Adventure XV - The Adventure of Silver Blaze



Paul Churchill once quipped he had a hard time studying for Sherlockian quizzes, so inspired by Simon Goodenough's *A Study in Scarlet – A Sherlock Holmes Murder Dossier*, Paul began collecting Canonical artifacts around 1990 to help him remember each story. Over 1,500 artifacts later, Paul's 'Evidence Boxes' became legendary in the Sherlockian world as he displayed them at numerous Scion meetings.

What Paul could not find, he made. He became known as a master forger, and 'created' numerous 'genuine faux' objects, such as letters, documents, and telegrams. Paul was invested in the Baker Street Irregulars in 2006 as "Corot." After Paul's passing, the Evidence Boxes were bequeathed to Watson's Tin Box Scion Society, a Society Paul cofounded in 1989. Debbie Clark has maintained the Boxes and continues the practice of displaying the items from one of the Boxes at each society meeting.

Beth Austin assisted in this effort by photographing, annotating the items, and finding the quotes for many of the items, while Denny Dobry and Rusty Mason supported Paul's efforts by photographing each of the items, as well as developing a comprehensive inventory with notations of item's mentioned in the story. Each of the Boxes is posted with permission of Debbie Clark and Jacquelynn Morris.



Pictured is the pipe and tobacco Holmes was smoking at the beginning of the adventure.

...charging and re-charging his pipe with the strongest black tobacco...



Pictured is the binoculars, or field glasses, which Holmes asked Watson to bring with them on their trip. Also pictured is the carrying case for the glasses.

'We have, I think, just time to catch our train at Paddington, and I will go further into the matter upon our journey. You would oblige me by bringing with you your very excellent field-glass.'



Pictured is stationary from King's Pyland Stables, in Dartmoor, Devon, where Silver Blaze was raised and trained.

'I am afraid, Watson, that I shall have to go,' said Holmes, as we sat down together to our breakfast one morning.

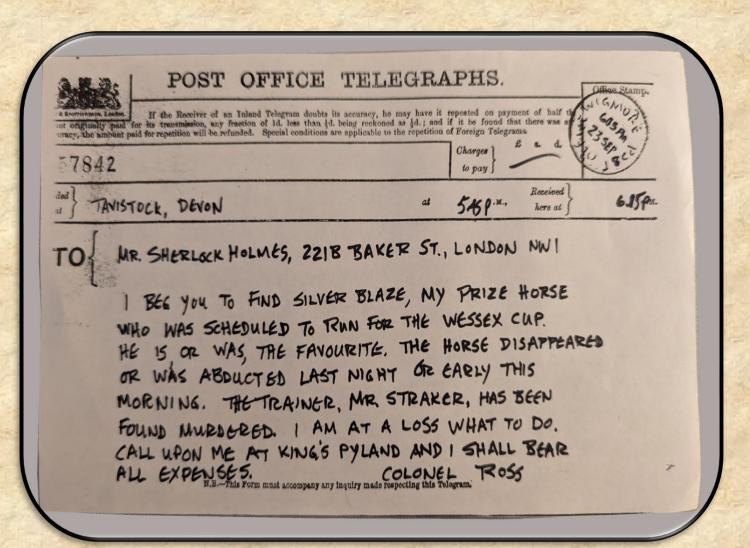
'Go! Where to?'

'To Dartmoor - to King's Pyland.'



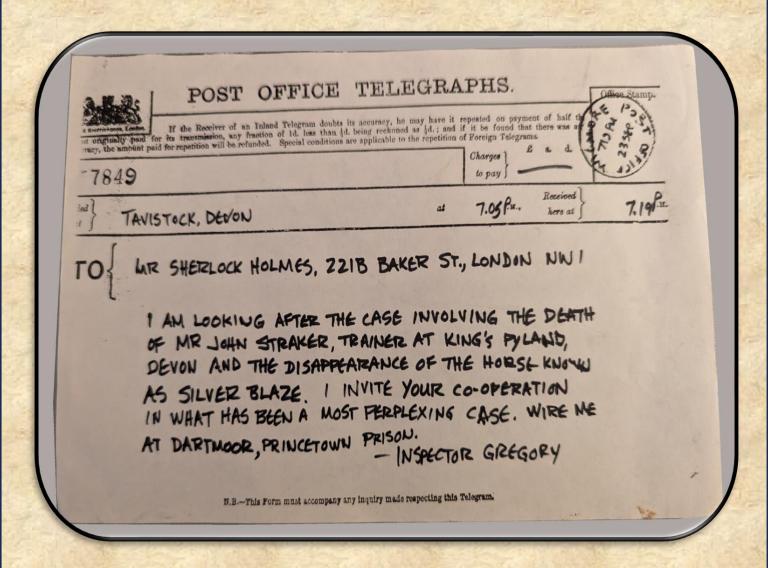
Pictured is a framed lithograph of Isonomy, a famous thoroughbred racehorse, with Silver Blaze from his stock.

'Silver Blaze,' said he, 'is from the Isonomy stock, and holds as brilliant a record as his famous ancestor.'



