



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

1889, as the majority of our experts think, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 35 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 37.

Main Characters:

Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismund von Ormstein, king of Bohemia. Irene Adler, American opera singer, noted adventurer and King Wilhelm's former mistress. Godfrey Norton, English barrister who weds Irene.

Notable Quotes:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen, but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature

An Inquiry into: "A Scandal in Bohemia"

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"A Scandal in Bohemia" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in July 1891. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

As the table shows, most of our chronologists are in agreement regarding the year in which this case took place. If indeed the year in which this case took place was

A Scandal in Bohemia

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	Tuesday, March 20, 1888
Baring-Gould	Tuesday, May 20, 1887
Bell	Tuesday, March 22, 1888
Blakeney	Wednesday, March 20, 1889
Brend	March 1889
Christ	Wednesday, March 20, 1889
Dakin	March 1889
Folsom	Thursday, March 21, 1889
Hall	March 20, 1888
Keefauver	Tuesday March 20, 1888
Klinger	1889
Zeisler	Friday, March 22, 1889

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.

Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature.

“You see, but do not observe.”

“It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

“She was a lovely woman, with a face that a man might die for.”

It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime.



Considering Irene Adler

One may safely say that in all of English literature has there been another character such as Irene Adler who, after such an ephemeral appearance, has generated such an immense number of articles and books. To truly gauge her measure it becomes necessary to step away from the Great Game for a moment.



Her creation was pure genius on the part of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. She served multiple purposes; for example, there is nobody else in the entire Canon who might have been a fit consort for the Great Detective. She was intelligent, well-educated, a star of the first magnitude in her own profession (mediocre-voiced prima donnas did not sing at *La Scala* or trod the stage of the Imperial Opera of Warsaw!), hers must have had a beautiful, crystal-toned voice. Having

known opera singers and well as ballet dancers, I am acquainted with the steel-edged discipline necessary to succeed in such endeavors. This alone proves her to have been a woman with more than

enough courage, determination, and will to make her own way in the world during a time in which females of her class mostly served as background decoration.

Then, opera as well as ballet existed in a limbo of nebulous respectability. While prima donnas and prima ballerinas received acclaim and the benefit of the doubt, the girls in the chorus as well as the anonymous “ballet rats” who tiptoed behind the likes of a Pavlova, were not deemed exactly respectable and stage-door Johnnies panted for them after each performance.

Miss Adler belonged to a unique and short-lived class of Victorian Era women. Even though it is highly unlikely that her relationship with the King of Bohemia was the only liaison she ever entered into, she was not, by any definition of the term, a prostitute or a courtesan, which until my parents’ time, were politely referred to as “adventuresses.”

I have always thought that ACD probably patterned her after Lillie Langtry, one of the grand dames who cut a wide swath through the high society of her time. She was one of King Edward VII’s many mistresses.

Another example of the class was Sarah Bernhardt who never attempted to hide her many scandalous liaisons. Neither fit the pattern of the high-level courtesans whom the French, with typical Gallic vitriolic wit referred to as the *grande horizontales*. These pampered demi-mondaines did not solely inhabit 19th-century Paris, but London as well, were almost indistinguishable from the *haut*



Lillie Langtry

monde, and were pursued by gaggles of newspaper reporters, with legendary reputations growing up around the most alluring and favored of these celebrities.

Like her fictional counterpart, Lillie was a woman of great beauty and charm. She became an actress and starred in many plays in Great Britain and the United States, eventually running her own stage production company. She was well-read and a witty conversationalist who spoke several languages. She had unashamedly public relationships with noblemen, including the Prince of Wales, the Earl of Shrewsbury, and Prince Louis of Battenberg.

At her apogee, she received widespread public and media interest. She immediately became a trend-setter and socialites shamelessly copied her hats, gowns, and demeanor. Both ladies and gentlemen often made it a point to “just happen” to be at Hyde Park, where the elite would drive on summer afternoons from five to seven, when she would go by in her luxurious carriage following the fashionable route from Hyde Park Corner to Knightsbridge Barracks.



