



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

case took place in 1886, as the majority states, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 32 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 34.

Main Characters:

Alexander Holder, prominent banker residing in Streatham with his son and niece. Arthur Holder, son of Alexander, a young man worried about his gambling debts. Mary Holder, niece and adopted daughter of Alexander. Sir George Burnwell, cad, friend of Arthur and Mary's lover.

Notable Quotes:

"It is an old maxim of mine that when you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."

*An Inquiry into:
"The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet"*

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"The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in May 1892. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

As shown by the table, the chronology for this case varies, depending on which Canon expert one consults. If the

<i>The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	A Friday in February
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	Friday, December 19, 1890
<i>Bell</i>	A Friday in February 1882
<i>Blakeney</i>	1881-1887
<i>Brend</i>	March 1886
<i>Christ</i>	Friday, February 23, 1883
<i>Dakin</i>	Tuesday, February 23, 1886
<i>Folsom</i>	Friday, January 8, 1886
<i>Hall</i>	January 8, 1886
<i>Keefauver</i>	Friday February 26, 1886
<i>Klinger</i>	1889
<i>Zeisler</i>	Friday, February 19, 1886

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.



Peddling a National Treasure

When his so-called exalted client asks Alexander Holder whether he has heard of the Beryl Coronet, our banker replies that it is “One of the most precious possessions of the Empire.” Which brings us to the perennial question, exactly who was this “exalted” client?

A majority of Canon scholars have identified this worthy as most likely having been HRH Albert Edward (Bertie), Prince of Wales. They reason that because of his importance within the Royal Family as heir apparent, he would have had access to the diadem. For a time I, too, thought so, however I now lean towards Prince Albert Victor (“Eddy” to his intimates), Duke of Clarence and Avondale (1864 - 1892), Bertie’s eldest child, grandson of Queen Victoria, and heir presumptive to the British throne.

I veered from Bertie to Eddy because although he did not enjoy an immaculate reputation, being renowned as a roué, poacher of (willing) married women, and an inveterate card and roulette player, Bertie nonetheless does not strike me as



Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale.

The best that can be said is that he was a dullard who moved within dubious circles of high society, and might have been eminently open to blackmail during a time when homosexuality was viewed as the worse of perversions.

None of this, of course, establishes who was the exalted personage playing fast and loose with what seems to have been as much a national possession as the Crown Jewels, which even Victoria herself would not have been free to dispose of in any way. The glittering jewelry that has been passed down from generation to generation, which female royals wear on official occasions were Queen Victoria’s personal property of. At no time were they part of the Crown Jewels.

having been foolish enough to raise funds by misusing a national treasure for security. He already lived on his mamma’s

gunsights, who thoroughly disapproved of his behavior, blaming it and him of worrying Prince Albert, his father, into his grave. Paradoxically, although he had a dismal personal record to the day he died, when he inherited the throne from his August Mother, he became an excellent king who not only ruled well, but considerably helped maintain peace in Europe.

Eddy was a completely different matter. His assorted sexual proclivities and limited mental capacity were, and still are, subjects of speculation; although nothing definite was proved he was linked to the 1890 Cleveland Street scandal, which involved a homosexual brothel.



King Edward VII of England.

Although this not seems to have applied to the Beryl Coronet (“One of the most precious possessions of the Empire” not of the monarch) this did not deter the borrower. It is interesting to note that the illustrious borrower avoids saying that he has rightful possession of the treasure, limiting himself only to telling Holder that he would not be, essentially, hocking the coronet if he were not absolutely certain that he could redeem it in four days.

All these circumstances lead one to conjecture just what expense—or demand—was so pressing that had to be immediately met; surely it was not a past due bill from the exalted person’s tailor. As the mysterious borrower put it, “It is absolutely essential to me that I should have £50,000 at once,” adding afterwards that “it is very essential to me that the money should be paid at once.” Nonchalantly, our noble borrower justifies his action by boasting that “I could, of course, borrow so trifling a sum ten times over from my friends, but I much prefer to make it a matter of business and to carry out that business myself.” He then justifies his reason for preferring to use the coronet by stating that “In my position you can readily understand that it is unwise to place one’s self under obligations.”