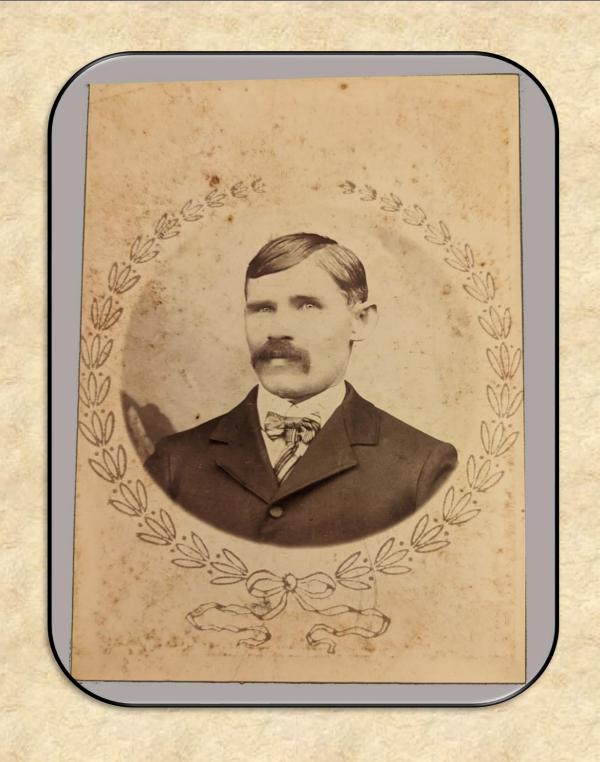
Pictured is the telegram sent by Colonel Ross of King's Pyland Stables, requesting Holmes assistance in the disappearance of Silver Blaze, his prize horse, and the murder of John Straker.

'On Tuesday evening I received telegrams, both from Colonel Ross, the owner of the horse, and from Inspector Gregory, who is looking after the case, inviting my co-operation.'



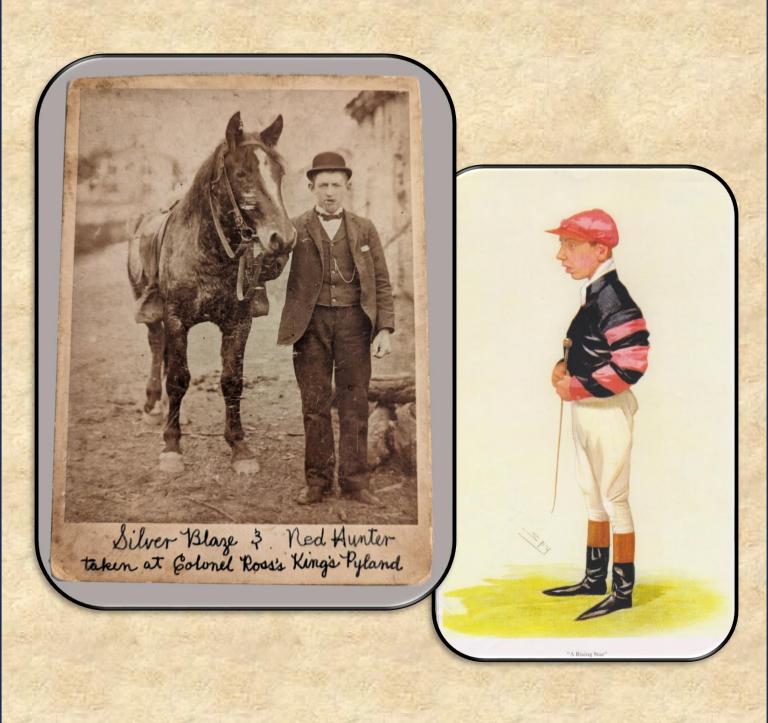
Pictured is the telegram received by Holmes from Inspector Gregory, asking for his assistance in solving the disappearance of Silver Blaze and the death of John Straker.

'On Tuesday evening I received telegrams, both from Colonel Ross, the owner of the horse, and from Inspector Gregory, who is looking after the case, inviting my co-operation.'



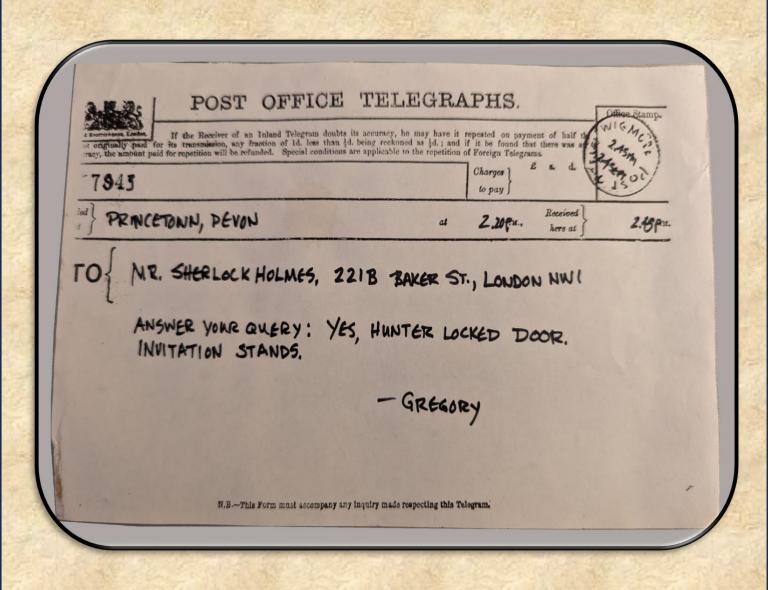
Pictured is a cabinet photograph of John Straker, the trainer of Silver Blaze, who was found murdered.

'The trainer, John Straker, is a retired jockey, who rode in Colonel Ross's colours before he became too heavy for the weighing-chair.'



Pictured is a cabinet photograph of Ned Hunter and Silver Blaze, as well as a lithograph of Ned Hunter, the jockey for Silver Blaze.

'Two of the lads walked up to the trainer's house, where they had supper in the kitchen, while the third, Ned Hunter, remained on guard.'



Pictured is the telegram from Inspector Gregory to Holmes answering his inquiry concerning the locked door.

'One moment!' I asked. 'Did the stable boy, when he ran out with the dog, leave the door unlocked behind him?'

