



An Inquiry into: "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge"

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"The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" was first published in the September-October 1908 issue of *The Strand Magazine*, and in *Collier's Magazine's* August 15, 1908 issue. It is part of *His Last Bow*.

Considering that there is no clear agreement among our chronologist, whenever we focus on this case, I think it is best to give precedence to Doctor Watson's dating; in this instance, 1892. The different estimates of our chronologists show sharp disagreement regarding the year in which this case took place. The reason is simple: Holmes vanished into the Great Hiatus between April 1891 and April 1894. During this period of time, Watson (as did most of the world) believed Sherlock Holmes was dead and if he engaged in any kind of investigation, the facts of it are forever lost to us.

Had the case actually have taken place in 1892, Sherlock Holmes would have been 38 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 40.

Main Characters:

Scott Eccles, a respectable, dull English bachelor. Inspector Tobias Gregson of Scotland Yard, an energetic, gallant, and, within his limitations, a capable officer. Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary. Aloysius Garcia a young Latin, living in Surrey, one of Don Murillo's pursuers. Mr. Henderson, a.k.a. Don Murillo, the so-called "Tiger of San Pedro," former brutal dictator of that country. Miss Burnett, a.k.a. *señora* Victor Durando, member of the band of avengers pursuing Murillo.

Notable Quotes:

"I suppose, Watson, we must look upon you as a man of letters."

The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	Late March 1892
Baring-Gould	Monday, March 24, 1890
Bell	Late March 1895
Blakeney	1896, or 1898-1902
Brend	March 1894
Christ	Monday, March 21, 1892
Dakin	Late March 1894
Folsom	Late March 1890
Hall	End of March 1895
Keefauver	Thursday, March 24, 1892
Klinger	1895
Zeisler	Monday, March 24, 1902

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.

“My mind is like a racing engine, tearing itself to pieces because it is not connected up with the work for which it was built. Life is commonplace, the papers are sterile; audacity and romance seem to have passed forever from the criminal world.”

“You are like my friend, Dr. Watson, who has a bad habit of telling his stories wrong end foremost.”

“It is an error to argue in front of your data. You find yourself insensibly twisting them round to fit your theories.”

“But how come you into this matter, Miss Burnet? How can an English lady join in such a murderous affair?”

The Impressive Baynes

If one is to examine this case with an unbiased eye, inescapably the conclusion must be that Watson did not chronicle another success of Sherlock Holmes, but one of Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary.

Throughout this case, it is painful to observe that Baynes was at least one step ahead of Holmes in just about everything. One has to wince at the Great Detective’s surprise when Baynes identified Mu-



rillo by tracking his travels. Holmes must have felt acutely embarrassed recalling his amusement when Baynes arrested the mulatto. One might almost conclude that Baynes was making fun of his eminent colleague, when he stated his intent to continue on his own track after having been warned by Holmes that he was in error.

This would have been especially true considering that the mulatto’s arrest turned out to be a ruse on Baynes’ part to trap the rest, showing that, like Holmes, he thought that properly used the press was a most valuable institu-

tion. Then, as bitter icing for the cake, He observes Holmes’ approach to Murillo’s house without the Great Detective even realizing that he had been spotted. To top it all, if it had not been for Warner’s decisive intervention, Miss Burnet would have been taken before Holmes was able to intervene. In fact, he was preparing to attempt her rescue at the house, when she already had been taken away from it.

Even Holmes had to admit to Baynes’ excellence: “You will rise high in your profession. You have instinct and intuition.”

Not Just Holmes

This is an extremely atypical case, in that both Holmes and Watson were off their game. In Watson’s instance, we witness an experienced physician who appears unable to tell man from beast. At García’s house when he examined the voodoo implements found there he tells us that, “At first, as I examined it, I thought that it was a mummified Negro baby, and then it seemed a very twisted and ancient monkey. Finally, I was left in doubt as to whether it was animal or human.” Considering that any educated layman would have been able to tell the difference between the remains of an animal, such as

a monkey, and those of a human being the whole thing is inexplicable. The hands would have been very revealing—man is the only primate boasting opposable thumbs. The shape and proportions of the legs and feet would have been a dead giveaway: few humans have what would appear to be a set of four hands.