Lillie Langtry and Sarah Bernhardt.

Irene particularly shines in the Canon because of how easily she cut down to size a rather arrogant Holmes; she gave him no choice but to recognize her as a first-rate adversary after having grossly underestimated her. Personally, whenever I revisit this case, I experience mixed feelings—a touch of *schadenfreude* over our sleuth's chagrin as well as sympathy over his defeat.

Without further details about the lady's life, just going by what Watson set down, it seems patently unfair for Irene Adler to have been referred to as an "adventuress," and described as having been "of dubious and questionable memory."

It is well to consider that everything that we know about her comes from her antagonists' perspective.

Wisely, ACD safely put her beyond any possibility of her and Holmes ever meeting again. From the very beginning he informs us that she was dead, leaving a wistful Sherlock Holmes under the spell of *the* woman, thus making it impossible for any other member of the gentle sex to ever come close to measuring up to such a benchmark.

Regarding *the* woman, Jane Austen probably put it best: "I hate to hear you talk about all women as if they were fine ladies instead of rational creatures. None of us want to be in calm waters all our lives."

Incidentally, if any of you wish to learn more about the *grande horizontals* and their time, I heartily recommend Michael Harrison's book, *A Fanfare of Strumpets*.

The "Late" Irene Adler

One cannot avoid but notice Watson's passing reference to "the *late* Irene Adler." As the term was used then (and now) for someone deceased it would indicate that fairly soon after her brief encounter with Sherlock Holmes our diva continued her adventures and operatic career in the Great Beyond. However, because no indication is given us as to what led to the lady's supposed demise one must wonder whether her death was not her greatest performance—a complete fabrication.

Regardless of all his professed admiration towards his former mistress, the King's behavior was that of a spoiled brat; probably also a resentful and revengeful one as well. He very well might have been



one of those deluded males who believe that after a relationship with *Him* no one else could ever replace him. It is not too farfetched to think that he might have been capable of later trying to get to her for having had the effrontery to love and marry someone else. Faced with such circumstances, disappearing would have been her best solution; especially because it appears that neither she nor her husband lacked the economic means with which to do so.

It is practically certain that the first steps leading to their involvement were taken by the king, just as the disgraceful way in which he dropped her was no doubt what triggered her response.

She was then subjected to the additional abuse of being waylaid and having her home burgled five times. Under such circumstances none of us would have felt very safe; especially knowing that sooner or later she would have to face the formidable Sherlock Holmes.

By no extent of the imagination could Holmes have felt particularly proud of himself at the end of the case. Aside from the fact that she bested him, he obviously came to realize the sort of man the king was and to what extent he had wronged Irene Adler—it is notable that he refused to shake the noble hand. He obviously came to respect and admire Irene for the extremely capable person that she was. This is proven by the fact

that from then on, as Watson put it, she eclipsed and predominated the whole of her sex, which moved Holmes to refer to her “always under the honourable title of *the woman*.”

But what about Irene herself? Did she find happiness with Godfrey Norton, her husband? Although one certainly would hope so; however, if Watson’s “late” truly meant deceased, that happiness may have been short-lived.

Consider that she was the prima donna of a prestigious world-class opera house, but retired. This is very unusual because she was still young—she was only thirty-one at the time. So why would she have given up all that while she was at what had to have been the height of her powers? It may have been that she was the victim of a terminal disease, most likely tuberculosis, which back then was rampant, and this would go far to explain her abandoning a profession that requires above-average breath control and lung exertion.

The King

There has, is, and will always be considerable canonical speculation about the King of Bohemia’s true identity. Perennially, some fingers point at the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, but his age and marital status pose a problem. At the time the heir to the British throne was 48, married, and not particularly attractive. I find it unlikely that Irene, as I picture her, would have been inclined to engage in such a relationship with the heir to the British throne.