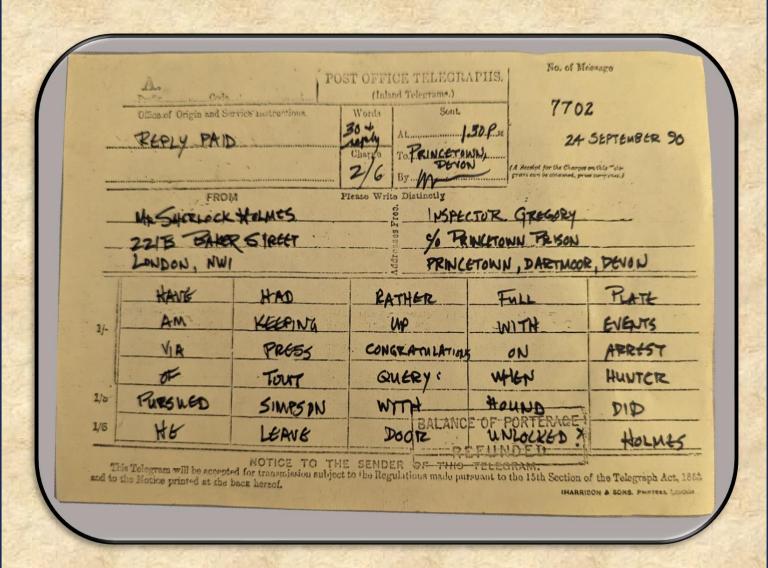
'Excellent, Watson; excellent!' murmured my companion. 'The importance of the point struck me so forcibly, that I sent a special wire to Dartmoor yesterday to clear the matter up. The boy locked the door before he left it.'





Pictured are prints of the dog which guarded the stables, as well as Silver Blaze, the beloved horse of King's Pyland Stables.

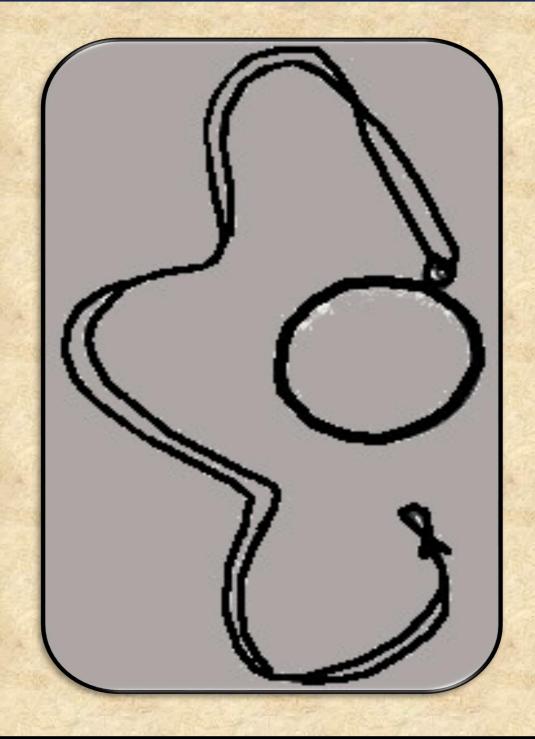
'He sprang up and rushed across the stable to unloose the dog.'
'You've two horses in for the Wessex Cup - Silver Blaze and Bayard.'



Pictured is the telegram sent from Sherlock Holmes to Inspector Gregory requesting information on the locked door.

'One moment!' I asked. 'Did the stable boy, when he ran out with the dog, leave the door unlocked behind him?'

'Excellent, Watson; excellent!' murmured my companion. 'The importance of the point struck me so forcibly, that I sent a special wire to Dartmoor yesterday to clear the matter up.'



Pictured is the monocle, or eyeglass, worn by Colonel Ross when he met Watson and Holmes at the rail station.

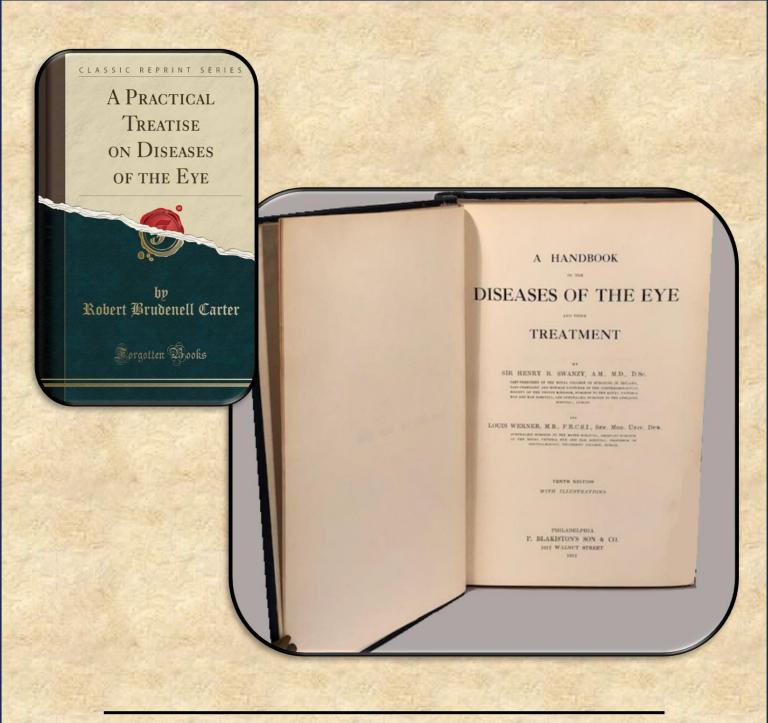
Two gentlemen were awaiting us at the station... the other a small alert person, very neat and dapper, in a frock-coat and gaiters, with trim little side-whiskers and an eyeglass. The latter was Colonel Ross, the well-known sportsman.



Pictured is the £10 note which Mr. Simpson was planning on bribing the stable boy with. It was found on Simpson when he was searched.

'He says that it was a ten-pound note. One was found in his purse.'

