

**NAXOS**  
AudioBooks

CLASSIC  
FICTION

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
**The Return of  
Sherlock Holmes III**

The Adventure of Black Peter and other stories

Read by **David Timson**



NA434612D

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<b>1</b>	<b>The Adventure of Black Peter</b>	4:10
<b>2</b>	Our visitor was an exceedingly alert man...	3:56
<b>3</b>	'You must have read in the account...'	4:25
<b>4</b>	The young inspector winced...	6:08
<b>5</b>	Alighting at the small wayside station...	4:08
<b>6</b>	It was past eleven o'clock...	3:55
<b>7</b>	The man pulled himself together...	6:01
<b>8</b>	'Well, Watson, what do you think of it?'	5:03
<b>9</b>	There had been some talking in gruff voices...	4:17
<b>10</b>	'It's soon told...'	3:51
<b>11</b>	'Now I'll tell you the queerest part...'	4:13
<b>12</b>	<b>The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez</b>	3:53
<b>13</b>	When the light of the hall lamp...	4:43
<b>14</b>	'Now I will give you the evidence of Susan Tarlton...'	3:44
<b>15</b>	He unfolded the rough chart...	4:13
<b>16</b>	Sherlock Holmes took the glasses...	4:40
<b>17</b>	The gale had blown itself out next day...	4:32
<b>18</b>	'Now we are making a little progress.'	4:22
<b>19</b>	Holmes was pacing up and down...	3:58
<b>20</b>	Holmes was curiously distrait...	3:48
<b>21</b>	The old man had just finished his lunch...	4:49
<b>22</b>	I saw the old man throw up his arms...	4:47

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23	The old man reached out a trembling hand...	4:59
24	She tore from the bosom of her dress...	4:04
25	<b>The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter</b>	4:07
26	My friend had listened with amused surprise...	5:54
27	Sherlock Holmes was a past-master...	4:24
28	There were a number of letters...	4:40
29	There was a telegraph-office...	4:20
30	It was already dark...	4:04
31	Holmes replaced the bill in his notebook.	3:51
32	'Could you not follow it?'	6:38
33	I was horrified by my first glimpse of Holmes...	4:08
34	There could be no doubt...	3:44
35	Dr Armstrong took a quick step forward...	3:11
36	<b>The Adventure of the Abbey Grange</b>	4:12
37	A drive of a couple of miles...	4:54
38	At last she continued...	5:11
39	The keen interest had passed...	4:12
40	Holmes was down on his knees...	5:21
41	During our return journey...	5:21
42	The household at the Abbey Grange...	4:06
43	She was an interesting person...	4:25
44	Holmes's card sent in to the manager...	2:37

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45	Before evening, we had a visit...	3:55
46	There was a sound upon the stairs...	4:06
47	'Well, I never thought to see her again...'	6:51
48	<b>The Adventure of the Second Stain</b>	4:43
49	'That can be done in a very few words...'	4:21
50	Sherlock Holmes rose with a smile.	4:34
51	Holmes shook his head mournfully.	3:19
52	When our illustrious visitors had departed...	5:09
53	Mrs Hudson had appeared with a lady's card...	4:05
54	'One more question, Mr Holmes.'	3:05
55	All that day and the next...	5:32
56	'What do you think of that, Holmes?'	4:03
57	'What is it, then?'	4:09
58	The big constable, very hot and penitent...	4:28
59	When we arrived at the residence...	4:12
60	The butler had hardly closed the door...	4:06
61	'What happened there, madam?'	3:02
62	The Prime Minister's manner was subdued...	4:24

**Total time: 4:34:36**

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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

## The Return of Sherlock Holmes III

With *The Adventure of the Second Stain*, included in this selection, Doyle's reluctant return to 221b Baker Street drew to a close, he hoped for ever. Having succumbed to the public demand for his most famous creation, by bringing Sherlock Holmes back from beyond the grave, Doyle went on to prove that he had lost none of his powers when it came to creating a story full of suspense and mystery. There are thirteen stories in this series, first published in *'The Strand'* magazine between 1903 and 1904, and published in book-form in 1905 as *'The Return of Sherlock Holmes'*.

