



An Inquiry into: "The Reigate Squires"

Vol. XII No. 59 • October 21, 2021

"The Reigate Squires" first appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in June 1893 and in *Harper's Weekly* on the same date. It is part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

Incredibly so, there is no doubt as to when the case takes place, because Watson gives us the exact date. He heard

of Holmes' illness on April 14, 1887, and then follow, in quick succession, 24 hours plus three days, plus one week, plus the following morning, which takes us to April 26, 1887 for the case. As a result, none of our chronologist disagree regarding the year in which this case took place. Their estimates appear on the table.

At that time Sherlock Holmes would have been 33 years old and Dr. John H. Watson 35.

Main Characters:

Colonel Hayter, an old military friend of Dr. Watson, whom the latter attended in Afghanistan. Inspector Forrester, a local police detective. Old Mr. Cunningham, an elderly local squire and justice of the peace. Alec Cunningham, Mr. Cunningham's son. Mr. Ac-ton, a neighbor involved in a land dispute with the Cunninghams. William Kirwan, the Cunninghams' murder victim.

Notable Quotes:

"A little diplomacy was needed, but when Holmes understood that the establishment was a bachelor one, and that he would be allowed the fullest freedom, he fell in with my plans."

"[I]t is as well to test everything."

"I make a point of never having any prejudices and of following docilely wherever fact may lead me."

<i>The Reigate Squires</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Monday, April 25, 1887</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Thursday, April 14, 1887</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Tuesday, April 25, 1887</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>April 1887</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>April 1887</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Monday, April 25, 1887</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Tuesday, April 26, 1887</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Monday, April 25, 1887</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>April 25, 1887</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Tuesday April 26, h 1887</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1887</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Monday, April 25, 1887</i>

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.

The Bachelor Establishment

Watson tells us that Holmes agreed to go to Colonel Hayter's house in Surrey for a rest only after he assured him that it was a "bachelor" establishment. At first glance, this smacks of misogyny on the Great Detective's part.

But only for those who do not know our sleuth well.

There is no indication that Holmes hated, or even disliked, women; the worst you can say about him is that perhaps he did not trust the fair sex as much as an average man might. It is very easy (for the uninitiated that is) to forget that Sherlock Holmes was inarguably a product of his time: a Victorian English gentleman, taught from childhood that women were weak, not very smart, and in constant need of male protection and guidance. Many viewed Queen Victoria's self-imposed seclusion after Prince Albert's death as confirmation of this.



Of course, none of the prime ministers who reported to her thought this of their Sovereign—there was iron beneath the lace.

Society at the time believed that too much education for a girl was not a good thing. An intellectual woman? Good heavens, how unfeminine, how would she ever find a husband? The result was that except for what a good governess and perhaps a ladies' academy might teach her, a young lady got no more than sufficient French, Italian, or German to enable her to converse, a little music, some history, and enough arithmetic to enable her to balance the household accounts. Usually, all education ceased—at the latest—at age 18.

The lady's brothers, of course, were tutored on various other subjects, which would have included geometry, trigonometry, Greek, Latin, history, and a dash of literature. After all, they were bound for university while she, of course, was not.

The average lady's intellect, therefore, was too insufficiently developed to intrigue our sleuth.

It is not unsurprising that someone able to discuss "a quick succession of subjects,—on miracle plays, on medieval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the war-ships of the future,—handling each as though he had made a special study of it," would have found the overwhelming majority of the

ladies that he would have come into contact to be most shallow and dull. Why, they would not have been interested in even discussing the polyphonic motets of Lassus!

It is interesting to note that one of the main attractions of the "charming invaders" from America (aside from their fabulous dowries) was that, being far better educated than their British counterparts, they were able to participate—and hold their own—in conversations dealing with politics and world developments. This impressed and fascinated the would-be husbands.

It would appear that for all his admonitions that "love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment," there is no question that Irene Adler certainly caught his attention.