The Adventure of Silver Blaze

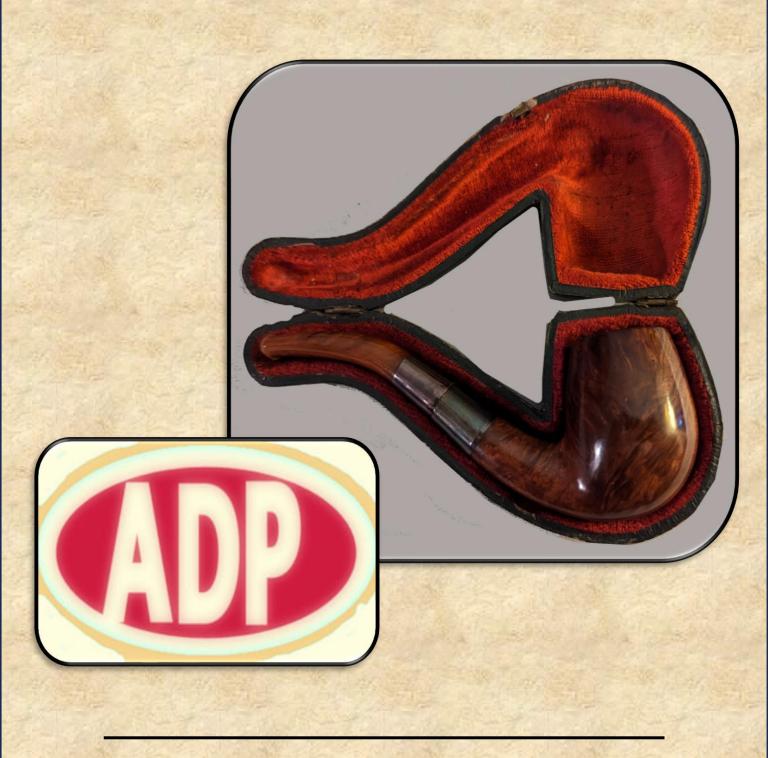


Pictured is A Handbook of the Diseases of the Eye and Treatment, which describes the use of a cataract knife for very specific surgeries.

'It is what we call a cataract knife,' said I.

'I thought so. A very delicate blade devised for very delicate work. A strange thing for a man to carry with him upon a rough expedition, especially as it would not shut in his pocket.'

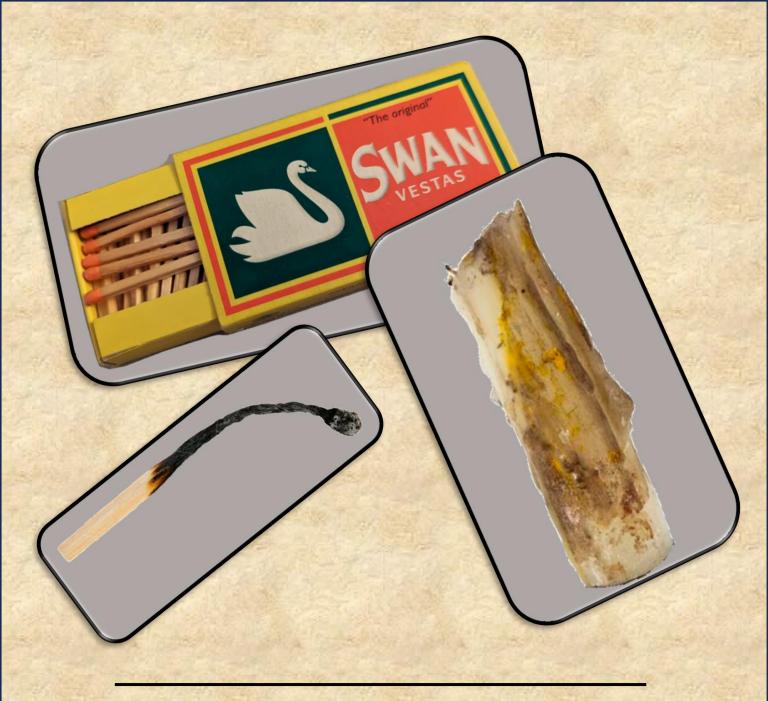
The Adventure of Silver Blaze



Pictured is the pipe found in Straker's pocket when he was found dead.

'I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?'

'...an A.D.P. briar-root pipe...'



Pictured is the matches and candle found in Straker's pocket when he was found

dead. Also pictured is the burnt vesta (match) found by Holmes.

'I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?'

'... There was a box of vestas, two inches of tallow candle...'

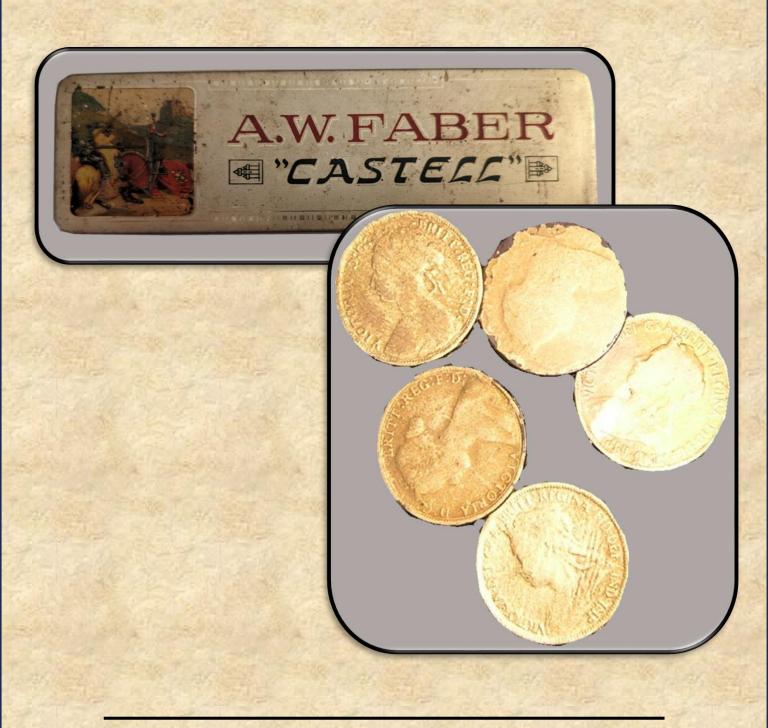
It was a wax vesta, half burned, which was so coated with mud that it looked at first like a little chip of wood.



