



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXXV -- The Adventure of the Six Napoleons

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, May 1904, *Collier's Weekly*, April 30, 1904

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

June stated, 1900 or 1902 likely

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Holmes & Watson sharing quarters at 221B.

Opening scene:

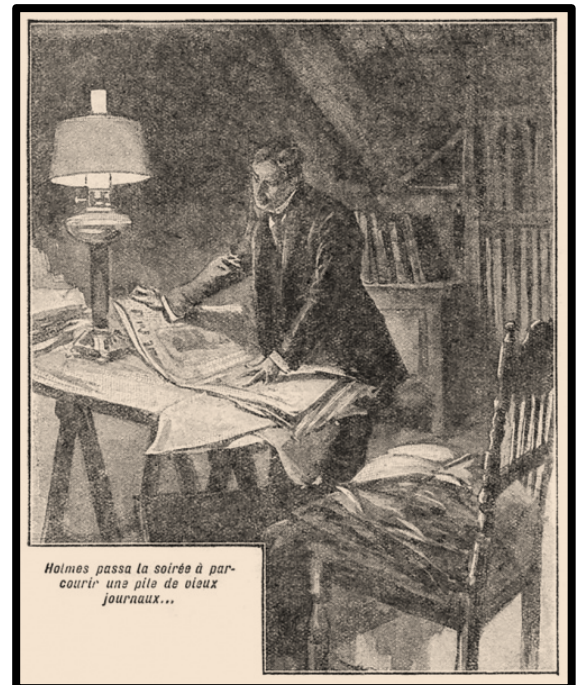
Inspector Lestrade looked in upon Holmes & Watson of an evening, and his visit was welcome.

Client:

Lestrade. This is a continuing question, never explained in the Canon, what exactly was the relationship between Holmes and the Yard. The likely explanation is that Scotland Yard had an ongoing and approved retainer with Holmes. He would be called in as needed, and they would pay him. This arrangement was never detailed by Watson.

Crime or concern:

Lestrade told Watson of one of those senseless acts of Hooliganism which occur from time to time, in which a man smashed a plaster bust of Napoleon which was on display in the retail shop of Morse Hudson. Then less



than a week later, a doctor finds two identical busts, one in his house and one at his office, had also been smashed by an unknown break-in artist. Then, 4 days later another bust is missing, this one at a murder scene.

Villain:

A suspected promiscuous iconoclast. It was Beppo, a simian man, with thick eyebrows and a very peculiar projection of the lower part of the face, like the muzzle of a baboon. He had stolen The Black Pearl of the Borgias either directly from the Prince of Colonna or from his crooked maid, Lucretia Venucci, and her brother who was found murdered at the fourth bust-smashing location.

Motive:

Retrieve the pearl he had hidden in a bust of Napoleon at the bust-manufacturing facility where he worked, to avoid its seizure by the police, who were hot upon his trail for a knifing incident.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes observed that the first four busts were broken where there was a light, in fact on the fourth, the bust-smasher went some distance to a lighted spot. Photograph of Beppo found at the scene of the murder, whom inquiries revealed had been employed by Morse Hudson, tying the different smashed busts together. Watson then contacted both the retailers and also the wholesale manufacturers, and could trace each of the busts from the beginning.

Policemen:

Insp. Lestrade who consulted Watson on behalf of the Yard.

Holmes' fees:

No mention.

Transport:

Holmes & Watson took a cab to 131 Pitt Street, a quiet little backwater just beside one of the briskest currents of London life. It took half an hour. No. 131 was one of a row, all flat-chested, respectable, and most unromantic dwellings.

Holmes & Watson with Lestrade took a four-wheeler which was at the door at eleven, and in it they drove to a spot at the other side of Hammersmith Bridge.

Food:

No breakfast when Holmes & Watson were summoned to the murder scene. "There's coffee on the table, Watson, and I have a cab at the door."

The murdered man had an apple in his pocket.

While tracking down Beppo, the afternoon was far advanced before Holmes & Watson were able to snatch a hasty luncheon at a restaurant.

Lestrade dined with Holmes & Watson the evening of the arrest, and caught a few hours sleep at 221B prior to the excursion.

Drink:

No mention

Vices:

During the opening visit to Holmes & Watson, Lestrade puffed thoughtfully at his cigar.

Other cases mentioned:

The dreadful business of the Abernethy family was first brought to Holmes' notice by the depth which the parsley had sunk into the butter upon a hot day.

The Conk-Singleton forgery case.

Notable Quotables:

"This business presents some features which make it absolutely original in the history of crime. If ever I permit you to chronicle any more of my little problems, Watson, I foresee that you will enliven your pages by an account of the singular adventure of the Napoleonic busts." – Watson

Other interestings:

Lestrade admired Holmes' handling of the case. "Well," he said, "I've seen you handle a good many cases, Mr. Holmes, but I don't know that I ever knew a more workmanlike one than that. We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow, there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

When all was said and done:

After five of the six busts proved to not contain the pearl, Holmes contacted Mr. Sandeford, the owner of the sixth, and bought it for £10. After Sandeford left, Watson smashed the bust and found the pearl, fixed like a plum in a pudding. Watson does not tell us of how or when Holmes disposed of the Pearl.

McMurdo's Camp