But *had* the original Sherlock Holmes returned? In this set of stories he is unpredictable, and given to signs of emotion and strain. Doyle seems to dwell on the weaknesses of his detective, perhaps to deter his adoring public from wanting yet more. Thus Holmes' ambiguous attitude to the 'powerful and wealthy' is referred to by Watson in *The Adventure of Black Peter* – yet we have seen him happily pocket a cheque for £6,000 from the Duke of Holderness in *The Adventure of the Priory*

*School*. Is this hypocrisy? Or just Doyle reminding us, through the voice of Watson, that Holmes *can* be practical when it comes to fees, but is essentially a bohemian, and 'like all great artists, lived for his art's sake'. Likewise, Watson refers in *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*, to Holmes's 'sleeping fiend' of cocaine addiction; the dark streak that runs beneath all these stories, reminding us that Holmes is unconventional, unpredictable, and dangerous. At times he even defies the law he works to uphold: 'Once or twice in my career I feel that I have done more real harm by my discovery of the criminal than ever he had done by his crime,' Holmes says in *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange*, 'I have learned caution now, and I had rather play tricks with the law of England than with my own conscience.' So, listening to his conscience, he allows the criminal in that story to walk away.

Would the public turn against their hero if Doyle showed them Holmes had feet of clay? The change was not unnoticed. Doyle gleefully reported in an article for *'The*

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*Strand'* that a Cornish fisherman had remarked to him that 'when Mr Holmes had that fall he may not have been killed, but he was certainly injured, for he was never the same afterwards.'

### **THE ADVENTURE OF BLACK PETER**

In this story of an old sea-salt murdered with his own harpoon, Doyle draws upon his youthful experiences aboard an Arctic whaling ship. In 1880, whilst still a medical student, he had signed up to join the whaler *Hope* as ship's surgeon, bound on a seven-month voyage into the Arctic. He didn't do much in the way of surgery, but he enjoyed to the full the rough-and-tumble life of a whaler: boxing in the evenings, learning to harpoon and telling tales to the ship's crew. The experience stayed with him for the rest of his life and the haunting world of the frozen wastes of the Arctic contributes to the atmosphere in *Black Peter*. The convincing portrait of the hard-bitten whaler, Patrick Cairns, must have come from life.

But what became of Cairns? Watson fails to tell us whether he was found guilty of murder. Cairns insists it was a just killing, self-defence, though he could not deny the charge of blackmail if it were pressed

against him. It is uncharacteristic on Doyle's part for the reader not to be told the outcome of a case.

We are also introduced for the first time to Holmes's protégé, Inspector Stanley Hopkins. Never one to have a high opinion of the official police force, Holmes nevertheless gives a great deal of time to this young man; he appears in no less than three cases in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. Perhaps to Holmes, he is the son he never had; and maybe Doyle wants to show that Holmes, far from being a machine, has a human side after all, and wants to pass on his accumulated knowledge to the next generation. Holmes is a severe teacher, however, not averse to ticking Hopkins off if he disappoints:

*Hopkins:* 'There were no footmarks.'

*Holmes:* 'My good Hopkins, I have investigated many crimes, but I have never yet seen one which was committed by a flying creature.'

The story also ends curiously with Holmes's enigmatic reference to Watson and he being in Norway – is this perhaps a joke, as Norway was one of the main starting points for whaling trips into the

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Arctic Circle? Or is Holmes anticipating that the King of Scandinavia will soon have another delicate case for him to handle, as he did at the time of *The Adventure of the Final Problem* ?

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE GOLDEN PINCE-NEZ**

This case occurred during one of the busiest periods of Holmes's career. He was at the height of his fame, and Watson has barely had time to jot down notes on the stream of cases that came to Baker Street. What wouldn't the literary world give to have Watson's account of the case of 'the red leech and terrible death of Crosby the banker'; or to know just what exactly the Ancient British barrow contained; or the capture of Huret, the Boulevard assassin – an event so momentous that Holmes was given la Légion d'honneur by the French President. But, alas, we are destined merely to be tantalised by Watson's list (referred to in this and other stories) that will now never be written or read.

