, we do see a more human side to the Duke but let’s just say it’s not a good look on him. His peccadilloes, as for other aristocrats typical of Holmes stories, come back to haunt him. I’ve read that one of the aspects of the Victorian era is that, while the aristocracy retained its political ascendancy in Britain, the middle class more and more were acknowledged as the moral leaders of society.

A Dramatically Good Quiz on PRIO

By: SOB Charlie Cook

1. Who was it that made such a dramatic entrance to 221B?
2. What was the first thing the visitor did upon his arrival there?
3. What two (2) cases of current importance did Holmes claim would keep in London?
4. Name the Duke of Holderness’s private secretary.
5. What was the Duke’s son wearing when he disappeared?



6. Someone else went missing; name him and his function at the school!
7. In Watson’s words, in what “country” was the Priory school located?
8. With how many different impressions of tyres was Holmes familiar?
9. Name the grove of trees to the North of the school!
10. Name the Inn and its proprietor where Holmes and Watson found horses!
11. What did the Duke keep in a glass case in his museum room?
12. What was the most interesting object Holmes had seen in the North country?

Answers may be found on Page 4



SOB Kris Hambrick’s *Sherlock on Screen:* The Adventure of the Priory School

Firstly, as I was not in attendance at the March Meeting at which I was conferred the great honor of “The Footprints of a Gigantic Hound” award, I want to thank you all for this great honor and for reading this column! Now onto the kidnapping fun!

As with many stories, the only film we have to go on is the Granada one, but it gives me an excellent chance to talk about something I’ve mentioned before: that adaptation is not always the slavish regurgitation of a written story on the screen. Many other considerations are in effect and, while sometimes a straight up page-to-screen method can turn out fine, I believe “Priory School” to be a great example of a faithful adaptation that, nevertheless, actually changes quite a bit about the story. The tale is a solid adventure, with villains and some action and a gruesome death and great clues for Holmes to follow, but Michael Cox’s decision to rearrange some of the information, beef up Watson’s role, and take advantage of some really excellent cinematography and music makes the story into something even more.

For one thing, there is far more in this film for Watson to do, whether it’s his witnessing of key plot elements or the way his patience in dealing with Holmes are gently illustrated. The film allows an interaction impossible in the book when Watson’s expression reveals that Holmes is not, in fact, busy, and is just holding out for the promise of money. There’s also an engaging bit where Watson repeatedly attempts to engage Holmes, only to be met with Holmes repeating back what Watson had just said as if it were his own idea. These moments have stuck with me from my first viewing and... [Continued on Page 3](#)

Sherlock on Screen: The Priory School

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...are what I remember about this episode, rather than the plot.

Second, by drawing out details like the Holderness's past as cattle robbers, the film allows things that are actually clues to be seeded throughout and come to fruition in due time. (Again, it is Watson who unearths this gem.)



A few trivia items of note:

- Lord Holderness is played by Alan Howard, cousin of previous Holmes, Ronald Howard. He's also the voice of the Ring in Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy!
- And, if you recognize the Lord's home, it's been used in many films (including both of the most recent *Pride and Prejudice* movies) and, in fact, Chatsworth House

itself was namedropped in Austen's novel as a place Elizabeth Bennet visits on her tour of the Lake Country.



More Romnes Poetry

By: SOB James Romnes

- ♦ The dog insisted I send this immediately:

"On Choosing a Pipe"

Do nothing brash
as a calabash!
The Canon's way?
Light a greasy clay.

- ♦ Another hatchling the dog and I came up with:

"The End of the Islander"

Thames boat
Small afloat,
Take note
Tonga won't.

A Study in "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" ...

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The second out-of-step stride from the norm is found in the dialog. As Holmes takes notes of his questioning, Watson relates the answers in a rambling fashion wherein the questions are alluded to and not heard/written as the other party is left alone on paper to ramble. I liked this one, though. It lent a Dragnet-ian "Just the facts, ma'am" vibe. Why did Holmes take the case notes and not Watson? Because Holmes works cases, Watson works Holmes. I'm actually surprised this isn't shown more often, really. Here, Watson simply tries a different take. Perhaps he's trying to learn the trick more indirectly by watching the reactions of those who are less familiar to him than Holmes.