The Bohemian connection, others argue, points to Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria because at the time Bohemia was a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Prince, for sundry reasons—possibly pathological, of a syphilitic nature—was not a very stable personality. Although he would have been the right age he was besotted with the young Baroness Vetsera, whom he later shot dead, blowing his own brains off afterwards at the royal hunting lodge at Mayerling.

A more likely candidate might be Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir presumptive to Emperor Franz Joseph’s throne. In 1889 he was of the right age—twenty-six—and unmarried. It would not have been difficult to imagine his falling head-over-heels for Irene. He might have even loved her deeply enough to want to make her his wife; after all, he was not the heir, only the spare, and never the Emperor’s favorite who disliked and ignored him, considering him unfit for his position, not to speak of the throne itself.

Rudolf’s suicide would have turned everything upside down. Franz suddenly, unexpectedly (and very likely unwillingly), now found himself in direct line to the throne. He must have immediately come under focused scrutiny, with the powers-that-be deciding that he be respectably married and assume his duties as heir apparent. Crushed by the enormous change in status and mercilessly pressured by what probably was the stuffiest court in Europe, he would have had to end his relationship with Irene and carry out his new duties.



Doubtless the whole matter could have been handled orders of magnitude better and far more discreetly and satisfactorily than it was, sparing Irene much grief and justifiable anger.

Unfortunately for the course of history, a few years later the Archduke was performing his duties when he carried out an official visit to Sarajevo in 1914 and both he and his wife were assassinated, triggering what would become the First World War.

The Delicate Princess

Unlike so many of their descendants today, Royals back then had to maintain appearances; although it is true that back in Good Queen Victoria's time there was considerable "Nod-nod-wink-wink" going on. Improbably, I may be ignoring some minor exalted noble husband, but when one reviews the royal houses of the time, it seems that Albert, Victoria's Prince-Consort, may have been the only faithful husband in the lot. Looking around at Franz-Joseph and Prince Rudolph, the Bonapartes (both



Napoleon the Great, the disappointing Napoleon III) and others, married fidelity on the part of royalty was a hothouse rarity. And when it came to bachelor royalty, well, boys will be boys. Many princesses and queens received unwelcomed presents of STDs courtesy of philandering husbands.

Considering all of the above, one is left to wonder what sort of cloistered life must have been led by the King of Bohemia's would-be bride, Princess Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, daughter of the King of Scandinavia. When the King self-importantly claims that what he is about to reveal to Holmes and Watson might influence European history, his principal concern centers over the possibility that his little *tête-à-tête* escapade with Irene could become known to the princess, who "is renowned by her delicacy," derailing the coming marriage.

Princesses and queens, just as farm girls learned early in life that there is no such thing as the stork. Almost without exception, they knew that it wasn't only the eyes that did the roving when it came to their male counterparts. Anyway, one might wonder why a princess (or any woman as far as that goes) then or now would be shocked over the fact that bachelor males in good health are interested in intimate female companionship.

Although the time strived to be discreet, the realities—and abuses—of life were understood. Bertie's escapades (before and during his marriage) were a major reason for Victoria not to be amused. The Heir Apparent's (and later King's) escapades were shrugged off by his peers and the press. By the standards of the time, the unmarried King of Bohemia's activities with Irene Adler would have fallen far short from being classified a true scandal.

Overall the question then remains, what would have happened two years later that would have made the delicate by then Queen of Bohemia feel any less appalled?

A Golden Case

Prompted by the sound of the arrival of the King of Bohemia's brougham, Holmes looked out the window and admiringly (and somewhat atypically) commented, "A nice little brougham and a pair of beauties. A hundred and fifty guineas apiece. There's money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else."

Quite true! Back then 300G-worth of horseflesh (\approx \$240,000 today) for a couple of carriage-pulling hayburners indicated a well-off owner.