In this story, as in many others, we notice just how commonplace smoking in public places was a century ago, though we should remember that the Victorians did segregate smokers from non-smokers in

public houses, with separate bars. No man who wished to be considered a gentleman would smoke in the presence of ladies, but in male company, it was almost obligatory. Doyle himself was a heavy smoker, particularly when writing, and Holmes and Watson followed suit. The atmosphere at 221b must have been heady. If Holmes was not smoking his famous pipe, he would be indulging in cigarettes, though not perhaps to the extent he does in this story to prove a point. In addition to pipe and cigarettes, Holmes was also an inveterate cigar smoker, writing famously a monograph *Upon the distinction between the Ashes of the various Tobaccos*.

In the 1890s sinister Russian 'reformers, revolutionists, nihilists', like Professor Coram and his wife Anna in this story, were beginning to appear in London life. After the assassination of the liberal Czar Alexander II in 1881, and the subsequent reactionary policies of the next Czar, Alexander III, pockets of discontented groups were on the increase in Russia, and the Czar's forces were rigorous in rooting them out, driving many to set up headquarters abroad. Lenin, for instance, based himself in Zurich, whilst others fled to London, which led to much resentment

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among the local population against these 'aliens' or 'anarchists'. These political refugees were blamed for an increase in crime; this prejudice seemed justified when in 1910, three policemen were murdered in Houndsditch, by supposed Latvian separatists. This sensation led to the Siege of Sidney Street in 1911 at which the young Stalin was alleged to have been present. One commentator at the time said the murderers were 'socialists of the very worse type, men who did not acknowledge God or anything.' Against this colourful background of political refugees with whom he would have had a great deal of sympathy, Doyle sets his story.

### **THE ADVENTURE OF THE MISSING THREE-QUARTER**

Watson, who refers in *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* to his experiences as a rugby player, seems to have forgotten his former prowess in this story. Any former player would surely understand the game's terminology used in the telegram; yet he describes it as 'enigmatic' and fails also to recognise the name of its sender, Overton, a well-known player. Likewise, he confesses to having lost touch with the medical profession, not recognising the name of

Dr Leslie Armstrong, whom he subsequently discovers to be a leading member of his profession. Maybe this is why in *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*, he is reading a book on surgery in an attempt to keep up to date. Since Holmes had bought out Watson's practice after his return in 1894, Watson had become so much a part of the investigative team, that these lapses are perhaps brought about by his having to devote all his time to writing up the case-notes of the busiest period in their joint career, as well as keeping an eye on Holmes's cocaine habit!

Doyle himself was an inveterate sportsman all his life – he tried his hand at everything: football, golf, bowls, skiing, billiards, boxing; but his favourite game was cricket, and once he gained the distinction of bowling out the great W.G. Grace.

Set in Cambridge, this story again raises the question as to which university Holmes attended. He seems to be unfamiliar with the East Anglian countryside, and his reference to Cambridge being 'an inhospitable town' is often cited as proof that he must therefore have studied at Oxford – but we know from *The Adventure of the Gloria Scott* that his student days were not happy or sociable: '...always



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rather fond of moping in my rooms,' he reflected. The debate continues...

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE ABBEY GRANGE**

Once again Doyle shows us a less attractive side of Holmes in this story, as Watson is subjected to a bout of literary criticism from his colleague concerning the way he presents his cases. One can hardly blame Watson for responding with a bitter, 'why do you not write them yourself?' Holmes's attack is undoubtedly a thinly-veiled cry of irritation from Doyle himself at having to turn out these potboilers instead of his (as he felt) more important literary output. Holmes vetoed any more stories from Watson's pen until after his retirement; a day no doubt Doyle longed for! Under these terms, *The Adventure of the Second Stain* was not published until ten years after the events it depicts, when Holmes was keeping bees on the Sussex Downs!

At the crux of this story is the deeply unhappy marriage between Sir Eustace Brackenstall and his Australian wife, Mary Fraser. Doyle wished to highlight the unfair divorce laws then existing in England. In 1909, as President of the Divorce Law Reform Union, he fought a campaign to

give women greater equality in divorce settlements, though, conversely, he by no means supported women's emancipation, nor did he necessarily agree with divorce as a solution to domestic problems. Whilst writing this collection of stories, Doyle became involved platonically with a young woman, Jean Leckie, yet he never contemplated divorcing his invalid wife, Louisa, for his new love. It would have been most uncharacteristic for him to give up on any difficult situation he was in, however much it meant sacrificing his own interests and desires.

