



An Inquiry into:
“The Adventure of the Abbey Grange”

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“The Adventure of the Abbey Grange” was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in September 1904 and in *Collier’s Weekly* on December 31, 1904. It is part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

Very uncharacteristically, in this case Watson leaves little

doubt as to the year in which it took place. As shown by the table, our chronologists faithfully follow suit, although there is disagreement on the matter of a specific date.

If, indeed, the case took place in 1897, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 43 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 45.

Main Characters:

Stanley Hopkins, young Scotland Yard police inspector. Sir Eustace Brackenstall, wealthy owner of the Abbey Grange. Lady Brackenstall, *née* Mary Fraser, Sir Eustace’s Australian wife. Therese Wright, Lady Brackenstall’s austere maid and lifelong companion. Captain Jack Croker, sailor and killer of Sir Eustace in his own self-defense and that of Lady Brackenstall, whom he loves.

Notable Quotes:

“Come, Watson, come! The game is afoot.”

“I must admit, Watson, that you have some power of selection which atones for much which I deplore in your narratives. Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over work of the utmost finesse and delicacy in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite, but cannot possibly instruct, the reader.”

“I propose to devote my declining years to the composition of a text-book which shall focus the whole art of detection into one volume.”

<i>The Adventure of the Abbey Grange</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Winter 1897</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Saturday, January 23, 1897</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>January 1897</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1897</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>January 1897</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Friday, January 22, 1897</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>January 1897</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Late January 1897</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Early January 1897</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Monday, February 15, 1897</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1897</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Friday, January 15, 1897</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.

“Perhaps when a man has special knowledge and special powers like my own it rather encourages him to seek a complex explanation when a simpler one is at hand.”

“Once or twice in my career I feel that I have done more real harm by my discovery of the criminal than ever he had done by his crime. I have learned caution now, and I had rather play tricks with the law of England than with my own conscience.”

Call for Help

There have been about seven occasions on which Inspector Hopkins called in Holmes. Unfortunately, of these, only three of them made it to the Canon—the present being one of them. Undoubtedly, the rest—if not set down—must have at least existed in note form, stored in Watson’s long-lost (and much regretted) tin box.

The Passionate Captain—an Observation

It is not only modes of expression or outlooks that change over time, but ways in which to express love.

Croker’s proclivity towards kissing Mary Fraser’s footprints on the deck of his ship could easily be viewed by today’s somewhat less romantic standards as being ludicrous. Back in his time, however, it was a serious way of expressing his deep love for the girl, and although possibly being considered somewhat excessive, nobody would have found it either funny or absurd.

It was part of the ethos of the time, during which men tended to look upon women as wonderfully mysterious and delicate creatures whom a male was supposed to approach with extreme care and excellent manners.

O tempora, o mores!

Bringing Facts to Light

A logical question that comes to mind is why Holmes would have allowed Watson to publish this case.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Regardless of how well the players’ identities were disguised by our ever-discreet medico, there can be little doubt that the whole thing would have rung alarm bells in Inspector Hopkins’ mind when he realized what had truly happened.

While he might have personally agreed with Holmes’ decision to let the pair go, as a policeman it is unlikely that he would have given the whole matter a pass; particularly because he brought Holmes into the case out of admiration and trust and he might feel that the Great Detective deceived him.

The same thing holds true in the case of Dr. Sterndale in DEVI. Why did Holmes telegraph Watson telling him it would be all right to publish that story? The most likely reason, of course, would have been that the famed African explorer had perished.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

So what happened in the case of Captain Croker and his beloved Mary? Perhaps our sleuth's permission was prompted by the same sad reason that prompted him in Sterndale's case: did they sail together and met with an iceberg on the path of their ship?

It is interesting to note that of the 37 cases of murder, attempted murder, or manslaughter set down for us by Watson, in 22% of them Holmes opts to follow his conscience and let the guilty party go. His thinking is that there are times in which Justice is best served by a not-too-strict adherence to the



Courtesy of ITV Granada

letter of the law—a matter of British law versus Christian morality.

