



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes Adventure XXII -- The Adventure of the Crooked Man

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson has been married only a few months. Holmes drops by at midnight and asks him to come along in the morning and serve as a witness when he questions a very important suspect.

The Munsters were at the Indian rebellion. They were trapped in a fort, along with their women and children. Both James and Henry were in love with Nancy. Nancy loved Henry, but her father wanted her to marry James because he was more ambitious.

James sent Henry to sneak through enemy lines and bring help, but he also tipped off the enemy that Henry was coming. Henry was captured. This eliminated James' rival.

The Munsters were relieved and Henry was presumed dead. James married Nancy and rose through the ranks to become commanding officer of the regiment. Almost 30 years passed.

Henry was not dead, but was enslaved and tortured so severely that he was permanently deformed. He eventually escaped and made his way via Nepal, Afghanistan and the Punjab back to England. He brought Teddy and a defanged cobra with him and earned a living as a conjurer in pubs, using Teddy and the cobra as a finish. He came upon Nancy who was on her way home from a church mission meeting and told her of James' treachery. He then decided that he should follow her home, in case James became violent.

Nancy confronted James. Henry looked through the window and saw them arguing. He entered the room through a French door. At the sight of him, James had a stroke and fell dead. As he fell, he hit his head



on the hearth, producing an ugly wound. Teddy got loose during the excitement. Henry caught him and left because he felt it would look bad for him should he be caught. Nancy collapsed with "brain fever."

Because of James' head injury, Nancy was accused of murdering her husband. Murphy called Holmes in. Holmes solved the case and located Henry, but said nothing of Henry's connection with the case because an autopsy revealed apoplexy and not violence was the cause of death so Nancy was released.

We are not told anything about the future of Nancy and/or Henry.

SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)

Holmes goes to Watson's house and tells him about the case he's working on. It is the murder of Colonel Barclay, commander of the Royal Mallow's Regiment in Aldershot. Two days before, Mrs. Barclay had come home and had a fight with her husband.

The servants, who were listening to the quarrel through the door of the small living room, heard a scream and then fell silent. The driver tried to enter, but the door was closed from the inside, so he decided to go around the garden and came into the room through a French window.

He discovered the colonel's body lying on the ground, stiff dead, and Mrs. Barclay passed out on the couch. His first reflex was to open the door to other servants, but the key was not on the door and could not be found.

However, a club was found near the body and Mrs. Barclay was immediately suspected by the police. Holmes examined the house the next day and found the prints of an unknown man and a strange creature. He deduced that the colonel was killed by the stranger, who took the key with him, or that the colonel fainted with surprise when he saw the man and died when his head hit the chimney tracks.

Miss Morrison tells Holmes that on the night of the tragedy she had met a stranger she did not know but who seemed familiar to Mrs. Barclay. Holmes interviewed the man, Henry Wood, who had been a corporal in the same regiment as Colonel Barclay twenty years earlier.

Both were rivals and coveted the same woman, Miss Nancy Devoy, the current Mrs. Barclay. During the Cipay revolt, when Wood volunteered to seek reinforcements across enemy lines, Barclay, then sergeant, advised him the way to go.

Betrayed by Barclay, Wood fell into a trap and was imprisoned for years, suffering cruel abuse that made him deformed. Fortunately, he managed to escape and returned to England. When he met Mrs. Barclay in Aldershot, he told her about his sad adventure.

Mrs. Barclay asked her husband for explanations and argued with him. When Wood appeared in the small living room the colonel fainted under the effect of surprise and killed himself in the fall. The strange animal, Wood's companion, was a mongoose.

SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

Holmes calls on Watson late one evening to tell him about a case that he has been working on, and also to invite him to be a witness to the final stage of the investigation. Colonel James Barclay, of The Royal Mallows based at Aldershot Camp, is dead, apparently by violence, and his wife, Nancy, is the prime suspect. The Colonel's brother officers are quite perplexed at the Colonel's fate, as most of them have always believed that he and Nancy were a happy couple. They have observed over the years, however, that the Colonel seemed more attached to his wife than she to him. They have also noticed that the Colonel sometimes had bouts of deep depression and moodiness for no apparent reason.

As a married officer, the Colonel lived with his wife in a villa outside the camp at Aldershot. Nancy went out that evening with her next-door neighbor, Miss Morrison, on an errand connected with her church, coming back not long afterward. She went into the seldom-used morning room and asked the maid to fetch her some tea, which was unusual for Nancy. Hearing that his wife had returned, the Colonel joined her in the morning room. The coachman saw him enter, and that was the last time that he was seen alive.