Pictured is the silver pocket watch and sealskin pouch found in Straker's pocket when he was found murdered.

'I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?'

'...There was a pouch of sealskin with half an ounce of long-cut cavendish, a silver watch with a gold chain...'

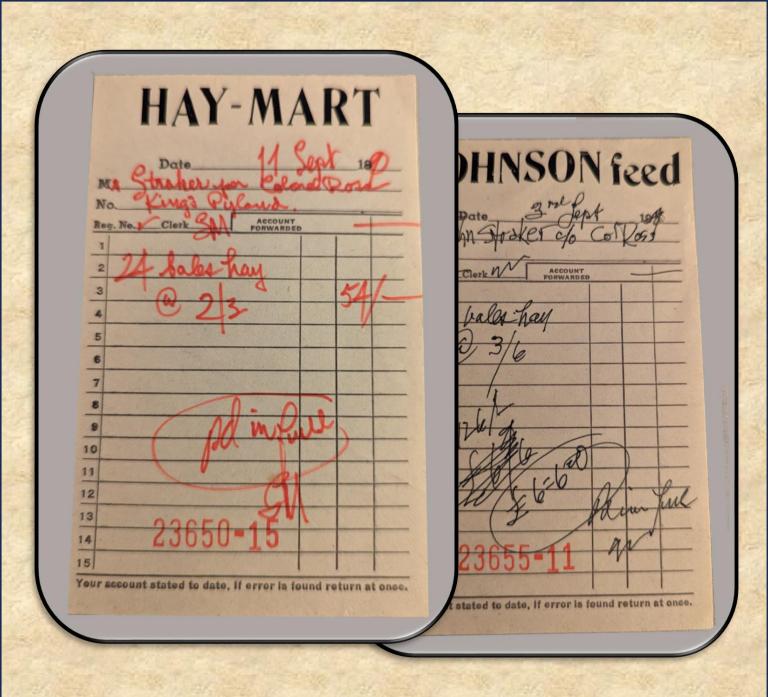


Pictured is the pencil case made of aluminum and five gold sovereigns found in Straker's pocket when he was found murdered.

'I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?'

'... There was five sovereigns in gold, an aluminium pencil-case...'

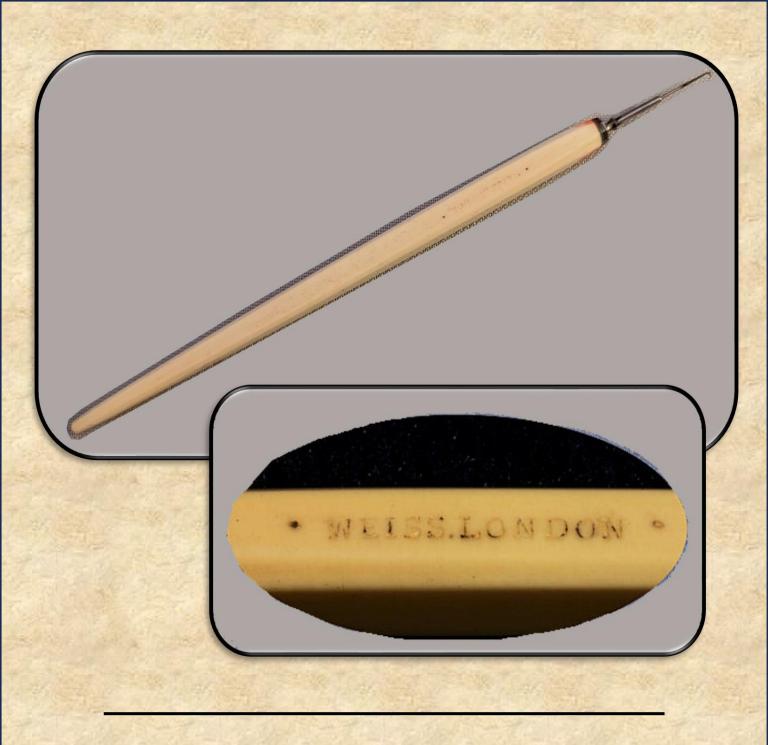
The Adventure of Silver Blaze



Pictured is the receipts for Hay-Mart and Johnson Feed found in Straker's pocket when he was found murdered.

'I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?'

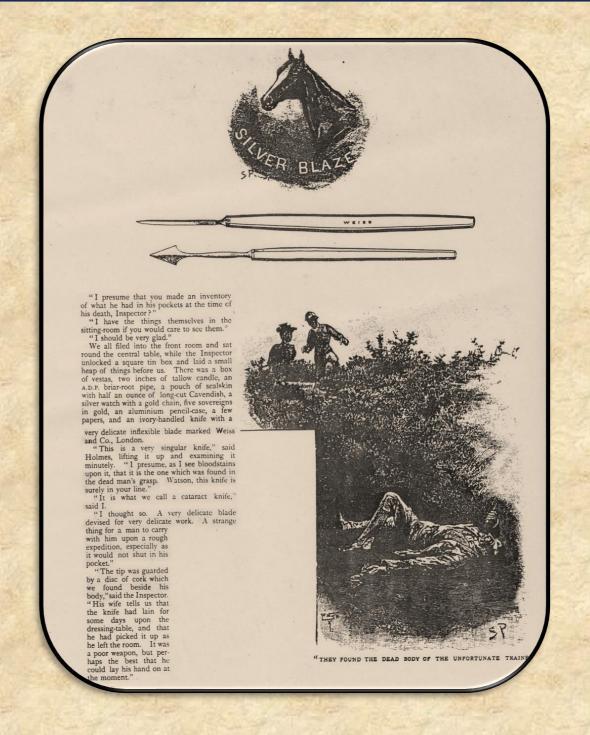
'...There were a few papers... Three of them are receipted hay-dealers' accounts.'



