



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Adventure VIII -- The Man with the Twisted Lip

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married and in practice.

As the story opens, Kate comes to the Watsons' house and asks the Doctor to fetch her husband from an opium den, the "Bar of Gold." Watson does so and finds Holmes there in disguise, looking for clues in a case he is working on. Watson puts Isa in a cab and accompanies Holmes.

St. Clair was an actor, turned reporter. While doing an article on begging for his paper, he realized that a comfortable living could be made thereby. With his gifts for makeup as well as his skill at repartee, he was a very successful beggar.

Soon he gave up his reporter's job, and subsequently bought a very comfortable home in the country. Eventually he married and had two children. No one knew of his alter ego, who was known as Hugh Boone, except a lascar who kept a boarding house where he changed costumes.

All was going well until his wife came by accidentally and caught him at his room. He had his make-up on and was arrested on suspicion and charged with St. Clair's murder. He did not reveal his true identity because he did not want to scandalize his wife and children.

He managed to send a letter to his wife (via the lascar), but it was several days before the lascar could mail it because he was watched so closely by the police. St. Clair enclosed his ring in the letter and told his wife that all would be well.



Holmes solves the mystery, goes to the jail, washes off Boone's makeup, revealing St. Clair and since no crime had been committed, he was freed.

After making him promise to stop begging, Holmes agrees to prevent public disclosure of his situation, thus avoiding a scandal.

SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)

Upon her request, Watson went to find Mrs Whitney's husband in an opium den. There, he stumbled upon a dressed up Holmes, looking for a man called Neville Saint-Clair, who'd been missing for a few days. After sending Mr. Whitney back at his home, Holmes and Watson went to the Saint-Clairs' house to question Neville's wife – as she also happened to be one of Holmes' clients.

She told the two men that a few days before, as she was walking on Upper Swandam Lane, she saw her husband waving at a window of the second floor of the Bar of Gold, an opium den. As nobody would allow the poor lady to reach the second floor, she decided to call the police.

The policemen searched the room, but the only person in there was a disfigured beggar named Hugh Boone. The police also found a few blood marks near another window overlooking the Thames, and a moment later, fished Saint-Clair's jacket, heavy with coins, out of the river.

Holmes reckoned Neville was dead, but Mrs. Saint-Clair received a pretty reassuring letter from her husband himself. After a night of deep reflection, Holmes went to Bow Street Police Department to pay Hugh Boone a visit.

He cleaned the man's face, and discovered that Saint-Clair and Boone were actually one and the same. For several years, the poor lad had been earning more money as a beggar than as an clerk. And, when his wife had seen him, he hadn't been able to tell her about his real source of income.

SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

Neville St. Clair, a respectable businessman, has disappeared and his wife claims she saw him at the upper window of an opium den. Rushing upstairs to the room she found only a beggar who denied any knowledge of St. Clair – whose clothes are later found in the room, and his coat, laden with coins, in the River Thames outside the window. The beggar is arrested, but a few days later St. Clair's wife receives a letter from her husband. Holmes concludes, then proves, that the beggar is actually St. Clair in disguise;

he confesses that he has been leading a double life as a beggar, making more money that way than in his nominal work.

The story begins when a friend of Dr. Watson's wife comes to Watson's house, frantic because her husband, who is addicted to opium, has gone missing. Watson helps her pull him out of the opium den and sends him home. Watson is surprised to find that Sherlock Holmes is there too, in disguise and trying to get information to solve a different case about a man who has disappeared. Watson stays to listen to Holmes tell the story of the case of Neville St. Clair.

St. Clair is a prosperous, respectable, punctual man. His family's home is in the country, but he visits London every day on business. One day when Mr. St. Clair was in London, Mrs. St. Clair also went to London separately. She happened to pass down Upper Swandam Lane, a "vile alley" near the London docks, where the opium den is. Glancing up, she saw her husband at a second-floor window of the opium den. He vanished from the window immediately, and Mrs. St. Clair was sure that there was something wrong.

She tried to enter the building; but her way was blocked by the opium den's owner, a lascar. She fetched the police, but they did not find Mr. St. Clair. The room behind the window was the lair of a dirty, disfigured beggar, known to the police as Hugh Boone. The police were about to put her story down as a mistake of some kind when Mrs. St. Clair noticed a box of wooden toy bricks that her husband said he would buy for their son. A further search turned up some of St. Clair's clothes. Later, his coat, with the pockets stuffed with hundreds of pennies and halfpennies, was found on the bank of the River Thames, just below the building's back window.

Hugh Boone was arrested at once, but would say nothing, except to deny any knowledge of St. Clair. He also resisted any attempt to make him wash. Holmes was initially quite convinced that St. Clair had been murdered, and that Boone was involved. Thus he investigated the den in disguise. He and Watson return to St. Clair's home, to a surprise. It is several days after the disappearance; but on that day Mrs. St. Clair had received a letter from her husband in his own handwriting, with his wedding ring enclosed, telling her not to worry. This forces Holmes to reconsider his conclusions, leading him eventually to an extraordinary solution.

Holmes and Watson go the police station where Hugh Boone is held; Holmes brings a bath sponge in a Gladstone bag. Finding Boone asleep, Holmes washes the sleeping Boone's dirty face—revealing Neville St. Clair.

Mr. St. Clair has been leading a double life, as a respectable businessman, and as a beggar. In his youth, he had been an actor before becoming a newspaper reporter. In order to research an article, he had

disguised himself as a beggar for a short time, and was able to collect a surprising amount of money due to a skillset uncommon to beggars; his actor's skills enabled him to emulate a more sympathetic character with make-up, as well as provide a repertoire of witty dialogue with which to entertain passers-by to offer coins—he was as much a street performer as a beggar. Later, he was saddled with a large debt, and returned to the street to beg for several days to pay it off. His newspaper salary was meagre and, tempted by the much larger returns of begging, he eventually became a "professional" beggar. His takings were large enough that he was able to establish himself as a country gentleman, marry well, and begin a respectable family. His wife and children never knew what he did for a living, and when arrested, he feared exposure more than prison or the gallows. But there is no murder, so he is released, and Holmes and the police agree to keep Mr. St. Clair's secret as long as no more is heard of Hugh Boone.