



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure LV – The Adventure of the Three Gables

Mrs. Morton Maberley, whose late husband had been a client of Holmes, was puzzled by an unexpected offer from an anonymous person to buy her home, The Three Gables, at the highest price she could name. The catch was that the offer included everything in the house, with the possible exception of her clothing and jewelry. The furniture, the pictures... even her Crown Derby tea-set were all included as a condition of the purchase. Remembering that Holmes had helped her husband, she turned to the Master Detective for guidance.

Holmes decided to take up the matter after a sudden incursion into the rooms at 221B Baker Street by a professional pugilist named Steve Dixie, who warned Holmes to keep away from The Three Gables under penalty of physical harm. That very day Holmes and Watson visited Mrs. Maberley at her home and determined that there was something which the house contained that was wanted very badly by whoever had hired Dixie, an “enforcer” for the Spencer John gang, to try to scare Holmes off. Holmes advised Mrs. Maberley to make a strict accounting of the contents of her home, and said he would return upon the morrow to look further into the situation.

By the next day, however, Mrs. Maberley had been chloroformed into unconsciousness during the night and the house had been rifled by burglars. The only thing missing was the bulk of a manuscript written by her son Douglas, who had died only a month earlier.



One page of the manuscript was inadvertently left behind by the burglars, and furnished Holmes with a clue that might lead him to the person behind this strange sequence of events.

I have never read the excerpt of Douglas Maberley's manuscript contained in this story without saying a silent prayer of gratitude that Isadora Klein had the good taste to burn the rest of it. Could it be that Doyle was having a little joke at the expense of the tabloids of the day such as the Family Herald (THOR) when he wrote that tommyrot? Was Isadora Klein really afraid that the unintended comical undertones in the narrative would make her not the talk, but rather the laughing-stock of British society?

Watson writes, "I don't think that any of my adventures with Mr. Sherlock Holmes opened quite so abruptly, or so dramatically, as that which I associate with The Three Gables." Surely, he hadn't forgotten the violent appearance of Dr. Grimesby Roylott in the doorway of 221B in SPEC? What do the Hounds think? Were there any adventures besides these in which the story opens abruptly and/or dramatically?

Holmes said to the wheezy Susan Stockdale, "Good-bye, Susan. Paregoric is the stuff..." Paregoric is a camphorated tincture of opium, used in Victorian times for relief of diarrhea and intestinal pain. Would it also have been helpful in treating asthma, emphysema, or any complaint which causes the sufferer to wheeze loudly?

Isadora Klein told Holmes that Barney and Susan Stockdale were the only persons who knew of her involvement in this matter. If the Stockdales (and Steve Dixie, for that matter) were members of the Spencer John gang, how was it that the Stockdales knew Isadora Klein's role in the Maberley affair, but Spencer John didn't? Who was "Spencer John"? Was he a would-be Moriarty? Was "Spencer John" the criminal pseudonym of Isadora Klein?

Finally, Frau Klein described Douglas Maberley as "a penniless commoner." It's not as though she were averse to marriage to a younger man, for she was engaged to the young Duke of Lomond. She was wealthy due to her inheritance from the German Sugar King (Sugar Daddy?). Was she only interested in a title, a place in the peerage?

Steve Clarkson

May 07, 1999