



His Last Bow

Adventure XLIII – The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot

Publishing History

43 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, December, 1910 *The Strand Magazine (US)*, January & February, 1911

Part of *His Last Bow* collection by

John Murray, London, 1917

George H. Doran, New York, 1917

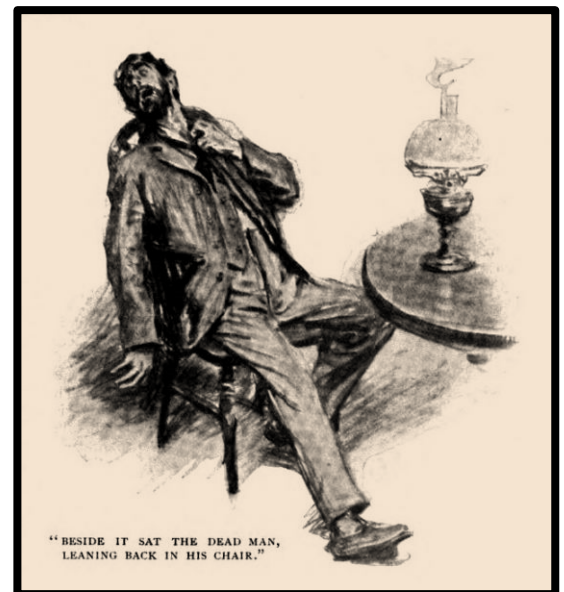
British illustrator – Gilbert Holiday

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Tuesday, March 16 to Saturday, March 20, 1897 making it 43rd of the 60. This means that Holmes is 43 and Watson 45.

Christopher Morley Says

“In some moods Holmes believed this story of the Cornish Horror the strangest case he ever handled. It happened when he and Watson were vacationing in the unusual landscape of Cornwall. In their investigation both were nearly overcome by the strange effects of the West African drug, *radix pedis diaboli* or the devil’s foot root.”



Dummies Short Summary

“When an entire family is driven insane, the village priest is sure that it’s the work of the devil. Sherlock Holmes isn’t so sure.”

How Many Words

At 10,055 words DEVI has the 52th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 is NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 23 classified as a MURDER where the perpetrator was either killed, arrested, or otherwise satisfactorily handled. And one of 4 where Holmes let the perpetrator go free. The others were ABBE, BOSC, and VEIL.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle named it #9 on his list of 12 favorites.
- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #12 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 15th of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 12th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1897)

- Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.
- Uprising on India's Northwest Frontier.
- First Women's Institute in the world; established at Stoney Creek, Canada.
- Sir Henry Tate presents the Tate Gallery to the nation.
- Employers' Liability Act: responsibility for injuries to and compensation of employees injured at work.
- Royal Automobile Club, London.
- Trained nurses only to be employed in hospitals.
- Dreyfus affair.
- Universal suffrage introduced in Austria.
- H.G. Wells publishes *The Invisible Man*.
- Roistand publishes *Cyrano de Bergerac*.
- Paul Dukas debuts *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.
- Gauguin paints *Girls Bathing in Tahiti*.

- Aspirin marketed.
- 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.
- Beginning of Monotype system of typesetting.
- S.A. Andre is killed attempting to explore the polar regions in a free-flying balloon.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Living arrangements not stated in the story. The two are probably not together at 221B. (Holmes telegraphed Watson) Holmes certainly is still at 221B.

Dramatis Personae

- **Mr. Roundhay**, vicar at Tredannick Wollas parish, Cornwall.
- **Mortimer Tregennis**, a boarder at the vicarage.
- **Owen Tregennis**, brother to Mortimer
- **George Tregennis**, another brother
- **Brenda Tregennis**, a sister and secret lover of...
- **Dr. Leon Sterndale**, noted African explorer.
- **Dr. Moore Agar**, prominent Harley Street physician who prescribed a complete rest for Holmes.
- **Dr. Richards**, local medical practitioner of Tredannick Wollas.
- **Mrs. Porter**, maid to the Tregennis household.
- **Helston**, a lunatic asylum where Owen and George were taken.

Quotable Sherlock

- "The Cornish horror – Strangest case I have handled."
- "I fear that if the matter is beyond humanity it is certainly beyond me. Yet we must exhaust all natural explanations before we fall back upon a theory as this."
- "I think, Watson, that I shall resume that course of tobacco-poisoning which you have so often so justly condemned."
- "To let the brain work without sufficient material is like racing an engine. It racks itself to pieces."

- “Let us get a firm grip of the very little we do know, so that when fresh facts arise we may be ready to fit them into their places.”
- (Sterndale) “You are very inquisitive, Mr. Holmes.” (Holmes) “It is my business.”
- “It is not for me, my dear Watson, to stand in the way of the official police force. I leave them all the evidence which I have found,”
- “Surely the clearest proof of it is that, knowing what I know, I have sent for you and not for the police.”
- “I have heard your reasons and regard them as unconvincing and inadequate. We will pass that.”
- An exchange between Holmes and Sterndale
Sterndale “How do you know that?”
Holmes “I followed you.”
Sterndale “I saw no one.”
Holmes “That is what you may expect to see when I follow you.”
- “Some fumes which are not poisonous would be a welcome change.”
- “I have never loved, Watson, but if I did and the woman I loved had met such an end, I might have done as our lawless lion-hunter has done.”

Holmes’ Fee

No mention. Sterndale was the only survivor, so Holmes probably didn’t get a shilling

Unrecorded Cases

Watson thought was worthy to give to his readers.

- Dr. Moore Agar, whose dramatic introduction to Holmes I may someday account.

SHERLOCK HOLMES ON THE BIG AND THE LITTLE SCREEN

- 1921 *The Devil’s Foot* with Eille Norwood in one of his 47 movies. This is one of them that are available to the public.
- 1965 *The Devil’s Foot* with Douglas Wilmer as an episode in his *Sherlock Holmes* TV series
- 1888 *The Devil’s Foot* with Jeremy Brett as one of 43 *Sherlock Holmes* episodes.

Fainting In The Canon

In this tale, Mrs. Porter actually faints. And, as for the doctor responding to the Tregennis, “I could not stand it, and the doctor was as white as a sheet. Indeed, he fell into a chair in a sort of faint, and we nearly had him on our hands as well.”

Annotated Sherlock

- **“ramping”** jumping up and down
- **“nitsky”** next to nothing
- **“Nihilist”** member of the Russian revolutionary party professing extreme anti-social
- principals and destruction of political institutions
- **“Furies”** three Greek goddesses who used secret strings to punish the crimes of those who escaped public justice

Weapons

Just 2 weapons but one is the title of the story0

- **Revolver** - Which Dr. Leonard Sterndale used to cover Mortimer Tregennis while preparing to submit the latter to the deadly Devil’s Foot Root.
- **Devil’s Foot Root (Radix Pedis Diabole)** - An extremely poisonous alkaloid from Africa, which Mortimer Tregennis used to murder his sister (while driving his two brothers mad); which Leon Sterndale, erstwhile lover of Miss Tregennis, used to gain revenge upon Tregennis; and which Holmes very nearly succeeded in poisoning both himself and Watson during an experiment.

Frank Mentzel