



## His Last Bow

### Adventure XLV – The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax

#### Publishing History

# 45 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, December, 1911

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Part of *His Last Bow* collection by

John Murray, London, 1917

George H. Doran, New York, 1927

British illustrator – Alec Ball

U.S. ILLUS – Frederick Dorr Steele

#### Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Tuesday, July 1 to Friday, July 18, 1902 making it 52<sup>nd</sup> of the 60. This means that Holmes is 48 and Watson 50.



#### Christopher Morley Says

“When Holmes telegraphed Watson asking for a description of the Rev. Dr. Shlessinger’s left ear, Watson thought it an ill-times jest. But as usual Holmes had his reasons. A gruesome and excellent story, and with an unexpected suggestion of romance: when Holmes deduces that Watson had a companion in the cab, it is not the first suggestion that the doctor is courting a second Mrs. Watson.”

## **Dummies Short Summary**

"One of the most dangerous classes in the world", says Holmes, "is the drifting and friendless woman. She is the inevitable inciter of crime in others." So it was with Lady Frances Carfax.

## **How Many Words**

At 7,740 words LADY has the 25<sup>th</sup> most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

## **Classifying This Case**

This case is one of 3 classified as a disappearance by abduction. In this case, the abductors escaped. The other 2 were PRIO and SOLI.

## **The Best Of Sherlock Holmes**

- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #3 on their worst list.
- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 36th of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 36th of the 56 short stories.

## **What Else Happened That Year (1902)**

- Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.
- Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.
- Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.
- Anglo-Japanese Treaty, for mutual defense and to maintain status quo in Far East.
- Institution of the Order of Merit for distinguished service to the state; limited to 24 holders at one time.
- Esperanto introduced to England.
- Establishment of Metropolitan Water Board, supplying London.
- Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.
- Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.
- Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) renewed to 1914.
- Italian designs on Tripoli conditionally approved by France and Austria.
- Russo-Japanese Convention, Russia agrees to evacuate Manchuria in 18 months.
- French work day reduced to 9 1/2 hours.
- White settlement of Kenya begins.
- St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.

- F.A. Krupp takes over Germania shipbuilding yard at Kiel; great armaments firm develops.
- Conan Doyle publishes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
- Kipling publishes *Just So Stories*.
- Arthur Edward Woodley Mason publishes *The Four Feathers*.
- Beatrix Potter publishes *Peter Rabbit*.
- Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record--154 recordings in all.
- Picasso paints *Nude, Back View*.
- Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.
- Trans-Pacific Cable laid.
- Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

### **Holmes And Watson – Personal Information**

It really isn't stated, but the pair seems to be living at 221B.

### **Dramatis Personae**

- **Lady Frances Carfax**, the only surviving heir of...
- **Earl Of Rufton**, deceased. Father of Lady Frances
- **Miss Dobney**, formerly a governess and friend of Lady Frances
- **Marie Divine**, maid of Lady Frances.
- **Jules Vibrant**, a waiter at the Hotel National and engaged to Marie.
- **Mssr. Mosser**, manager of Hotel National.
- **Dr. Shlessinger**, aka **Holy Peters**, a fake clergyman who specializes in fleecing lonely women.
- **Mrs. Shlessinger aka Ms. Fraser**, his accomplice.
- **Hon. Philip Green**, former suitor of Lady Frances, recently returned from Barberton, South Africa.
- **Rose Spender**, a former maid of Mrs. Fraser who died and shared the coffin with Lady Frances.
- **Dr. Horsum**, tended Rose and pronounced her dead.
- **STIMPSON & CO.**, undertakers who made the special coffin.
- **BOVINGTON'S**, pawnbrokers where Peters pawned some of Lady Frances' jewelry.

## Quotable Sherlock

- "There is one correspondent who is a sure draw, Watson. That is the bank. Single ladies must live, and their passbooks are compressed diaries."
- "Besides, on general principles it is best that I should not leave the country. Scotland Yard feels lonely without me, and it causes an unhealthy excitement among the criminal classes."
- "All my instincts tell me that she is in London, but as I have no possible means of telling where, we can only take the obvious steps, eat our dinner, and possess our souls in patience."
- "When you follow two separate chains of thought, Watson, you will find some point of intersection which should approximate to the truth."
- "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just."
- "Should you care to add the case to your annals, my dear Watson," said Holmes that evening, "it can only be as an example of that temporary eclipse to which even the best-balanced mind may be exposed. Such slips are common to all mortals, and the greatest is he who can recognize and repair them."

## Holmes' Fee

No fee was stated in this story. We know that Lady Carfax's family was anxious, and as they were quite wealthy no sum would be spared to clear the matter up. Probably substantial, but by 1902, Holmes no longer needed any money.

## Disguises

In LADY we have Holmes disguised as a lady -- A French Ouvrier.

## Unrecorded Cases

- Abrahams who is in mortal terror for his life.

## Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

- 1923 *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax* with Eille Norwood was one of his 47 Sherlock Holmes movies. The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released
- 1965 *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax* with Douglas Wilmer was an episode in his *Sherlock Holmes* series.

- 1991 *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax* with Jeremy Brett was one of 43 episodes in his *Sherlock Holmes* series.

### **Fainting In The Canon**

Surprisingly, in this tale, no one faints, almost faints, pretends to faint, or even mentions fainting.

### **Annotated Sherlock**

- **“ouvrier”** French: Workman.
- **“Un sauvage – an véritable sauvage!”** A wild man, truly a wild man!

### **Weapons**

- **Chloroform** - Used by “Holy” Peters to drug Lady Frances Carfax.
- **Hands** - Of Philip Green, which he used to strangle Watson half to death.
- **Kidnapping** - Of Lady Frances Carfax by the notorious “Holy” Peters, in order to rob her of the very valuable jewels she kept with her.
- **Coffin** - Two-Layered, in the lower berth of which Holmes and Watson found Lady Frances Carfax, after she had been chloroformed by “Holy” Peters.

**Frank Mentzel**