Pictured is the knife found in Strakers hand, from the Weiss & Co., when Straker was found dead.

'I presume that you made an inventory of what he had in his pockets at the time of his death, Inspector?'

'...an ivory-handled knife with a very delicate inflexible blade marked Weiss & Co., London...'



Pictured is an excerpt from the story "Silver Blaze" at the scene of the murder of Straker and Watson's explanation of what a cataract knife was.

'It is what we call a cataract knife,' said I.

'I thought so. A very delicate blade devised for very delicate work. A strange thing for a man to carry with him upon a rough expedition, especially as it would not shut in his pocket.'



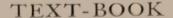
Pictured is the tin box which Lestrade had stored all of the items found in Straker's pockets when he was found dead.

We all filed into the front room, and sat round the central table, while the Inspector unlocked a square tin box and laid a small heap of things before us.



Pictured is the cataract knife Straker had in his hand when he was found dead, along with the cork tips he used to protect the blade.

'The tip was guarded by a disc of cork which we found beside his body,' said the Inspector. 'His wife tells us that the knife had lain for some days upon the dressing-table.'



OF

OPHTHALMOLOGY

DR. ERNST FUCHS

PROFESSOR OF OPHTHALMOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE TWELFTH REVISED AND GREATLY ENLARGED GERMAN EDITION WITH NUMEROUS ADDITIONS

ALEXANDER DUANE, M.D. SURGEON OPHTHALMIC AND AURAL INSTITUTE, NEW YORK

WITH FOUR HUNDRED AND FORTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS

FOURTH EDITION



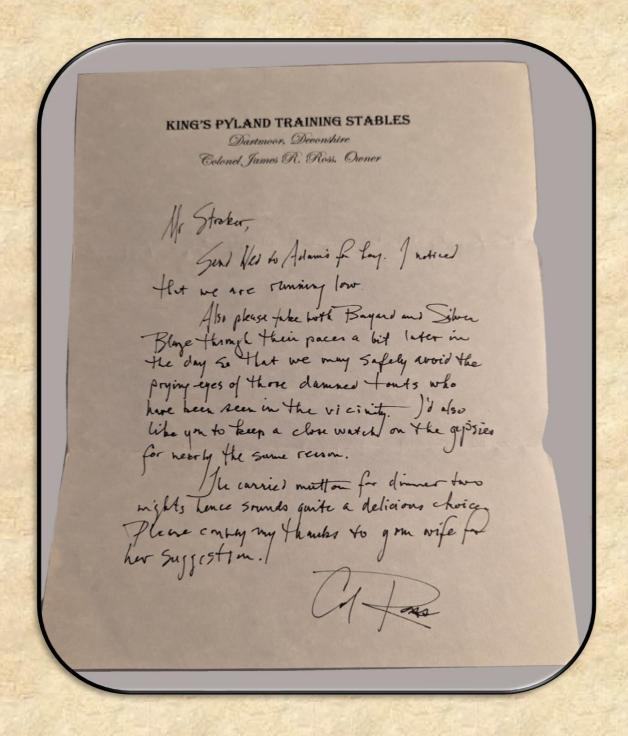
PHILADELPHIA & LONDON

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

Pictured is title page from *Textbook of Ophthalmology* by Dr. Ernest Fuchs. The book would explain the usage of a cataract knife for eye surgery.

'It is what we call a cataract knife,' said I.

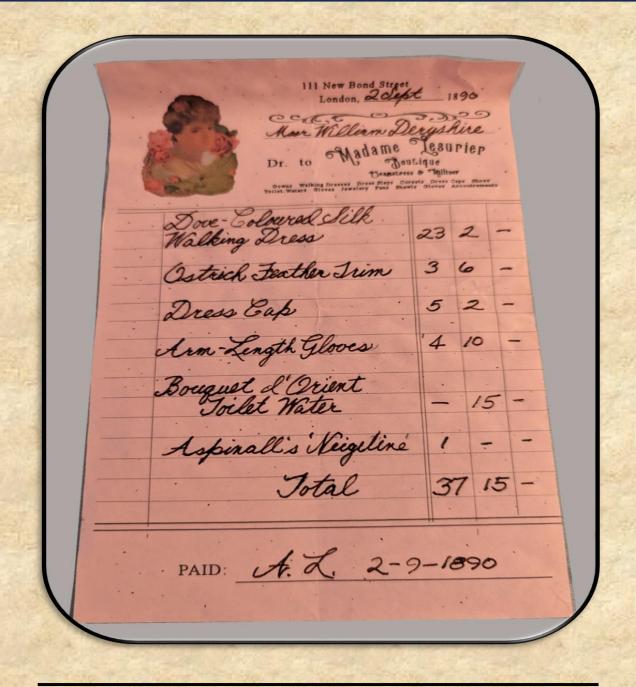
'I thought so. A very delicate blade devised for very delicate work. A strange thing for a man to carry with him upon a rough expedition, especially as it would not shut in his pocket.'



Pictured is a letter of instructions on King's Pyland letterhead. Colonel Ross' instructions were found in Straker's pocket.

'Very possible. How about these papers?'

'One of them is a letter of instructions from Colonel Ross.'