It does appear that with the exception of Baynes, nobody was thinking very logically.

Few Would Call It Love

Holmes comment to Watson about Miss Burnett, “I may add that Miss Burnett’s age and character make it certain that my first idea that there might be a love interest in our story is out of the question,” sounds a little too dismissive to me. I tend to think that his first impression was closer to the truth, albeit with a somewhat sinister twist.



Considering the events that had taken place, it seems very odd that the ruthless Murillo would have allowed the lady in question to live. What could have been his reason? Watson says of Murillo: “He had made his name as the most lewd and bloodthirsty tyrant that had ever governed any country with a pretense to civilization.”

Aided by his considerable resources, the ex-dictator by now was an expert in disappearing by assuming a different identity. Leaving two instead of only one body behind would not have added much to his difficulties and risks. Especially because any effort by the police to find the murderers of Garcia and Miss Burnett, probably would have quickly become a cold case especially as, with the passing of time, new felonies made their appearance.

So why did Murillo stay his hand? It is not too farfetched to suppose that in her desperate quest to remain with Murillo to be able to keep track of him, Miss Burnett would have been willing to sacrifice herself by becoming more than a simple governess in the former dictator’s household. This could explain why the so-called Tiger of San Pedro did not quickly and permanently rid himself of her, leaving the poor woman to keep company with Garcia. Perhaps he priced her very personal and intimate services above any possible risk that her continued existence might represent; especially if she firmly remained under his control. Otherwise, why drug her and risk attracting attention while helping a wobbly person into the train? It would have been far less risky to break her neck and stuff her in a trunk for later disposal.



Unquestionably, she was more dangerous to them alive than dead.

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What else happened in 1892:

Empire



Britain and Germany agree on Cameroons.

◀ Matabele War.

Cape-Johannesburg railroad completed.

Durand Agreement defines the frontier between India and Afghanistan.

Britain

Keir Hardie, first independent Labour Member of Parliament, takes his seat.

National Mining strike.

Salisbury resigns; Gladstone forms his fourth (and

last) Liberal government.

Liverpool overhead electric railway built.

Imperial Institute opens in London

Lottie Collins, music-hall star sings, *Ta-ra-ra boom-de-ay*.

World

Franco-Russian Alliance.

In Pennsylvania a bloody five-month strike fails at one of Andrew Carnegie's steel mills.

Prince Ito becomes Premier of Japan.

The Sierra Club is founded, with 182 charter members. John Muir is elected president. The club defeats an effort to reduce the boundaries of Yosemite National Park.



U.S. Marines overthrow the native government in Hawaii.

Giolitti becomes Premier of Italy.

Ivory Coast becomes a French colony.

Tewfik, Khedive of Egypt dies; succeeded by Abbas II.

◀ "Gentleman Jim" Corbett defeats John L. Sullivan, wins heavyweight boxing title.

In Russian-ruled Poland, unrest among workers brings an attack sent by authorities that kills 46.

Baseball is officially invented.

France captures Dahomey.

Grover Cleveland elected U.S. president.

Pan-Slav Conference held at Cracow.

Art

Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* premières in St Petersburg.



Gerhart Hauptmann publishes *Die Weber*, a German social drama.

Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

Monet begins his series of pictures of the Rouen Cathedral.

◀ Toulouse-Lautrec paints *At the Moulin Rouge*.

Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads*.

Leoncavallo premieres his opera, *Il Pagliacci* in Milan.

Munch paints *The Cry*.

Zola, *La Débâcle*.

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Science and Technology

American inventor John Froelich

develops and constructs the first gasoline-powered tractor.

Rudolf Diesel patents his internal combustion engine.

Hermann Dresser introduces acetylsalicylic acid, later to be known by the trade name of "Aspirin."

C.F. Cross and E.J. Bevan produce "viscose," which will lead to the manufacture of rayon.

First automatic telephone switchboard introduced.

Henry Ford designs his first motor vehicle.

Otto Lilienthal successfully flies a glider; crashes in 1896 after some 2,000 flights.

Next week's case: BRUC.

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..."

All Sherlock Holmes illustrations have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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