This last comment smacks of royalty.

Today that £50,000 would come to some \$19 million—far from a paltry sum. Funds required with such immediacy, to be returned with interest four day later, most certainly suggest the urgency of someone who is being blackmailed. Revealing also is the fact that at no time did he claim that he had the right to use the coronet as security, only that he “should not dream of doing so were it not absolutely certain that I should be able in four days to reclaim it” because he had a large sum due to him.

In my view, Holder was unwittingly close to becoming a criminal. If the coronet had not been recovered, technically he could have been guilty of receiving stolen goods, although it is unlikely that he would have been prosecuted, considering who it was he received the property from. It is excusable that the pressure of this person’s exalted position would have moved him—against his better judgment—to accept the coronet as security for the loan.

Alexander Holder: Twit

Not much more can be said in favor of Holder, other than that he was a 99 and 44/100% pure twit. Other than for following Scotland Yard’s suggestion that he go consult Sherlock Holmes, the man does nothing right. It is truly amazing, considering his level of understanding of things that he was able to get up every morning, dress, and go to work.



It is useless to point out that he should have left the coronet in the bank’s biggest safe, instead of opting to lug it home with him to lock it up in a flimsy wooden bureau that anyone could open. Even though he did not own a carriage, he intended to take the coronet out on the street with him during his comings and goings from work. Then, as if to make sure that no semblance of security is left, he reveals the story and whereabouts of the precious possession to his household, doing it so carelessly it is possible that the maid also heard him talking about it.

When the coronet is taken, he reveals the extent of his dearth of little grey cells. Although he realizes the theft can lead to “a scandal which would convulse the nation,” he does not hesitate to raise an alarm that would wake the dead. He unhesitatingly calls the police, has his own son arrested as a thief, and offers a £1,000 (≈\$380,000) reward for the coronet!

If discretion is a requirement for his profession, Holder is very much in the wrong occupation!

The National Treasure's Worth



According to Holder's exalted client, the coronet is considerably more than just ample security because "There are thirty-nine enormous beryls and the price of the gold chasing is incalculable. The lowest estimate would put the worth of the coronet at double the sum which I have asked." If we accept this lowest estimate, then are considering a value of £100,000, or roughly \$38,000,000 in today's money.

If we go by the price of gold back then £4 5s (\approx \$1,600) an ounce, a simple calculation shows that the gold content alone could not have been that "incalculable," even if the thing had weighed as much as a M1 3-pound (1.4 kg) WWII helmet. Estimating the price of the stones becomes a matter of speculation; however, the total cost of materials would likely fall short of \$38M. The one thing impossible to factor, however, is the value added to national treasure by its historical and cultural worth; it is in this realm where values could indeed become "incalculable."



As can be seen, it is not solely the intrinsic value of its jewels and workmanship that make the British crown valuable, but also the history and tradition it represents. This is true of the rest of the crown jewels.

The actual Crown Jewels inside the Tower of London have been estimated to be worth \$5 to \$8 billion—quite a price spread. However, there is considerable history and tradition tied up with them— although the Star of Africa alone (the diamond in the royal scepter), is estimated at \$400 million—the value of the whole does not only lie on simply the worth of the gold and jewels.

Holder's apparent disregard of the state of the recovered coronet—broken and bent out of shape—is understandable. Although it was specifically stated that *any* injury to the jewel would be almost as serious as its complete loss, the only irreplaceable part of it were its jewels, and Sherlock Holmes recov-

ered the missing ones with the help of his revolver. With these recovered, restoring the coronet to its former glory would have only required the intervention of expert jewelers.

Additionally, it was fairly obvious that his client could not say or do anything about the state of the pawned national treasure if he wanted to avoid the scandal that would have resulted from his pledging it like a cheap watch.

Nevertheless, it is very unlikely that the state of the coronet and the need for its repair could have been kept from the Queen. It would have been interesting to have been a fly on the wall when Holder turned the pieces over to his exalted client, and even better yet, to see and hear Victoria's reaction when she learned about her grandson's latest little escapade.

