



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXXVIII -- The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter

First published in:

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Time frame of story (known/surmised):

Winter, stated. February, stated by Watson. Probably 1897. (Note: this does not agree with published accounts of rugby matches. Some specialists in Holmes chronology believe Watson mis-stated the month.)

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Sharing quarters at 221B.

Opening scene:

Times are slow, and Watson is worried about Holmes's tendency to revert to drug use. Then a telegram arrives, signaling a new case.

Client:

Mr. Cyril Overton, Trinity College, Cambridge, and skipper of the 'Varsity Ruggers, an enormous young man, who was more accustomed to using his muscles than his wits. He was sixteen stone (224 lbs) of solid bone and muscle, and his comely face was haggard with anxiety. Overton had been referred to Holmes by Inspector Stanley Hopkins. Hopkins said the case was more in Holmes' line than that of the regular police.



Crime or concern:

Disappearance of Godfrey Staunton, star three-quarter for the Cambridge team. Overton believed he was a sportsman, down to his marrow, and wouldn't have stopped his training and let in his skipper if it were not for some cause that was too strong for him.

Villain:

None. Staunton left the team of his own accord, to attend personal matters. He slipped out in the middle of the night.

Motive:

Staunton was married secretly, to protect his inheritance from his uncle, Lord Mount-James, a queer little old man, one of the richest in England and an absolute miser, whom Staunton believed would have opposed the marriage. Staunton ran off to see his wife who was dying of consumption (TB). He was assisted, and the wife attended by, Dr. Leslie Armstrong, a family friend and noted physician.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes narrowed down his inquiry into the connection between Godfrey Staunton and the bearded man who summoned him from his hotel, and finding the third source from which each of them sought help against pressing danger, as indicated by an ink-blot on a telegraph form written by Staunton. Holmes tricked a telegraph agent into revealing the addressee. Then Holmes put anise-seed oil on Armstrong's carriage wheel and tracked it with Pompey, a drag-hound.

Policemen:

Inspector Hopkins, of the Yard, who referred the client to Holmes.

Holmes' fees:

Staunton's rich uncle, Lord Mount-James, a noble miser, was initially opposed to Overton's hiring Holmes because of the cost. But when Holmes suggested the nephew may have been kidnapped for ransom or to learn how to burgle his house, Mount-James became worried about the villainy and the money. He told Holmes, "I beg you to leave no stone unturned to bring him safely back. As to money, well, so far as a fiver or even a tenner goes you can always look to me."

Transport:

Holmes & Watson and the client stepped round together to the hotel to see the porter.

Food:

When visiting , Holmes & Watson had a cold supper which was ready upon the table at nine o'clock, at the little inn in Cambridge. When preparing to follow Dr. Armstrong a second time, Holmes & Watson had best to carry their breakfast, for Armstrong made an early start.

Drink:

No mention

Vices:

After supper, Holmes lit his pipe.

Other cases mentioned:

None

Notable Quotables:

"A draghound will follow aniseed from here to John o'Groats" – Holmes

"I was well aware that the fiend (drug-mania) was not dead but sleeping" – Watson, referring to Holmes' old habit.

"It argues the degree in which I had lost touch with my profession that the name of Leslie Armstrong was unknown to me. Now I am aware that he is not only one of the heads of the medical school of the university, but a thinker of European reputation in more than one branch of science." – Watson

Other interestings:

The Scottish town of John o'Groats is the northeast-most point on mainland Great Britain. Land's End (the southwest-most point)-to-John o'Groats is a common term for a long journey, or more broadly, to mean simply "all-encompassing". It is the longest land journey it is possible to make in Great Britain (unless you go around in circles).

Lord Mount-James had dry skin. How dry was it? Read the story and find out.

When all was said and done: The young wife died, and the team lost their important game. Holmes made friends with Dr. Armstrong, and all agreed to keep the story quiet. This was most likely important to the potential heir of old Lord Mount-James' estate.

McMurdo's Camp