I've mentioned a bit ago, Holmes dictating the nabbing. Lestrade on the couch and at rest thereon put me in mind of a line from A Supermarket in California by Allen Ginsberg. To paraphrase, 'What thoughts I have of you tonight, John Openshaw.' For if only Holmes extended young Openshaw the sofa instead of sending him out into that dark and stormy night what with children crying and sobbing in chimneys and whatnot. Again, this goes to show the true friendship developed. Plus, the Five Orange Pips is (probably) all about the forces of nature bending the wills of man. Fate vs. ↗

free will and definitely for another time, all that.

Then, finally, the lovely sentiment of Lestrade's puts the finest of points on camaraderie. "We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand." This, even after typical Holmes voila and jazz hands unfurling of facts. These guys all really admire each-other. This is a love-fest. Nothing of which sums it up much better than, "Put the pearl in the safe Watson." Really. Holmes needs to eat too, I mean the official police probably can't claim rewards, anyway.

Ed. Notes:

- I'd like to take a moment to remind you kind Gentlemen that I write these thoughts under the assumption of you having read these adventures. They are readily available everywhere, including for free at Project Gutenberg as well as Wikisource (at times), where you can listen to it read, as well.
- Online resources for this article include: Lit2GO, Crestline (The History of Travel Mugs and Tumblers), Wikipedia (The Adventure of the Six Napoleons, Red-light district), The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, Poetry Foundation. Special shout-outs to The Sound of the Baskervilles, scion society of The Baker Street Irregulars, and SOB Rich Krisciunas.



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By appointment of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria

Ineffable Twaddle

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A Scion Society of the Baker Street Irregulars since March 31, 1980
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Here's a Fun & Easy Contest

...proposed by SOBs Margaret & Allen Nelson!

You know Watson's hero and ours, Sherlock Holmes, but how well do you know about the private life of his literary agent, Sir Arthur? Here's your chance to dive into it:

Submit your response to this question and it will appear in a future issue of this newsletter!!

The question: *What is your favorite real-life story, event or nugget of info about Arthur Conan Doyle's life?* An example, "When Conan Doyle won a cricket match due to his hits in 1897." ♦ And, there's no deadline...**yet!** If your answer doesn't hit you until June or July, or even later, send it in then! The **final** deadline will be announced later! ♦ The names of those who DO provide answers will be put in a hat and, toward year-end, one or more of them will be drawn for nifty prizes!! *There might also be something special for our first respondent!* ♦ You choose the length of your answer and how many entries you'll submit. Just email your answers to: terri@soundofthebaskervilles.com. **Thanks!**



OUCH!! Unpaid Dues still overdue!

Our Club's fiscal year begins each new year on April 1. So does our membership year!

And, here we are on May 1st with only 52 of our 117 households paid for the 2022 / 2023 year!

We hope—if you haven't done so yet—that you'll renew your dues **today**, but certainly no later than **May 15**, either through the PayPal option on the "Join" page of our website at

<http://soundofthebaskervilles.com/join>

(where the Club pays the processing fee!), or by check—payable to The Sound of the Baskervilles—and mailed to:
Treasurer Melinda Michaelson,
P.O. Box 7633,
Tacoma, WA 98417.

Thank you!!

Answers To Cook's Quiz on Page 2:

1. Thornycroft Huxtable.
2. He staggered against the table and slipped down upon the floor.
3. The case of the Ferrers documents and the Abergavenny murder trial.
4. James Wilder.
5. His school suit of black Eton jacket and dark gray trousers.
6. Heidegger, the German master.
7. Peak.
8. 42.
9. Ragged Shaw.
10. Fighting Cock Inn; Reuben Hayes.
11. Horseshoes.
12. The check he received from the Duke.

The Sound of the Baskervilles
...is a scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars, serving the greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington, U.S.A., and has met monthly since March 31, 1980.

\$25 per year brings Members the monthly newsletter "Ineffable Twaddle", a copy of Beaten's Christmas Annual, and the incalculable benefits of association with a group of certifiable Holmes aficionados.

Meetings are held the 3rd Sunday of each month. Location of the meetings may vary.

Regularly scheduled additional events throughout the year include: "The Masters' Celebration" honoring the meeting of Holmes and Watson (March), "The Annual Wreath Throw" commemorating Holmes' loss at Reichenbach Falls (May), "The Dr. John H. Watson Picnic" (July), and "The Will Crakes Memorial Jollification" (December). Other activities—book crawls, teas, plays and gaming events—are as announced.

To join, or to renew your membership, send your check for dues—\$25 for individuals, \$35 for families (U.S. funds only)—payable to The Sound of the Baskervilles—to:

SOB Treasurer
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