The most likely explanation is that Eddy went to his father for help, and Edward was able to keep the coronet long enough to have it expertly repaired. Which would have made the whole affair somewhat reminiscent of D'Artagnan's frenzied race to replace Queen Anne's missing diamond studs and the Duke of Buckingham having copies made practically overnight producing studs identical to those stolen by Lady de Winter.

Considering all of the above it may be safely assumed that Holder emerged unscathed from the entire sorry incident. For all his stupidity in not keeping the coronet safe by secreting it in the largest, most massive safe that he had access to, instead of a rickety bedroom bureau in his own house, he could not have been touched. The fear that the sorry affair might be made public would have been too great, although Holder had not been very discreet in his offer of a large reward and having his son arrested for theft.

From Whence the Coronet?

Yet another problem worthy of consideration in all this is that, if the coronet was as described a precious and national possession of Great Britain, it would have resided in the Tower of London along



The Crown Jewels at the Tower of London.

with the Crown Jewels. There is a well-established protocol for getting any of these baubles from the Tower.

Only the monarch can request or allow any of these treasures to be brought outside the safety of the Tower. For a documentary about her coronation, the late Queen Elizabeth II was again brought into contact with the crown (which she alone may touch) used in the coronation. A number of steps—each very well defined—had to be gone through before it could be removed from the Tower and brought to her.

During special state occasions, we see the queen and princesses decked out in mouth-opening finery: coronets, necklaces, bracelets, and such. These jewels, in the case of Queen Elizabeth II, were all personal property, most of them, in Elizabeth's case, inherited from her own mother as well as her great-great-grandmother Victoria; these are therefore not a part of those locked up in the Tower.

But they are *not* national treasures.

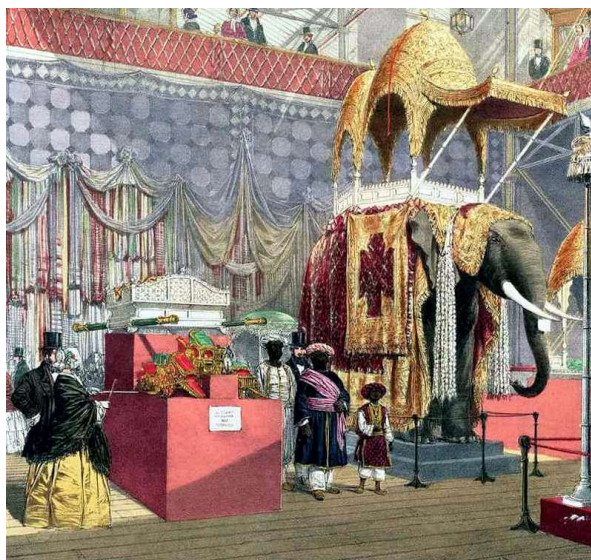
All this adds to the mystery of how Prince Eddy could have managed to get the Beryl Coronet. It is unlikely that it resided in the Tower; that is, it could not have been part of the actual Crown Jewels. Still, even if that were the case, and it was “one of the most precious possessions of the Empire,” how did he come to possess it? It is a certainty that he did not pinch it from his grandmother’s jewel case while that certain gracious lady’s attention was occupied elsewhere.

One of the most interesting aspects of this case is that it reveals the magnitude of the fees that Holmes must have been able to command at the zenith of his fame. After a very few years of moving to Baker Street—initially having to share the rent he could not afford for himself for the picturesque pile—he unhesitatingly came up with £3,000 (≈\$1,130,000) of his own resources to buy back the gems from their receiver.



What else happened in 1886:

Empire



Royal Niger Company Chartered.

Fire destroys nearly 1,000 buildings in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

◀ Colonial and Indian Exhibition.

City of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada is incorporated.

Eruption of Tarawera volcano destroys famous pink and white calcium carbonate hot-spring terraces of North Island, New Zealand.

First scheduled transcontinental passenger train reaches Port Moody, British Columbia, Canada.

British annex upper Burma. Presented to Queen Victoria as a birthday gift.

Weekly Herald, first Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada newspaper, publishes first issue.

