



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XL -- The Adventure of The Second Stain

It's a story of international intrigue, love, and loose carpets, and of what can happen when you don't think twice before sending off an impulsive letter! It's "The Adventure of the Second Stain," and the Hounds are putting on the dog in some very exalted circles to sniff out the connection between a missing missive, a messy murder, and a much-moved Mrs. So grab your hairpins, your curling tongs, and your curved Indian daggers, and let's all try to build our theories on the quicksand that is Canonical Woman.

Lady Hilda: Lady Hilda described her letter as "a foolish letter, a letter of an impulsive, loving girl. I meant no harm, and yet he would have thought it criminal. Had he read that letter his confidence would have been forever destroyed." We all jump to the logical conclusion that the letter had something to do with an earlier romance in Lady Hilda's life, whether innocent or not so innocent, and that it was the strict code of upper class Victorian behavior which threatened her with ruin if the contents of her letter were made known. That would have been sufficient trouble, surely, but was it the whole story? And was it enough to be considered "criminal?" As the daughter of a Duke, as a woman who married a man who either was then or later became the "European Secretary," Lady Hilda's earlier romance would have probably been on a similar plane – but would it necessarily have been with an Englishman? What kind of love affair might she have had which would have led her into criminal, or perhaps even treasonous, behavior? And isn't that just the kind of letter which would have ended up in Eduardo Lucas's hands, rather than those of an "ordinary" blackmailer?



In last week's story, some of us were a little hard on Lady Brackenstall and her ability to manipulate men – even Sherlock Holmes, at least temporarily – to get what she wanted. What do the Hounds think of Lady Hilda? Is she a brave and admirable lady, or is she a spoiled and foolish beauty who resorts to tears and

fainting spells whenever things get difficult? If you had been in a situation similar to the one faced by Lady Hilda, what do you think you would have done to resolve it?

Our diplomatic secrets : What might have been the consequences if Holmes had decided to tell Trelawney Hope and the Prime Minister the whole truth about Lady Hilda's actions? Obviously there would have been trouble in the Trelawney Hope household, but would there have been any repercussions at the Foreign Office? Do you agree with Holmes's decision to screen Lady Hilda? Despite all of Holmes's efforts at secrecy, Lord Bellinger had his suspicions about the affair. Do you think that Trelawney Hope's career suffered anyway?

The official police never knew that there was any other crime connected to the death of Lucas. Although Holmes had already been to the crime scene, his visit presumably took place under the pretext of an interest in the murder itself. We know that Holmes must have been there prior to the turning of the carpet, but Lestrade seemed not to realize that the carpet had been displaced long after the crime took place. My question is this: since the murder had already been solved, why DID Lestrade want Holmes to look at the bloodstains? When Lestrade said that the stains didn't "correspond," was he hinting that he knew something about another item of "correspondence" — namely, the letter that had gone missing from the Foreign Office?

Rosemary Michaud