



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XIV – The Adventure of the Copper Beeches

Publishing History

14 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, June, 1892

Part of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes collection by George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1892

Harper Bros., New York, 1892

The British Illustrator was Sidney Paget

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of this story as Friday, April 5 to Saturday, April 20, 1889 which makes it the 21st of the 60. This means that Holmes was 35 and Watson 37.

Christopher Morley Says

“The Copper Beeches was the name of the house in Hampshire where Mr. Rucastle paid high wages for a governess who would do unusual things – cut her hair short, wear an electric blue dress, and listen to comic stories. Behind these trivial demands was something much more sinister.”



Dummies Short Summary

“Definitely a weird tale. Why must the new governess obey her employer’s strange rules, like wearing a blue dress and cutting her hair? And why must she never go into a certain wing of the house?”

How Many Words

At 9,948 words COPP has the 51th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 7 classified as fear of physical harm or public scandal. The other 6 were CREE, GLOR, SUSS, SCAN, 3STU, and TWIS.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

Wow! The BSI had a real change of opinion.

1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #12 on their worst list.

1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 17th of the 56 short stories.

1999 – Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 17th of 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1889)

- British South Africa Company Charter awarded.
- Transvaal claimed to be "encircled" by Rhodes' concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.
- Great London Dock Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed.
- March 30, Early used of photographs in newspaper: Illustrated London News runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews.
- Act to prevent cruelty to children.
- Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.
- Establishment of telephone company.
- Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia.
- October 6--The Moulin Rouge first opens its doors.
- North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S. states.
- End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed.

- Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.
- Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.
- Conan Doyle publishes A Sign of Four.
- Mark Twain publishes A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.
- Van Gogh paints Man with a Pipe (self-portrait), The Olive Grove.
Eiffel Tower completed, 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, become highest structure on earth.
- Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.
- Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.
- First linotype machine in use.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Holmes and Watson sharing bachelor quarters at 221B as usual.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

A varied cast of characters but everyone usually cheers for “the dog.”

- **Violet Hunter**, a governess who consults Holmes
- **Jephro Rucastle**, hired Violet
- **Mrs. Rucastle**, second wife of Mr. Rucastle
- **Edward Rucastle**, young son of Mr. and Mrs. Rucastle whom Violet is to govern. A spoiled, ill-natured lad whose chief amusement is torturing small animals. His father finds this behavior quaint.
- **Alice Rucastle**, daughter of Mr. Rucastle by his first wife. Alice has an inheritance from her mother which is independent of her father.
- **Mr. Toller**, groom for the Rue castles. A heavy drinker.
- **Mrs. Toller**, his wife.
- **Mr. Fowler**, a seaman. Beloved of Alice
- **Carlo**, a vicious mastiff
- **Mrs. Stoper**, proprietor of "Westway's," an employment agency for governesses.
- **Col. Spence Munro**, Violet worked for him until he was transferred to Halifax
- **Lord Southerton**, owns the land adjacent to Copper Beeches..

Quotable Sherlock

Somehow COPP shows Holms "waxing philosophically."

- "To the man who loves art for its own sake," remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of the Daily Telegraph, "it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived."
- "Pshaw, my dear fellow, what do the public, the great unobservant public, who could hardly tell a weaver by his tooth or a compositor by his left thumb, care about the finer shades of analysis and deduction!"
- "I confess that it is not the situation which I should like to see a sister of mine apply for."
- "Data! Data! Data! I can not make bricks without clay!"
- "It is one of the curses of a mind with a turn like mine that I must look at everything with reference to my own special subject. You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation and of the impunity with which a crime may be committed there."
- "They always fill me with a certain horror. It is my belief, Watson, founded upon me experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than doe the smiling and beautiful countryside. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser."
- "The pressure of public opinion can do in the town what the law cannot accomplish. There is no lane so vile that the scream of a tortured child, or the thud of a drunkard's blow, does not beget sympathy and indignation among the neighbors, and then the whole machinery of justice is ever so close that a word of complaint can set it going, and there is but a step between the crime and the dock. But look at these lonely houses, each in its own fields, filled for the most part with poor ignorant folk who know little of the law. Think of the deeds of hellish cruelty, the hidden wickedness which may go on, year in, year out, in such places, and none the wiser."
- "I am glad of all details, whether they seem to you to be relevant or not."
- "My dear Watson, you as a medical man are continually gaining light as to the tendencies of a child by the study of the parents. Don't you see that the converse is equally valid. I have frequently gained my first real insight into the character of parents by studying their children."

Holmes' Fee

There is no mention of Holmes fee, but you can be sure that Alice Fowler (nee Rucastle) will send something.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

COPP is easily adaptable to melodrama, hence, our first film is from 1912.

- 1912 *The Copper Beeches* with Georges Travielle and is still available.
- 1921 *The Copper Beeches* with Eille Norwood was #11 in his 47 movies
- 1965 *The Copper Beeches* with Douglas Wilmer was a TV episode in his *Sherlock Holmes* series
- 1967 *Das Haus bei den Blubuchen* with Eric Schellow was an episode in a 6 episode series. (not available in English)
- 1985 *The Copper Beeches* with Jeremy Brett as one of his 43 Sherlock Holmes episodes

Newspapers

- **Daily Telegraph** (and Courier) - Morning paper of London which was Liberal until the middle of the 1880's whereby it became Unionist. It became very popular for the middle classes. Established in 1855. Is considered the country's "other paper of record."

Annotated Sherlock

Only 2 term in this story but we love "brain-fever" which happened in a few of the stories.

- **"brain-fever"** Seven patients in the canon have this diagnosis. "...one which follows quickly on a severe emotional shock, which exhibits weight loss, weakness, pallor, and high fever which has a protracted course. A preponderance of this in literature of the day seems to validate the medical diagnosis.
- **"locus standi"** legal term meaning the right to be heard by a court, now expressed as "legal standing"

Weapons

- **Service Revolver** - Dr. Watson's and it is mentioned in 13 cases. To blow out the brains of Carlo, Jephro Rucastle's guardian mastiff who had turned on his master.
- **Heavy Stick** - Which Joseph Rucastle most likely intended to use for dirty work against his daughter, and which he threatened Holmes and Watson with when he found them on the scene.
- **Mastiff** - Named Carlo, watchdog for Jephro Rucastle, which he intended to set on Holmes and Watson, but which turned on its master instead.

Frank Mentzel