Britain

Gladstone’s third Liberal government fails to pass its first Irish Home Rule Bill through the House of Commons. Gladstone resigns as Prime Minister. Split in the Liberal Party causes first Salisbury government to resign. Salisbury establishes his second Conservative-Liberal-Unionist government.

Chamberlain forms Liberal Unions.

The London Times newspaper publishes world's first classified ads.

English Lawn Tennis Association is established.

National Agricultural Hall in Hammersmith Road becomes "Olympia."

City of London buys Highgate Wood for public use.

Woolwich Arsenal football team established.

Putney Bridge opens.

First cremation in England.

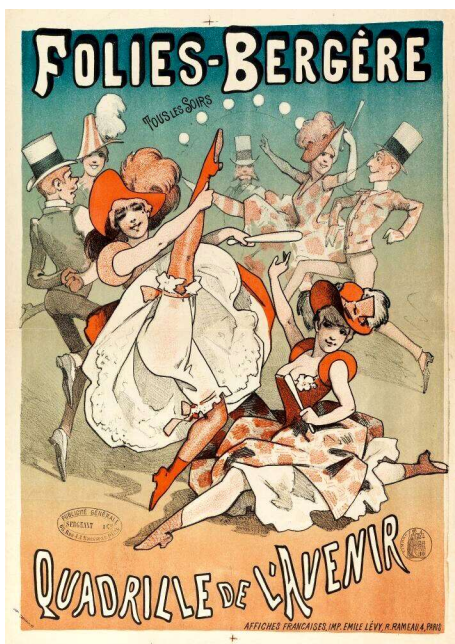
Shaftesbury Avenue opens.

World

Spain abolishes slavery in Cuba.

First major earthquake (7.3) recorded in eastern US, at Charleston, South Carolina.

Tunisia becomes French protectorate.



King Ludwig II of Bavaria supposedly drowns.

First Tournament of Roses is held in Pasadena.

Geronimo surrenders, effectively ending the Indian Wars of the Southwest.

◀ The Folies Bergère hall in Paris, France, stages its first revue, the *Place aux Jeunes*.

Haymarket riot in Chicago, Illinois; bomb kills 7 policemen.

Birth of Alfonso XIII Borbón; proclaimed King of Spain (rules 1902-31), with mother Queen Maria Christina appointed regent.

Carrollton Massacre in Mississippi; 20 blacks are killed.

The Novo-Ureiureilite meteorite falls in Russia.

Hurricane and sea surge kill 250 at Indianola, Texas.

Russian-Circassian War ends with the defeat and the exile of many Circassians. Imam Shamil defeated.

The Statue of Liberty Enlightening the World is dedicated by President Grover Cleveland in New York Harbor. It is celebrated by the first confetti (ticker) tape parade in New York City.

Witwatersrand district in Transvaal is declared a public goldfield.

The North, Central, and South American Exposition closes in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Westinghouse Electric Company is established.

First dinner jacket (the tuxedo) worn to autumn ball at Tuxedo Park, New York.

In Atlanta, Georgia, pharmacist Dr. John Styth Pemberton invents a carbonated beverage he calls "Coca-Cola," which contains cocaine.

Bonaparte family is banished from France.

Declaration of Berlin neutralizes Tonga.

President Grover Cleveland declares a state of emergency in Seattle, Washington because of anti-Chinese violence.

Art

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as well as *Kidnapped*.

Henry James publishes *The Bostonians*.

Rodin exhibits his statue, *The Kiss*.

Franz Listz, Hungarian composer dies.

Science and Technology



Nobel invents nitroglycerine.

The element Germanium is discovered.

The element Fluorine is isolated.

◀ James E. Keeler discovers Saturn's rings are made of space debris.

First U.S. alternating current power plant starts, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. First commercially-successful AC electric power plant opens, Buffalo, New York, USA.

The New York Tribune becomes the first newspaper to use a linotype machine, eliminating hand typesetting.

First public Dutch electric plant opens.

Aluminum manufacturing process is developed.

George K Anderson of Memphis, Tennessee, USA, patents typewriter ribbon.

Karl Benz in Karlsruhe officially unveils the Benz Patent Motorwagen, for the first successful gasoline-driven automobile.

Next week's case: COPP.

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..."

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

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