In terms of just mass, the “expense money” the King left for Holmes—£300 in gold (≈\$113,000)—would have weighed slightly over 5 lb. The Bohemian’s cloak’s pockets must have been reinforced!

Had the total amount of £1,000 (≈\$380,000) been in gold, it would have weighed about 18 lb.

Although this would seem unnecessarily unwieldy, especially for those of us living in an age of copper-nickel coinage, the fact is that the average Victorian avoided paper money because the banknotes’ denominations were impractically high. At the time, the Bank of England issued notes of £5 (≈\$1,900), £10 (≈\$3,800), £20 (≈\$7,500), and £100 (≈\$38,000) denominations. Amounts impractical for everyday use—imagine handing the supermarket cashier a \$10,000 bill to pay for a pound of hamburger! Even the popular *Baedeker’s London and its Environs* guide advised against the impractical bank notes:

These [the bank notes] are useful in paying large sums; but for ordinary use, as change is not always readily procured, gold is preferable. The number of each note [i.e., the serial number] should be taken down in a pocket-book, as there is a bare possibility of its being in this way traced and recovered, if lost or stolen.

When it came to his fee, Holmes already had in hand the £1,000 (≈\$380,000) that the king gave him for expenses, which was later augmented by the gift of a “small snuff-box of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid.” Irene’s gold sovereign acquired a different sort of value, having it been given by the lady to our sleuth in gratitude for serving as witness at her wedding. Holmes himself confirmed this: “I mean to wear it on my watch-chain in memory of the occasion.”

One must wonder, however, whether Holmes’ drunken-looking groom disguise completely deceived the lady.

More Chronological Quicksand

Unsurprisingly so, there are problems with this adventure’s dating. Watson tells us that it took place in 1888; however the illustrious Holmesian scholar D. Martin Dakin comments as follows:

Watson says it was in March 1888; but this must be changed to 1889. It was after Watson’s marriage, which took place towards the end of 1888 or early in 1889—long enough after for him to have returned to practice and put on seven and a half pounds, but not too long for this to have been his first visit to his old friend. . . . March 1889 would be just about the right lapse of time. Any later date would not only mean too large a gap, but would mean that Watson’s publication in July 1891 would have violated his promise of two years’ secrecy given to the king—a period which would extend very conveniently from 1889 to 1891.



What else happened in 1889:

Empire

Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

Transvaal claimed to be “encircled” by Rhodes’ concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. He is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.

Britain

Great London Dockers' Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers' unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers' favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.

Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.



Establishment of the telephone company.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

◀ General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

Early use of photographs in newspaper: *Illustrated London News* runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

World

Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

Wall Street Journal begins publishing.

Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.

U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.

Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.

President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.

Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.



◀ Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolf refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.

King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic "Land Captains" replace elected JPs in Russia.

Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to life imprisonment.

Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.

Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.

Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.

The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.

Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General Hippolyte, who becomes president.

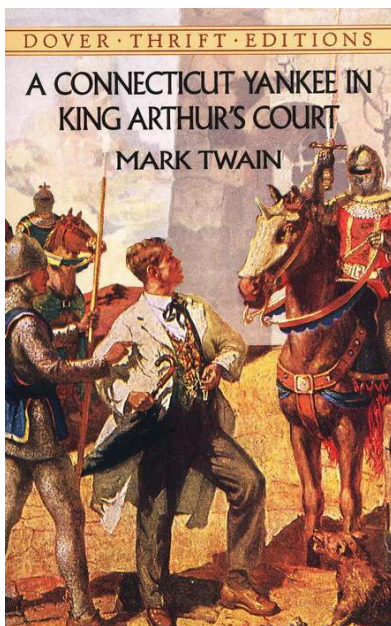
Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

Art



Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

◀ Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.

Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.

Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

Science and Technology

Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.

Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.

Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting in San Francisco, California.

Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his "Navigable Balloon."

The first jukebox makes its debut at the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.

The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

First linotype machine in use.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

Next week's case: REDH.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly..."

All Sherlock Holmes photos have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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