The morning room's blinds were up, and the glass door leading out onto the lawn was open. When the maid brought the tea, she heard an argument in progress between Nancy and her husband, and she heard Nancy say the name "David". She fetched the other maid and the coachman, who came and listened. Nancy was very angry and shouting about what a coward her husband was; his words were softer and less distinct. Suddenly, the Colonel cried out, there was a crash, and Nancy screamed.

Realizing that something awful had just happened, the coachman tried to force the locked door, but could not. He remembered the outside glass door, and went outside to get into the room through that. Upon entering, he found that Nancy had fainted, and the Colonel was lying dead in a pool of his own blood. The coachman summoned the police and medical help, and also found, to his surprise, that the key was not in the locked door on the inside. Later, a thorough search failed to turn it up. A peculiar club-like weapon was also found in the morning room. Although the staff has seen the Colonel's weapon collection, they do not recognize this weapon.

Holmes believes that the case is not what it initially appears to be. Although the staff are quite sure that they only heard the Colonel's and his wife's voices, Holmes is convinced that a third person came into the room at the time of the Colonel's death and, rather oddly, made off with the key. This Holmes deduces from

footmarks found in the road, on the lawn, and in the morning room. Odder still, the mystery man seems to have brought an animal with him. Judging from the footmarks it made, it is long with short stumpy legs, like a weasel or a stoat, but bigger than either of those animals. It left claw marks on the curtain, too, leading Holmes to deduce that it was a carnivore, for there was a bird cage near the curtain.

Holmes is sure that Miss Morrison holds the key to the mystery, and he is right. She claims to know nothing of the reason for the argument between her neighbors, but when Holmes tells her that Nancy could easily face a murder charge, she feels that she can betray her promise to her and tells all. On their short outing, the two women met a bent, deformed old man carrying a wooden box. He looked up at Nancy and recognized her, and she him. Nancy asked Miss Morrison to walk on ahead as there was apparently a private matter to discuss with this man. She came back very angry and made her friend swear not to say anything about the incident, claiming the man was a former acquaintance who had fallen on hard times.

This breaks the case wide open for Holmes. He knows that there cannot be many men of this description in the area, and soon identifies him as Henry Wood, and goes with Watson to visit him the next day in his room. Wood explains all. He had been a corporal in the same regiment as Colonel Barclay, who was still a sergeant at that time, at the time of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, then known as the 'Mutiny'. Also at this time, he and Barclay were both vying for Nancy's hand. Henry was not deformed and much better looking in those days. The regiment was confined to its cantonment by the turmoil in India, and water had run out, among other problems. A volunteer was asked to go out and summon help, and Henry volunteered to do so. Sergeant James Barclay—later the Colonel—instructed Henry on the safest route to take. But as Henry traveled along the route, he was attacked and taken prisoner, being knocked unconscious in the process. When he came to, he gathered from what he knew of the local language, spoken by his captors, that Sergeant Barclay had betrayed him to the enemy, driven by one motive—to get rid of Henry so he could have Nancy for himself. Henry was tortured repeatedly, which is how he became deformed, spent years as a slave or wandering, made money as a conjurer, and when he was getting old, he longed to come back to England. He sought out soldiers because he was familiar with the milieu.

Then, quite by chance, he met Nancy that evening, who was shocked to learn he was alive. Unknown to her, however, he followed her home and witnessed the argument, for the blinds were up and the glass door open. He climbed over the low wall and entered the room. An apoplectic fit caused by the sight of him killed the Colonel instantly, and Nancy fainted. Henry's first thought then was to open the inside door and summon help, and he took the key from the now-unconscious Nancy to do so. Realizing that the situation looked very bad for him and that he himself could be charged with murder, he chose instead to flee, stopping long enough to retrieve Teddy, his mongoose that he used in his conjuring acts, which had escaped from the wooden box.

However, he did drop his stick, the strange weapon that was later found, and he inadvertently carried the key off with him.

An inquest has already exonerated Nancy, having found the cause of the Colonel's death—apoplexy (Wood claimed the Colonel was dead before he received his apparently lethal head wound from hitting the fireplace fender, and the experts had apparently come to the same conclusion).

As for "David", this was apparently a reproach in which Nancy likened her husband to the biblical king, who had Bathsheba's husband Uriah transferred to a zone with heavy fighting so that he would be killed, leaving David free to marry Uriah's wife.