Although in the present case a very serious crime has been committed—murder—still the Great Detective chooses to exercise his own sense of justice rather than leaving matters to the courts of law. He expresses it best: “Once or twice in my career I feel that I have done more real harm by my discovery of the criminal than ever he had done by his crime. I have learned caution now, and I had rather play tricks with the law of England than with my own conscience.”

It should be noted, however, that he did give Hopkins all the necessary clues to discover the culprit on his

own. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why he decided to let Watson publish the case. Looking back upon it, Hopkins would have indeed realized that Holmes had put into his very hands all the threads necessary to untangle the case.

A Matter of Personal Justice

By our standards Holmes' decision to keep from the police the truth of what happened at Abbey Grange and reveal exactly how Sir Eustace met his death, would have been unnecessary; it was clearly a case of self-defense. The Great Detective himself observed that Croker would have been acquitted of murder had the whole thing gone to trial.

However, our sleuth was quite correct in his supposition that even if the capital charge were dismissed, there would have been other, lesser charges that might have been brought against the Captain and Mary herself. Even if those charges were minor in comparison to murder, and even if they were dismissed (unlikely, considering the tenor of the times), there would still remain the matter of the scandal that



Courtesy of ITV Granada

would have ensued, and the effect that it would have had on the hapless pair. Back then, the yellow press was at its most odorous flowering and society was unforgiving.

Today, however, this would probably be less of a problem. A brute of an abusive husband is something which although was frowned upon in 1897 was not looked upon with the same distaste and anger as is the case today.

A Slight Touch of Envy?

If anyone were to ask whether Holmes ever treated his friend and colleague unfairly and in a manner that could be described as insulting, all that would be needed is to point to this case. Consider: Watson is roughly awakened before dawn and dragged out of his comfortable warm bed in the dead



Courtesy of ITV Granada

of winter. He then finds himself in a cold, drafty unfriendly railway station, where he is pushed into a rattling, malodorous train with what had to have been a bad cup of tepid tea in lieu of breakfast, and then he is served an undeservedly unkind dose of criticism of his literary efforts.

Nobody could fault him for in essentially replying, “If you don’t like it, why don’t you do it yourself?”

Although we know that Holmes wrote and published (probably privately) several monographs on various aspects of the science of detection, none of these seems to have survived. In short, we have no idea of what the Great Detective’s formal prose looked like. However,

going by the cases that he personally recorded, it is neither unkind nor inexact to say that his efforts fell considerably short of attaining the quality of his biographer’s writing.

This little incident is one of a few that remind us that Holmes was not an unfeeling creature lacking any facet that might have made him more human.

He appears to have suffered from a slight touch over envy of Watson’s literary success.

What else happened in 1897:

Empire



◀ Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee.

Benin Expedition, a punitive expedition with a force of 1,200 under Admiral Sir Harry Rawson captures, burns, and loots Benin City, bringing to an end the West African Kingdom of Benin. Much of the country’s art, including the Benin Bronzes, was destroyed, looted, or dispersed.

Uprising on India’s Northwest Frontier.

General Kitchener occupies Berber, North of Khartoum.

Eighty-two British soldiers hold off attacks by 4,000 Zulu warriors at the Battle of Rorke’s Drift in South Africa.

First Women’s Institute in the world; established at Stoney Creek, Canada.

Britain

Sir Henry Tate presents the Tate Gallery to the nation.

Northern Polytechnic, Holloway Road, opens.

Blackwall Tunnel opens.

Report of Royal Commission (Eversley) on agricultural depression.



◀ On September 10, 1897, a 25-year-old London taxi driver named George Smith becomes the first person ever arrested for drunk driving after slamming his cab into a building. Smith later pleaded guilty and was fined 25 shillings.

Employers' Liability Act: responsibility for injuries to and compensation of employees injured at work.

Royal Automobile Club, London.

Trunk telephone lines transferred to control of the GPO.

Trained nurses only to be employed in hospitals.

World

Mathieu Dreyfus discovers that the document on which his brother, Alfred, was convicted was actually written by Major M.C. Esterhazy.

Visit of French President Faure to St. Petersburg cements Franco-Russian Alliance.

Stars and Stripes Forever by John Phillip Sousa is performed for the first time in Philadelphia.