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE SECOND STAIN**

Who was the real Lord Bellinger? Watson, with his usual impeccable discretion when it comes to matters of state secrecy, has surely camouflaged his true identity. But he must surely be the greatest Prime Minister of the late Victorian period – William Ewart Gladstone – 'Austere, high-nosed, eagle-eyed and dominant'. Paget's drawing in the original publication in *The Strand* magazine certainly suggests Gladstone. In 1894, the time of this scandal, he was in office for the fourth time, and was indeed the Grand Old Man of politics. He would have been 85. This same year, Gladstone resigned because

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of ill-health – and if he was ‘Bellinger’, maybe its cause was the stress produced by this case!

On two other occasions in the Sherlock Holmes stories precious objects are left lying carelessly about. In the *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*, young Percy Phelps leaves top secret documents open on his desk while getting a cup of coffee; whilst Mr Alexander Holder kept the precious Beryl Coronet unguarded in his bedroom! Is Doyle being openly critical of the endemic incompetence of the government?

Doyle had had a rough ride in the world of politics. He had stood in the post-Boer War ‘Khaki’ election of 1900, in Edinburgh, as a Liberal Unionist. He was eager to test himself, as usual, to the full in this new sphere, to go beyond his achievements in literature, and to have lived ‘a full and varied and perhaps useful life...and done my duty as a citizen’. During his election campaign he gave as many as ten speeches a day, but vigour alone would not get him elected. His refusal to indulge in dirty tricks, like the other parties, left him exposed to being constantly heckled and jokingly referred to as ‘Sherlock Holmes’. Finally, a smear campaign calling him ‘a Papist conspirator’ began on polling day and no doubt did him untold damage. Doyle lost

the election by 500 votes. It left him disgusted with whole party political machine: ‘a mud bath,’ he called it, ‘– helpful, but messy’. This disillusion may well have contributed to his picture of inefficiency in high-office as depicted in this story and *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*.

Doyle reflects in this story the growing anti-German feeling in Britain, long before it found expression in World War I. The ‘foreign potentate’ alluded to by Lord Bellinger is undoubtedly Kaiser Wilhelm II. German products were beginning to flood across the channel, threatening British trade. Germany in the early 1900s recognised the military possibilities of the aeroplane, and was increasing its navy to twice its size, in deliberate competition with the British. The unstable temperament of the Kaiser meant it was only a matter of time before there was conflict. Doyle reflects this uneasy state of affairs in this prototype spy story, that was to become a popular genre when conflict did materialise in 1914.

**Notes by David Timson**

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## The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

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**Music programming Sarah Butcher**

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

# The Return of Sherlock Holmes III

The Adventure of Black Peter • The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez  
The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter  
The Adventure of the Abbey Grange • The Adventure of the Second Stain

Read by **David Timson**

Once again Doyle presents a series of cases which baffle the police, but are no match for Sherlock Holmes and his trusty companion Dr Watson. In *The Adventure of Black Peter*, the peace of rural Sussex is disturbed by the discovery of a seafarer's body pinned to the wall of his hut with a harpoon. In the *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez* a young man is found dead clutching a pair of spectacles – yet he had perfect sight. Who is the short-sighted murderer? In the *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter* Holmes takes on a novel case when a rugby player goes missing the day before a major university match. A woman tied to a chair; her husband clubbed to death with a poker, a case of robbery with violence? But all is not what it seems in the case of the *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange*. The series ends with the *The Adventure of the Second Stain*, where a top secret document that could lead Britain into war goes missing. Holmes is put to the test to save his country as well as his reputation.



**David Timson** has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of the Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed for Naxos four plays of Shakespeare, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He also read *The Return of Sherlock Holmes I* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes II* for Naxos AudioBooks.

CD ISBN:

978-962-634-346-x

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Produced by Nicolaas Spaames  
Recorded at RIBI Talking Book Studios by Clare Winter  
Edited by Sarah Butcher. Cover picture: Hennesht Allies

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Total time  
4:34:36