



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XIII -- The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet

Holmes is full of energy in this one, analysing footprints at great length, charging around in disguise and even holding a gun to the head of a villain – it's like a film by Guy Ritchie, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

The story of private banker Alexander Holder loaning money to a royal personage and keeping the priceless beryl coronet as security, takes on a dramatic turn when parts of the jewel go missing and he catches his son with the remainder in his hand beside the bureau from which it had been taken. As is often the case, all against the wayward young man looks hopeless and only Holmes is confident of his innocence. We then follow Holmes as he unravels the mystery and finds the missing stones in his own unique way. This involves lots of detailed footprint analysis, disguising himself as a common loafer and having a sprightly exchange with the real villain who is a typical cad – a sort of Dorian Grey type who has made the banker's niece fall so in love with him that she would betray her own family for him.

I have always enjoyed the escapism element to the Holmes stories, the way they draw you into another time and it's not just the narrative which captures the reader, but also the settings, the epoch itself. At the start of this story Watson paints such a lovely scene that for a moment you are right there with him in the sitting room at 221B with Sherlock Holmes, a fire burning in the grate, cosy and warm as snow lays on the ground outside and a bitter wintery air pervades over Victorian London.

The story is also noteworthy for containing the famous line spoken by Holmes – 'When you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.'

Also rather noteworthy, but for a less positive reason, is the incestuous love the son has for his cousin.



This is made even more-so by the fact that his father really wanted them to marry, even though she was like a daughter to him and called him Dad. Was marriage between first cousins acceptable then in Victorian times? I thought they were more prudish than modern society and such a thing would have been unthinkable but clearly I am wrong.

I have to say that I did feel a bit sorry for poor Mary at the end, running away with a ruthless player and losing her family, certain to face much heartache. Yes, I know she probably deserved it after stealing the coronet and handing it to him but haven't we all done foolish things for love at least once in our lives?

**Good deduction, love, incest and family troubles – what more can
you want in a story? – 7 out of 10.**

Charlotte Anne Walters

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