Pictured is the receipt for dove-coloured walking dress @ 22 guineas and accoutrements from Madame Lesurier to William Darbyshire.

'This other is a milliner's account for thirty-seven pounds fifteen, made out by Madame Lesurier, of Bond Street, to William Darbyshire. Mrs. Straker tells us that Darbyshire was a friend of her husband's, and that occasionally his letters were addressed here.'



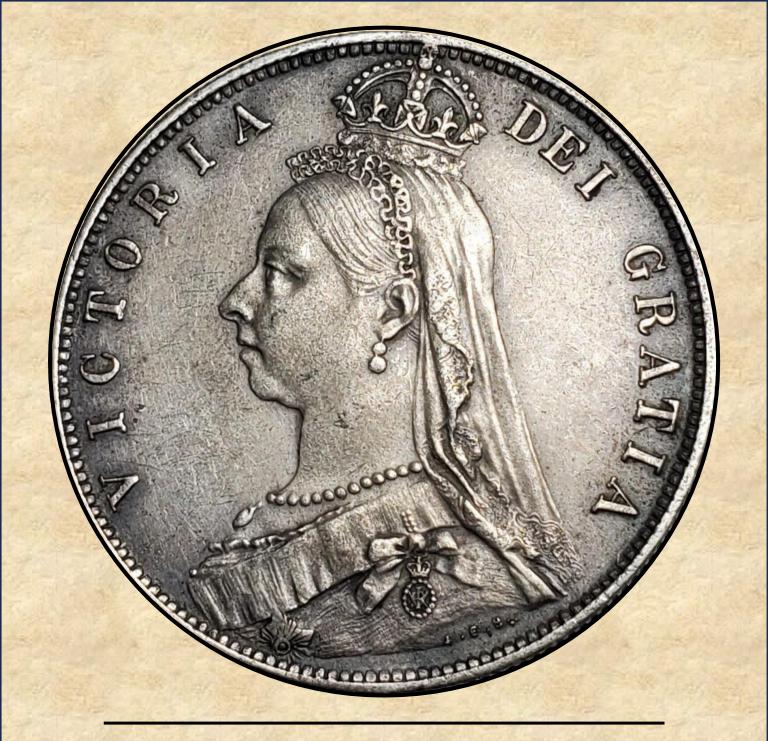
Pictured is John Straker's shoe, which Holmes was able to use to match prints in the soil and to track where Straker had been.

'In this bag I have one of the boots which Straker wore... and a cast horseshoe of Silver Blaze.'



Pictured is the stirrup from Silver Blaze's saddle, used by the jockey during the Wessex Cup. Also pictured is one Silver Blaze's horse shoes, which Holmes used to compare to hoof prints found near Straker's body.

'But I should like to take a little walk over the moors before it grows dark, that I may know my ground tomorrow, and I think that I shall put this horseshoe into my pocket for luck.'



Pictured is the half crown Holmes offered the groom at Capleton stables. The

British half crown was worth 1/8 of one pound, or two shillings and six pence.

As Sherlock Holmes replaced the half-crown which he had drawn from his pocket, a fierce-looking elderly man strode out from the gate with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand.



Pictured is the racing program for the Wessex Cup, scheduled to be run on September 30, 1890. Silver Blaze was part of the 1st race, competing against 5 other horses.

Four days later Holmes and I were again in the train bound for Winchester, to see the race for the Wessex Cup.



Pictured is the jacket and cap worn by King's Pyland jockeys. Red and black is the colors of the stables.

As I spoke a powerful bay horse swept out from the weighing enclosure and cantered past us, bearing on its back the well-known black and red of the Colonel.

THE TIMES, THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 1890

SALES BY AUCTION

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TEXTILE STOCKS UP

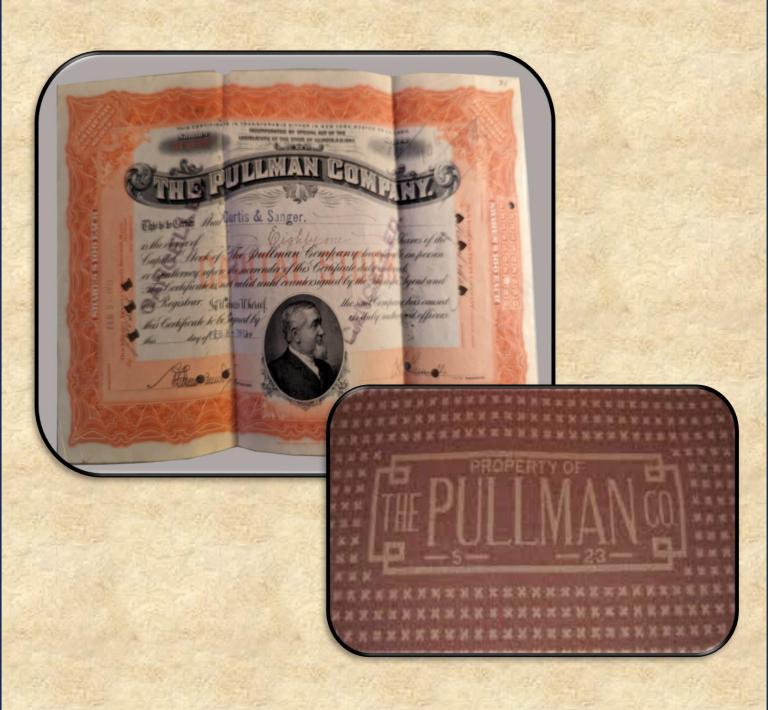
STRAND IMPROVEMENT IMMINENT

SILVER BLAZE WINS WESSEX

The Wessex Plate was won yesterday by Colonel Ross' Silver Blaze against a small field. The favourite went off at five to four in heavy betting and completed the new course a good six lengths ahead of Lord Backwater's Desborough in second and the Duke of Balmoral's Iris in third. There was some mystery involved in the absence of the familiar white markings on the four year old, but there was no mystery about his familiar rong running.