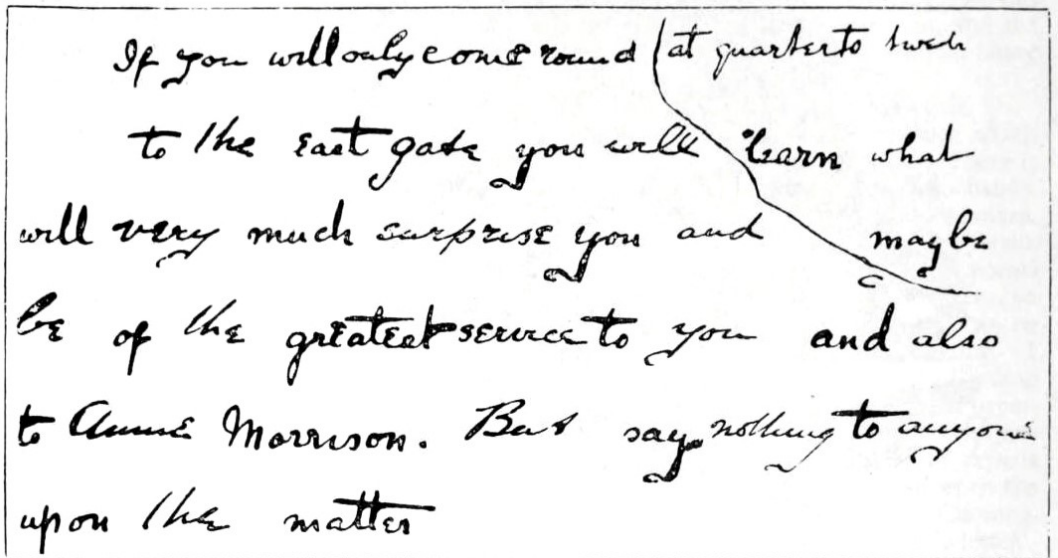
And she was born in America.

The Crucial Message

It is very puzzling why Cunningham would have kept the rest of the torn message he took from Kirwan when he killed him. Why not dispose of the highly incriminating thing? The successful solution of this case depended on locating the rest of the message. Had it been destroyed, it is unlikely that the crime could have been solved. It solved everything, including setting off young Cunningham stupidly making him pull a gun on Forrester. After that, it became impossible to deny the truth to the extent that the elder Cunningham became so disheartened that he confessed everything.

One must also wonder at the rather unique relationship between Cunningham senior and junior.

Although they were close enough to plan and carry out a cold-blooded murder, they did not trust each other, and wrote the message intended to attract Kirwan in a way to prove their shared guilt. It is as if they knew they would be caught. Also, they had to know



If you will only come round (at quarters) back to the east gate you will learn what will very much surprise you and maybe be of the greatest service to you and also to Anne Morrison. But say nothing to anyone upon the matter

that their vicious attempt on Holmes' life, with Watson and Inspector Forrester close by, was an irrefutable admission of their crime.

Holmes' deduction that the crime was committed by two people and that they took turns in writing the message was nothing less than brilliant. I would, however, have appreciated his concept of the "family mannerism" supposedly traceable in the two writing specimens.

Not that it matters much, of course, as Holmes told us that there were 23 other deductions that he had derived from the letter, all of which pointed to the culpability of the Cunninghams.

A Warped Family

The Canon is inhabited by some very despicable criminals. However, there are others who find themselves open to a criminal investigation that have at least some redeeming virtues—their crimes have not been primarily prompted by hatred and greed. For example, it is possible to sympathize with Jefferson Hope (STUD), who was so harmed by evil men and bad luck. Captain Jack Croker (ABBE) comes immediately to mind, as does John Turner (BOSC). But the Cunninghams, as well as their victim, Kirwan, earn the dubious distinction of being truly despicable.

The Great Friendship

This is one of my favorite cases. It is described as a "nice little case" which of course it is, except for those who were directly affected by its events. True, it is essentially unimportant and potentially grave consequences are not involved as in some of Holmes' other investigations; BRUC, CHAS, REDH, SECO, and LAST immediately come to mind.

It is one of my favorites not so much due to Holmes' brilliant deductions and the opportunity to see him at his best, but because it gives us a rare insight into the obvious regard in which Holmes and Watson held one another.

We see Watson rushing to France to be at the side of his friend whose health hangs on the balance due to his weeks' long exertions of grueling investigations. He is obviously very concerned about him and does his best to safely bring him back to Baker Street.

