



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXI -- The Adventure of the Reigate Squire (Puzzle)

Note: Harper's Weekly called it "The Reigate Puzzle". In Britain, it is usually "The Reigate Squires", as it was titled in *The Strand Magazine*. Doyle initially titled it "The Reigate Squire" (singular).

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, June 1893; *Harper's Weekly*, June 17, 1893

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

Stated – began April 14, 1887

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

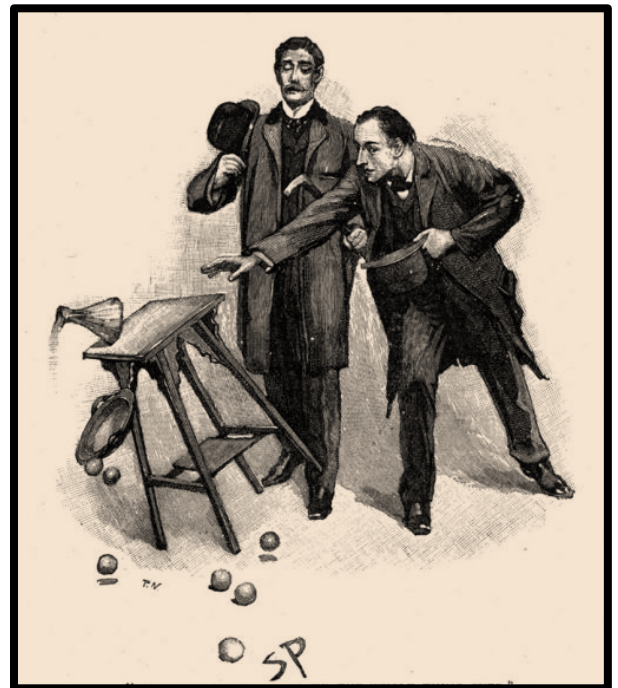
Holmes & Watson living together at 221B.

Opening scene:

Watson summoned by wire to France, where Holmes was lying ill in the Hotel Dulong in Lyons, prey to the blackest depression. His constitution had broken down under the strain

of an investigation which had extended over two months, during which period he had never worked less than fifteen hours a day and had more than once kept to his task for five days at a stretch.

Upon returning to 221B, Holmes & Watson agree Holmes needs some R&R, so they visit Watson's old friend, Col. Hayter, a fine old soldier who had seen much of the world and who lived near Reigate, in Surrey. He maintained a bachelor establishment.



Client:

The Police. After Insp. Forrester asked Holmes to step across, Holmes wanted details, and Watson perceived that the case for R&R was hopeless.

Crime or concern:

A baddish business. Neighbor's coachman William Kirwin was shot through the heart and killed.

Villain:

Mr. Cunningham, a neighbor and the county J.P., an elderly man, with a strong, deep-lined, heavy-eyed face. Alec, his son a dashing young fellow, with a bright, smiling expression and showy dress. Employers of their victim.

Motive:

Land dispute between neighbors, Cunningham and Acton. Cunninghams tried to steal a crucial document from Acton's house, failed, and took some other things to simulate a burglary.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes believed the Cunninghams were lying. Alec said victim was struggling with a man when he was shot, but there was no powder residue. The boggy ditch allegedly run across by the murder had no marks or tracks. Burglar unlikely to have attempted to enter house when two rooms were lit.

Piece of note found clutched in victim's hand led Holmes on a successful search for the remainder of it, which was the "smoking gun" to the mystery.

Then, perfectly desperate, the Cunninghams tried to murder Holmes, sealing their guilt.

Policemen:

Inspector Forrester, the local. A smart, keen-faced young fellow. There was a constable standing at the kitchen door. Later, after the attack upon Holmes, two constables came when the inspector blew his whistle. No mention of where the second one had been stationed.

Holmes' fees:

Insp. Forrester asked Holmes for help, but there is no mention of an arrangement to pay Holmes.

Transport:

Watson traveled from London to Lyons in 24 hours or less, using unspecified means.

Food:

None eaten, but there was a dish of oranges and a carafe of water on a table in Mr. Cunningham's bedroom. The oranges were important, but were not eaten. The Cunningham house had more than one kitchen.

Drink:

Holmes helped himself to a dash of the Colonel's brandy after being assaulted by the Cunninghams.

Vices:

At 11:45 the night of the killing, Mr. Alec was smoking a pipe in his dressing-gown.

Other cases mentioned:

The question of the Netherland-Sumatra Company and of the colossal schemes of Baron Maupertuis, which was intimately concerned with politics and finance. The successful resolution earned Holmes high praise and universal admiration. Europe was ringing with his name.

Notable Quotables:

"The county police ought to make something of that," said Holmes "why, it is surely obvious that —"
(interrupted by Watson, or there would have been little mystery)

"Oh, it is as well to test everything." – Holmes

"My dear Colonel, I am afraid that you must regret the hour that you took in such a stormy petrel as I am." – Holmes

It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognize, out of a number of facts, which are incidental and which vital.

"Oh, what an ass I have been!" – Watson

Other interestings:

The challenge of a new case cured Holmes of his funk. After some minutes in deep thought, he raised his face. His cheek was tinged with colour, and his eyes were as bright as before his illness. He sprang to his feet with all his old energy.

This case gave Holmes the opportunity of demonstrating the value of a fresh weapon. Not stated what the “fresh weapon” was, but probably handwriting analysis about which he demonstrated detailed knowledge.

At one point, Insp. Forrester almost gave away Holmes’ plan to the murderer, but Holmes interrupted him by faking a sort of nervous fit.

When all is said and done:

The dead coachman, William, had seen his masters, the Cunninghams, on their nocturnal burglary business, and had been blackmailing them, a risky venture that cost him his life.

The mysterious Annie Morrison was mentioned in the note to William. It was her only role in the story.