Pictured is The Times article announcing the victory of the Wessex Cup by Silver Blaze.

Before they reached us, however, Desborough's bolt was shot, and the Colonel's horse, coming away with a rush, passed the post a good six lengths before its rival, the Duke of Balmoral's Iris making a bad third.



Pictured are shares of stock for the Pullman Company, as well as a blanket from a railcar owned by the Pullman Co. The Pullman Company was a manufacturer of railroad cars in the mid-to-late 19th century.

We had the corner of a Pullman car to ourselves that evening as we whirled back to London.



Pictured is the phials which carried the powdered opium which was added to the curry ingested by the stable boy, putting him to sleep, so Silver Blaze could be taken without obstruction.

'The opium was added after the dish was set aside for the stable boy, for the others had the same for supper with no ill effects.'

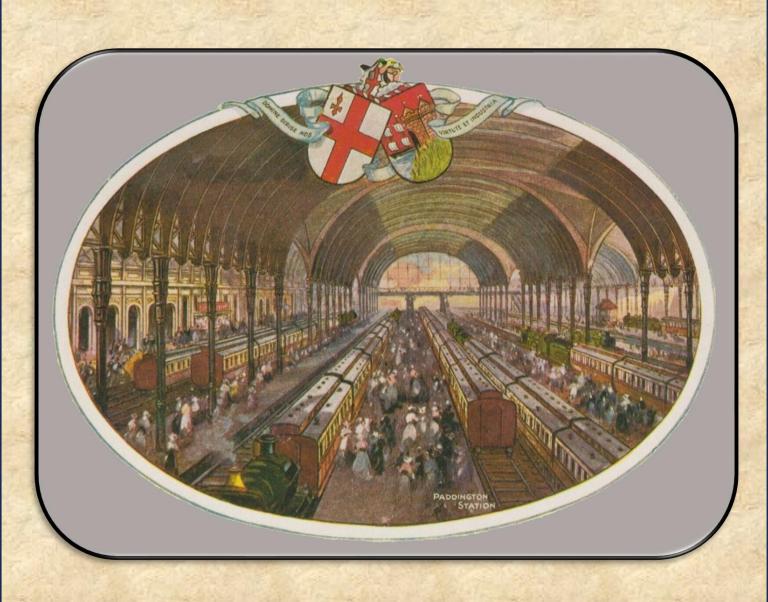
'The opium was probably brought from London.'



Pictured is the red and black cravat that found near Straker's body but was actually the property of Fitzroy Simpson.

'Straker had led out the horse to a hollow where his light would be invisible. Simpson, in his flight, had dropped his cravat, and Straker had picked it up with some idea, perhaps, that he might use it in securing the horse's leg.'

Additional items of interest in "The Adventure of Silver Blaze" not included in the original Evidence Box.



Pictured is a Christmas post card depicting the interior of Paddington Station, one of the major rail stations of London.

'We have, I think, just time to catch our train at Paddington, and I will go further into the matter upon our journey.'



Pictured is a photo of a rural telegraph pole, such as Holmes spotted during their rail trip to Exeter.

'Nor have I. But the telegraph posts upon this line are sixty yards apart, and the calculation is a simple one.'



Pictured is King's Pyland Stables, owned by Colonel Ross, and the home of Silver Blaze.

'This fact was, of course, appreciated at King's Pyland, where the Colonel's training stable is situated.'

The Adventure of Silver Blaze 4



Pictured is the head of the Penang lawyer, a weighted walking stick, carried by

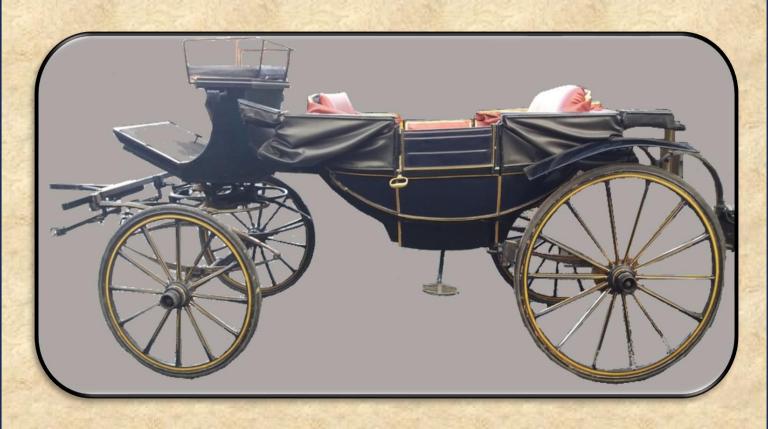
Fitzroy Simpson on the night Straker was killed.

His wet clothing showed that he had been out in the storm of the night before, and his stick, which was a Penang lawyer, weighted with lead, was just such a weapon as might, by repeated blows, have inflicted the terrible injuries to which the trainer had succumbed.



Pictured is a post card of Tavistock, the closest town to King's Pyland Stables, and where Holmes and Watson met Colonel Ross and Inspector Gregory.

It was evening before we reached the little town of Tavistock, which lies, like the boss of a shield, in the middle of the huge circle of Dartmoor.



Pictured is the landau which transported Holmes, Watson, Inspector Gregory, and Colonel Ross to the stables of Silver Blaze.

A minute later we were all seated in a comfortable landau and were rattling through the quaint old Devonshire town.



Pictured is the curried mutton served to the lads within the stables, which was treated opium to render them unconscious, allow Silver Blaze to be taken out of the stables.

'Were it mixed with any ordinary dish, the eater would undoubtedly detect it, and would probably eat no more. A curry was exactly the medium which would disguise this taste.'