When it becomes obvious to Watson that Holmes is still very much weakened by his efforts in the Continent, he promptly decides to get him away from the hustle and bustle of London (with its potential for further cases) to the country for a treatment of peace and quiet.



potential for further cases) to the country for a treatment of peace and quiet.

Although Holmes is by nature uninclined to social contacts and rustication, he good-humoredly agrees with his friend's diagnosis and treatment. Then later in Hayter's home, he docilely accepts Watson's admonition to avoid becoming involved in an investigation until he, as his doctor, decides that his patient is fully restored.

Of course, Inspector Forrester's appeal puts an end to this and Holmes apolo-

gizes to his friend when he tells him, "The fates are against you, Watson."

We see yet another example of Watson's authentic concern over Holmes' apparent weakness when his friend feigns a loss of consciousness when Forrester is about to reveal an important clue—the piece of the message received by the victim. Watson is again pained by Holmes' apparent error regarding the time of the bogus burglary when he writes the wrong time into the reward offer. Not knowing that Holmes' purpose was to get a writing sample from the elder Cunningham, the Good Doctor mourns over the sleuth's supposed humiliation.

The final irony, of course, is that although Holmes did not exactly follow his doctor's orders, he became reenergized by the little provincial murder.

What else happened in 1887:

Empire

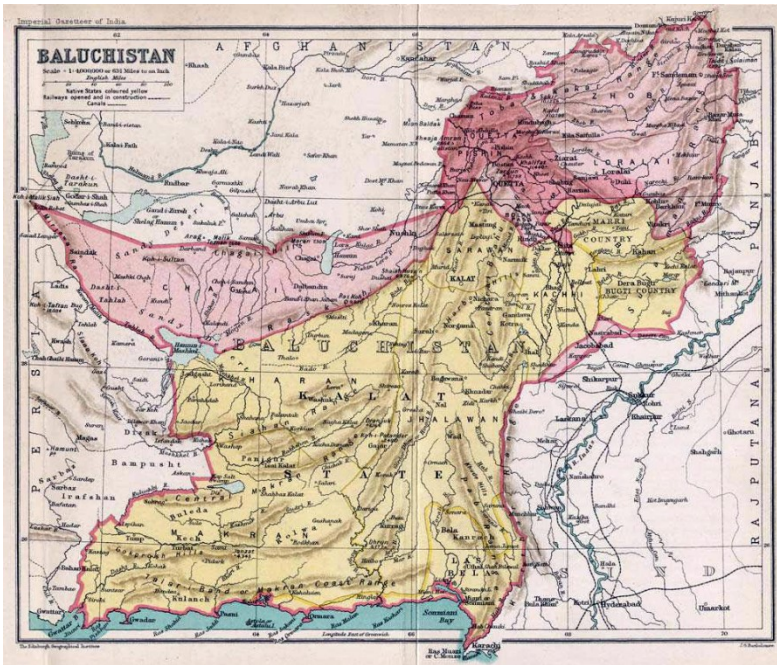
British East Africa Company charter awarded.

Zululand becomes protectorate.

First colonial conference opens in London.

Anglo-Russian treaty fixes Russo-Persian frontier along the Oxus River.

Failure of former Prime Minister Gladstone's Home Rule Bill brings Irish affairs into prominence, Charles Parnell proposes bill for diminution of Irish rents, which is rejected. Arthur Balfour, Prime



Minister Salisbury's nephew, introduces new coercion bill, which passes as a result of fabricated charges against Parnell, accusing him of complicity in the Phoenix Park Murders.

◀ British Baluchistan, including Quetta, established.

Britain

Independent Labour Party is founded.

“People's Palace” first stage, the Queen's Hall, opens in East End.

Earls Court opens at entertainments ground.

Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 50th year as Queen, is celebrated throughout the Empire.

The Queen drives in state from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey, where a Special Jubilee Service is held. This event marks the end of the Windsor Retirement.

Charing Cross Road opens. ▶

Allotments Act, Local authorities empowered to acquire land compulsorily for allotments.

Coal Mines Regulation Act, boys under 13 not to work underground, and under 12 at the surface.

Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith, opens after being bought by Metropolitan Board of Works.

