



His Last Bow

Adventure XLI -- The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge

First published in:

Collier's Weekly, August 1908

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

Late March, 1892, stated. Some chronology mixup here.

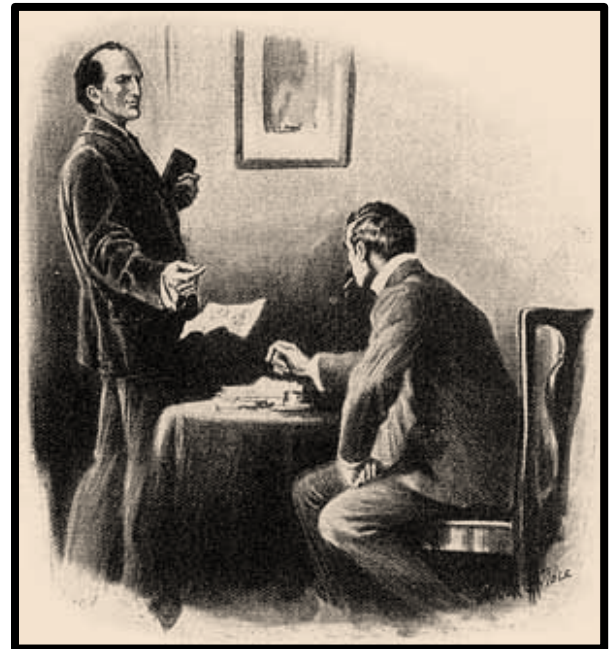
Holmes was on his post-Reichenbach hiatus.

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Sharing quarters at 221B.

Opening scene:

Holmes languishing; business is slow. Telegram requesting a consultation received from potential client, who had a most incredible and grotesque experience. Holmes & Watson discuss use of the word "grotesque".



Client:

John Scott Eccles. a stout, tall, gray-whiskered and solemnly respectable person, with heavy features and pompous manner. He was a Conservative, a churchman, and a good citizen, orthodox and conventional to the last degree.

Crime or concern:

Eccles had a most singular and unpleasant experience. Never in his life had he been placed in such a situation. "Improper — most outrageous." He had been a guest at the house of a recent acquaintance, Aloysius Garcia, and when he awoke in the morning, everyone had flown the coop.

Villain:

Don Murillo, once called the Tiger of San Pedro. He had been the cruel and evil dictator of a Central American country. He fled with his close confederates and his fortune in the nick of time when he was overthrown, settling in England. Then Garcia was murdered by Lucas, Murillo's aide.

Motive:

Garcia's motive with respect to Eccles was to establish an alibi using a conventional and respectable Englishman. Garcia's motive in his plan to kill Murillo (aka Henderson), for which he would need the alibi, was political and personal revenge against the despot. Then word leaked out, and an associate of Murillo killed Garcia who was on the way to kill Murillo.

Logic used to solve:

A note from Garcia's confederate in the household giving directions to Murillo's room indicated a very large house. Inquiry by Holmes among the house-agents identified the location.

It was illogical the servants might have done Garcia in on the very night he had a guest and was not at their mercy. Holmes observed there were grave events afoot, as the sequel showed, and the coaxing of Scott Eccles to Wisteria Lodge had some connection with them.

Policemen:

Inspector Gregson of Scotland Yard, an energetic, gallant, and, within his limitations, a capable officer, accompanied by Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary; a stout, puffy, red man, whose face was only redeemed from grossness by two extraordinarily bright eyes, almost hidden behind the heavy creases of cheek and brow. Baynes and Gregson were hunting together. They followed Eccles to 221B and stopped in during Holmes' initial interview with the client, then arrested him for the murder of Garcia, whose head had been smashed to pulp by heavy blows of a sandbag or some such instrument, a most furious assault.

A constable was in possession of the crime scene when Holmes & Watson and Baynes arrived at Wisteria Lodge, Garcia's abode, to investigate. The constable had been spooked by the appearance at dusk of a scary-looking giant at the window.

Holmes' fees:

No mention.

Transport:

Holmes & Watson with Insp. Baynes traveled to the pretty Surrey village of Esher by unspecified means.

Food:

On his night in Garcia's house, the client dined tete-a-tete with his host, who was oddly inattentive, and the dinner was neither well served nor well cooked.

Drink:

Holmes suggested Watson serve a brandy and soda to the client, after his arrest.

Vices:

At the end, Holmes smoked his evening pipe.

Other cases mentioned:

REDH & FIVE. The locking-up of Col. Carruthers.

Notable Quotables:

"I'm sure, Watson, a week in the country will be invaluable to you. It is very pleasant to see the first green shoots upon the hedges and the catkins on the hazels once again. With a spud, a tin box, and an elementary book on botany, there are instructive days to be spent." – Holmes

"As I have had occasion to remark, there is but one step from the grotesque to the horrible." –
Holmes

"A singular set of people, Watson."

Other interestings:

Inspector Baynes was a first-class detective. We rate him as the smartest of all the police detectives in the Canon. He would have solved the case without Holmes' help. Baynes tended to hide his prowess behind the display of a slow and blundersome nature, something like Detective Columbo on TV.

An interesting red-herring in this case is a servant of Garcia, one of the freedom fighters. He was a man of most remarkable appearance — being a huge and hideous Mulatto, with yellowish features of a pronounced negroid type. The Mulatto was a true voodoo-worshipper, and was the strange figure in the window that frightened the constable. He had returned to get his fetish, a shriveled and dried-up primate of some kind, maybe a monkey or a mummified negro baby. He also left behind a white cock (male chicken), torn savagely to pieces with the feathers still on, plus a bucket of blood and some charred animal bones.

When all was said and done:

Eccles had been recruited by Garcia for his one outstanding quality. He was the very type of conventional British respectability, and the very man as a witness to impress another Briton. Neither of the inspectors dreamed of questioning his statement, extraordinary as it was.

Murillo and Lucas both got theirs 6 months later, murdered in Madrid, presumably by Garcia's organization.

McMurdo's Camp