



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure V – A Case of Identity

Publishing History

5 of the 60 stories written

First published in The Strand Magazine September 1891

Part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* collection

By George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1892

In the US by Harper Bros., New York, 1892

The British illustrator was Sidney Paget

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the date of the story as Tuesday, October 18 to Wednesday, October 19, 1887 which makes it the 12th of the 60 stories. This means that Holmes 33 and Watson 35

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY SAYS

“Mary Sutherland, the typist, was thrilled when romance came into her life. Her suitor was also skillful with a typewriter, but when he left her waiting at the church she consulted Holmes. Holmes felt the case could be best settled with a horsewhip.”



Dummies Short Summary

“Holmes uncovers a heartless deception in a case he solves without ever leaving his rooms.”

How Many Words

At 7,030 words IDEN has the 13th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 is NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of a misdeed and is not prosecutable. Holmes solves the case and alleviates much of the distress.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

You are right. Not a lot of votes for this “case without a crime.”

- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #1 on their WORST list.
- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it # 32 of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – Sherlock Holmes Society of London votes it #43 of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1887)

1887 – AGAIN. We just did this year twice already. Back up a few pages and check both SCAN and REDH.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Watson is on his own. “We sat on either side of the fire in his lodgings at Baker Street” as stated in the first sentence sounds as if they were Holmes’ lodgings, not OUR lodgings as Watson would have said were they still roomies.

Dramatis Personae

Only 3 (or is it 4?) characters are the real story. Holmes and Watson don’t do a heck of a lot.

- **Mary Sutherland**, a wronged woman who comes to seek Holmes counsel.
- **Mrs. Windibank**, mother of Mary
- **James Windibank**, a traveler in wines. Stepfather of Mary. He is 15 years younger than his wife and 5 years older than Mary.
- **Hosmer Angel**, betrothed of Mary

- **Boy In Buttons**, unnamed pageboy.
- **Mr. Hardy**, foreman to Mr. Sutherland who continued to manage the business after Mr. Sutherland's death until Mr. Windibank persuaded his wife to sell it.
- **Mrs. Etheridge**, referred Mary to Holmes.
- **Westhouse & Marbank**, claret importers who employ James.

Quotable Sherlock

4 or 5 of these quotes are excellent detective reasoning.

- "I can never bring you to realize the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumb-nails, or the great issues that may hang from a boot-lace."
- "Life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent."
- "Indeed, I have found that it is usually in unimportant matters that there is a field for the observation, and for the quick analysis of cause and effect which gives the charm to an investigation."
- "Never trust general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details."
- "It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important."
- "The larger crimes are apt to be the simpler, for the bigger the crime the more obvious, as a rule, is the motive."
- "It is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook."

Holmes' Fee

We don't really know what went into Holmes' bank account. Windibank refers to the expense of hiring Holmes. Mary Sutherland's expenses would have come out of the household income, to which she was a significant contributor.

Disguises

Holmes uses no disguises in this tale. James Windibank's disguise as Hosmer Angel must have been great. Or maybe Mary Sutherland is just plain dumb.

Unrecorded Cases

If only we knew what these stories were. Sometimes I think half the royalty in Europe have "messed up" and had Sherlock bail them out.

- The matter of the reigning house of Holland, for which Holmes received a large diamond ring. The matter was too delicate to be confided to Watson.
- An intricate matter referred from Marseilles
- Mrs. Etheredge. Holmes found her husband after he was thought to be dead
- The Dundas Separation Case

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

IDEN is not a flashy story and has only been attempted twice.

- 1921 A Case of Identity was Eille Norwood's 3rd case of his 47 20 minute movies
- 2001 A Case of Identity was an episode of Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century (Animated TV series)

Fainting In The Canon

In IDEN, James Windibank almost faints. I can't figure out why Mary Sutherland didn't faint.

Newspapers

- **Daily Chronicle** - A morning paper established in 1877. Liberal and one of the most popular.

Annotated Sherlock

All English "gentlemen" had Latin and some had French in school. Most of us didn't.

- **"an affaire du Cœur"** French for a love affair
- **"dénouement"** French for final revelation or occurrence which clarifies the nature and outcome of a plot
- "quinsy" he had acute tonsillitis.
- "jet" a velvet-black coal-like mineral, usually highly polished and used for ornaments
- **"frock coat"** A double-breasted man's coat with long tails that are the same length front and behind, reaching to about the knees.
- **"gaiters"** another name for spats.
- **"voilà tout!"** French: That's it – that's everything.

Holmes The Author

Holmes is working on another monograph on "the typewriter and its relation to crime," but hasn't finished it.

Weapons

- **Heavy Hunting Crop** - Of Sherlock Holmes that he used to put a scare into James Windibank.

Frank Mentzel