Kilburn Park opens after being acquired by the City of London.



World

United States begins free mail delivery to homes of any community with a population of 10,000 or more.

China recognizes Portugal's right to the island of Macao.

Franco-German crisis over actions of Boulanger in Schnaebelle case. Boulanger fails to gain office.



German Reichstag dissolved; alliance of Imperialists, Conservatives, some National Liberals—the Kartel—give Bismarck majority in the new Reichstag; military grants renewed.

◀ President Grévy resigns the Presidency of the French Republic and quits the Elysées the same evening. Riots break out in Paris when his resignation becomes public.

Renewal of Russo-German “Reinsurance” Treaty; and Triple Alliance.

Expiry of Dreikaiserbund.

Bismarck refuses permission for Russia to raise loans in Berlin.

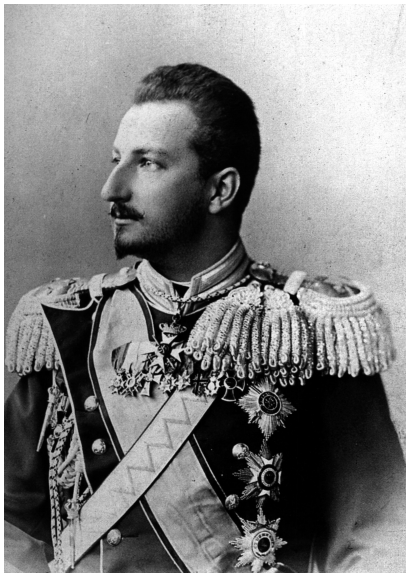
Slave revolt in Brazil takes place near São Paulo. Troops are called out but slaves take refuge in the jungle and hold their ground. This accelerates the emancipation of slaves across that empire.

France advances Russia 350 million francs.

Reverend Henry Ward Beecher dies in the United States.

Italian force annihilated by Ethiopians at Dongola; designs on Tripoli conditionally supported by Britain and Germany.

Union of Indo-China formed by France.



New attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II of Russia, Moscow is placed under martial law.

General Boulanger fails in a *coup d'état* in Paris.

Macao recognized as Portuguese by China.

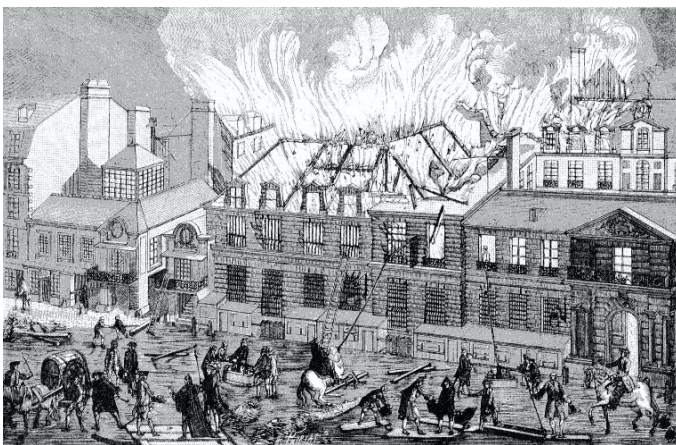
◀ Bulgarian parliament elects Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg as Prince. Russia, Germany, and France withhold recognition of the Prince. By the end of the year, Russia's attitude has grown so menacing that war appears inevitable.

Yellow River floods in China, killing nearly a million people.

Four of the eight anarchists involved in the Chicago Haymarket riot are executed; two are sentenced to life imprisonment, another for 15 years, the eighth commits suicide.

The Comte de Paris, from England, issues manifesto "to the representatives of the Monarchical party in France," urging his followers in the Chambers to defend Conservative interests to show France how desirable is the re-establishment of the monarchy.

Peaceful revolution in Hawaii. American and native residents, indignant at King Kalakaua's corruption, assemble in force and proceed to the palace, where the king consents to dismiss his Ministry and submit to a constitution, by which his own power becomes nominal.



◀ The *Opéra Comique* at Paris is totally destroyed by fire. Loss of lives is never correctly ascertained.

U.S. Interstate Commerce Act, federal control of interstate railways.

Work begins on Kiel Canal.

General Chiang Kai-shek born.