Possibly the most severe quake in history strikes Assam, India. Shock waves are felt over an area size of Europe.

Dr. Karl Wolfert and his mechanic are killed in Germany when their dirigible, powered by a Daimler car engine, crashes on its fourth flight.

In Austria a giant Ferris wheel, designed by Walter Bassett of England, opens in Vienna. It was built in the Wurstelprater amusement park to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the accession of Emperor Franz Joseph to the Habsburg throne.



◀ Swede Saloman Andrée and two companions, Knute Fraenkle and Nils Strindberg, in the Ornen balloon are forced down after 64 hours in the first expedition to fly by balloon across the North Pole. Their attempt to return ended on White Island. Their fate was later discovered in 1930, by Norwegian whalers.

The gold-laden ship *Excelsior* from Alaska lands in San Francisco. Seattle mayor W.D. Wood was visiting and immediately resigns his job, hires a ship, and organizes an expedition from San Francisco to the Yukon Territory. The steamer

Portland arrives into Seattle from Alaska with 68 prospectors carrying more than a ton of gold. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* announces the arrival of men with gold from Alaska. This unleashes the Klondike gold rush and tens of thousands headed for the Yukon. The Klondike gold rush gave America and Canada a psychological boost in getting the economy moving again after the terrible depression that followed the 1893 crash.

Amelia Earhart is born in Kansas. First woman to fly solo across the Atlantic, disappears in the South Pacific while trying to fly around the world.

William McKinley inaugurated as U.S. president.



King of Korea proclaims himself emperor; lasts until 1910.

Adolph Ochs of the *New York Times* publishes for the first time his slogan “All the News That’s Fit to Print.”

◀ Grant’s Tomb is dedicated.

Russia occupies Port Arthur.

Two German missionaries murdered in Shantung; Germany occupies Kiao-chow, in north China.

Universal suffrage introduced in Austria.

Crete proclaims union with Greece; Turkey declares war on Greece and is defeated in Thessaly. Austro-Russian treaty on Balkans relaxes tensions created by this 30-day war between Greece and Turkey in Macedonia.

Art

The Vienna Secession is founded by artists Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Max Kurzweil, and others. The movement rebelled against the sentimental academic painting of the 19th century.



Conrad publishes *Nigger of the Narcissus*.

Kipling, *Captains Courageous*.

◀ H.G. Wells publishes *The Invisible Man*.

Rostand publishes *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Paul Dukas debuts *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*.

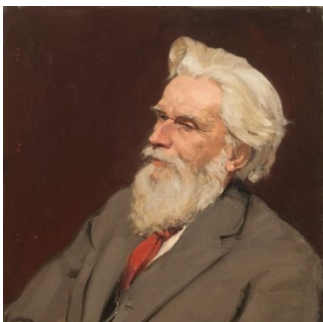
Gauguin paints *Girls Bathing in Tahiti*.

Toulouse-Lautrec paints *Marcelle*.

Bram Stoker writes *Dracula*.

Science and Technology

Physicist Sir Joseph John Thomson describes the electron as a particle of negative charge whose motion constitutes electricity at a meeting of the Royal Institution in London. He worked on cathode rays and identified electrons, charged particles smaller than the hydrogen atom.



◀ Henry Havelock Ellis publishes *Studies in Psychology of Sex*.

Ramsay discovers the inert atmospheric gases xenon, krypton, and neon.

Felix Hoffmann, a German worker for Bayer, rediscovered aspirin (acetyl salicylic acid), the active ingredient of the willow plant’s (salicin). In 1832 a French chemist named Charles Gergardt had experiments with salicin and created salicylic acid. On March 6, 1899, Bayer registered “Aspirin” as a trademark.

J. McCreary patents an air-washer intended to purify air in a building; beginning of air-conditioning.

Diesel engine invented.

Sir Ronald Ross, bacteriologist, identifies the causes of malaria and studies the disease.

Photographs first taken using artificial light.

Paris Métro opens.

Barthelot publishes *Thermochemie*, extending his *Mécanique chimique* (1878).

Beginning of Monotype system of typesetting.

Next week's case: SECO

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.

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