L.L. Zamenhof devises Esperanto.

Sir Thomas Moore beatified by Pope Leo XIII. (Canonized, 1935.)

Art

Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, first Sherlock Holmes story, published.

Sir Hall Caine publishes *The Deemster*, a novel about the Isle of Man.

Thomas Hardy publishes *The Woodlanders*, a novel.

Mallarmé publishes *Poésies*.

August Strindberg debuts *The Father*, a play.

Gilbert and Sullivan debut *Ruddigore*.

Singer Jenny Lind dies at her home in the Malvern Hills, England.

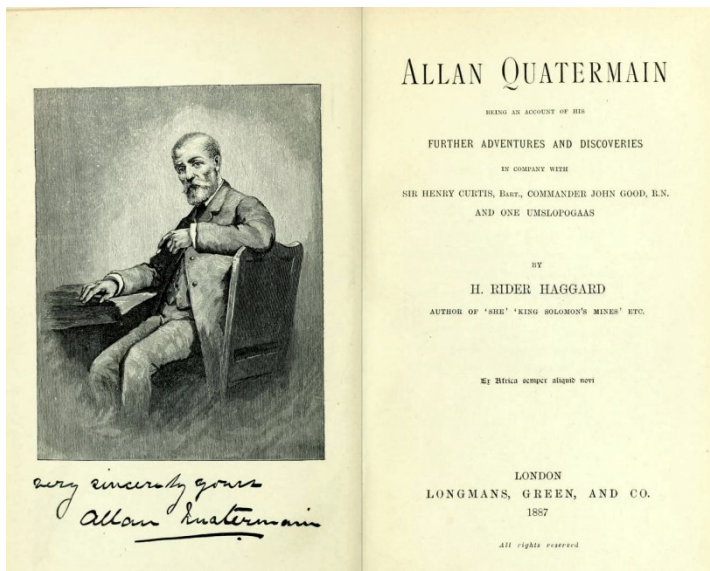
Hermann Sudermann publishes *Frau Sorge*, a novel.

Emile Zola publishes *La Terre*, a bitter novel about peasant life.

L.L. Zamenhof publishes first book in Esperanto.

Cézanne paints *The Blue Vase*.

I. Donnelly publishes “The Great Cryptogram, Francis Bacon’s Cypher in the So-called Shakespeare Play.”



◀ H. Rider Haggard publishes *She* and *Allan Quatermain*.

Monet paints *Fields in Spring*.

Sir John Stainer debuts *The Crucifixion*, an oratorio.

Van Gogh paints *Le Moulin de la Gallette* and *Boulevard de Clichy*.

Verdi debuts *Othello*.

Richard Strauss debuts *Aus Italien* and *Macbeth*, tone poems.

Claude A. Debussy debuts *Le Printemps*.

Chabrier debuts his opera, *Le Roi malgré lui*.

Science and Technology

Radio waves discovered by Hertz.



Bauxite, source of aluminum, is discovered in Georgia.

Edison and Swan combine to produce “Ediswan” electric lamps for domestic use.

◀ Ernst Mach defines the Mach number, now used in supersonic flight.

Daimler four-wheeled motor car produced.

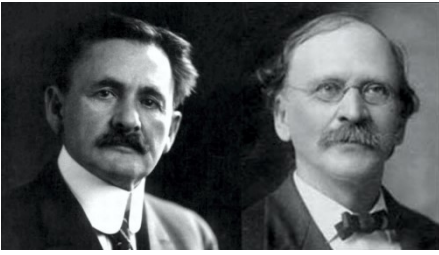
Emil Berliner improves the phonograph’s sound quality.

Joseph Lockyer publishes *The Chemistry of the Sun*.

H.W. Goodwin invents celluloid film.

Cyanide process used for the extraction of gold and silver proposed, ridiculed.

Svante A. Arrhenius proposes ion theory of electrolysis.



C.A. von Welsbach demonstrates practical incandescent gas mantle.

◀ Michelson and Morley experiment on the relative velocity of light in perpendicular directions; no speed difference found, results later lead to Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

Phenacetin, an analgesic drug, discovered.

Construction of first British torpedo cruiser.

Next week's case: CROO.

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.

© 2021 Alexander E. Braun