

NAXOS

AudioBooks

COMPLETE  
CLASSICS  
UNABRIDGED

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

# THE COMPLETE CASEBOOK OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Read by **David Timson**



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## CD 1

### **The Casebook of Sherlock Homes – Volume I**

<b>1</b>	<b>The Problem of Thor Bridge</b>	5:59
2	The letter which he handed me...	7:04
3	'Well! Well!' said Holmes...	6:02
4	Our visitor made a noisy exit...	6:47
5	'It is only for the young lady's sake...'	5:18
6	There was some delay in the official pass...	6:01
7	Suddenly he sprang up again....	6:08
8	We were compelled to spend the night at Winchester...	4:52
9	'I went down as I had promised...'	4:45
10	It was not a long journey from Winchester to Thor Place...	5:35
11	Late that evening, as we sat together...	3:20
<b>12</b>	<b>The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone</b>	6:46
13	Watson's honest face was twitching with anxiety.	5:14

**Total time on CD 1: 73:59**

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## CD 2

1	It was therefore an empty room...	6:25
2	The Count looked sharply at his companion.	4:29
3	Billy had appeared in answer to a ring.	3:34
4	Holmes withdrew, picking up his violin from the corner...	7:04
5	The Count gave a gesture of resignation.	7:22
6	<b>The Adventure of the Creeping Man</b>	6:12
7	There was a quick step on the stairs...	6:11
8	Mr Bennett drew a little diary book from his pocket...	4:57
9	What Sherlock Holmes was about to suggest...	5:18
10	Monday morning found us on our way...	6:30
11	Mr. Bennett pushed his way through some shrubs...	6:37
12	I saw nothing of my friend for the next few days...	6:45
13	And then in a moment it happened!	7:05

**Total time on CD 2: 78:37**

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### CD 3

<b>1</b>	<b>The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire</b>	5:36
<b>2</b>	He handed the letter across.	6:08
<b>3</b>	Promptly at ten o'clock next morning...	7:48
<b>4</b>	It was evening of a dull foggy November day...	5:05
<b>5</b>	On the bed a woman was lying...	6:01
<b>6</b>	He took her aside and spoke earnestly for a few minutes.	4:20
<b>7</b>	'Let me tell you then the train of reasoning...'	5:06
<b>8</b>	<b>The Adventure of the Three Garridebs</b>	6:13
<b>9</b>	Our visitor's angry face gradually cleared.	7:23
<b>10</b>	It was twilight of a lovely spring evening...	5:41
<b>11</b>	'I merely called to make your acquaintance...'	4:48
<b>12</b>	I noticed that my friend's face cleared...	3:31

**Total time on CD 3: 67:46**

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## CD 4

1	Holmes was up and out early...	5:51
2	That hour was not long in striking.	7:11
3	<b>The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier</b>	7:15
4	Mr. James M. Dodd appeared to be the sort of person...	5:31
5	'It was a large, bare room on the ground floor...'	5:50
6	'Next day I found the colonel rather more conciliatory...'	3:53
7	'I was hesitating as to what I should do...'	4:34
8	As we drove to Euston...	6:06
9	At the end of that time we passed down the garden path...	7:11
10	Colonel Emsworth pointed to me.	7:42

**Total time on CD 4: 61:10**

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## CD 5

### **The Casebook of Sherlock Homes – Volume II**

<b>1</b>	<b>The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger</b>	7:16
<b>2</b>	Our visitor had no sooner waddled out of the...	8:04
<b>3</b>	When our hansom deposited us at the house...	7:49
<b>4</b>	'It was a pitch-dark night when my husband...'	6:36
<b>5</b>	<b>The Adventure of the Illustrious Client</b>	6:53
<b>6</b>	Our visitor was greatly disturbed.	6:05
<b>7</b>	When our visitor had left us...	8:14
<b>8</b>	'So there you are Watson. You are up to date...'	7:51
<b>9</b>	I did not see Holmes again until the following...	7:43
<b>10</b>	And it did. Their blow fell...	6:03
<b>11</b>	On the seventh day the stitches were taken out...	6:50

**Total time on CD 5: 79:31**

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## CD 6

1	<b>The Adventure of the Illustrious Client</b> ( <i>cont.</i> ): He was standing...	7:37
2	And then! It was done in an instant...	8:32
3	<b>The Adventure of the Three Gables</b>	6:47
4	A short railway journey and a shorter drive...	7:51
5	'But what do they want?'	8:19
6	We found the Three Gables a very different...	7:32
7	We had taken a cab and were speeding to some...	6:22
8	She broke into a ripple of laughter...	5:27
9	<b>The Adventure of the Retired Colourman</b>	4:26
10	It was late that evening before I returned.	5:45
11	'That is most satisfactory. What else did he...'	5:01
12	In the morning, I was up betimes...	5:49

**Total time on CD 6: 79:32**

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## CD 7

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|----|--|------|
| 1  | <b>The Adventure of the Retired Colourman</b><br>( <i>cont.</i> ): It was soon apparent... | 6:51 |
| 2  | Holmes led us along the passage...   | 8:46 |
| 3  | <b>The Adventure of the Lion's Mane</b>  | 6:27 |
| 4  | I was kneeling and Stackhurst standing by...   | 6:23 |
| 5  | Stackhurst was round in an hour or two...  | 6:03 |
| 6  | But the words were taken from his mouth...   | 5:28 |
| 7  | A week passed.   | 6:14 |
| 8  | He had gleaned along the same furrows as I had.  | 4:43 |
| 9  | My outer door was flung open...  | 5:34 |
| 10 | When we reached my study...  | 6:31 |
| 11 | <b>The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place</b>  | 4:41 |
| 12 | The door had opened...   | 7:06 |
| 13 | Holmes sat for some time lost in thought.  | 4:38 |

**Total time on CD 7: 79:34**

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## CD 8

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|----|---|------|
| 1  | <b>The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place</b><br>(cont.): 'When does this...' | 2:00 |
| 2  | Thus it was that on a bright May evening...                                 | 6:11 |
| 3  | In the morning Holmes discovered that we had...                             | 5:23 |
| 4  | When John Mason had left us...  | 5:05 |
| 5  | Sir Robert gave him a glance of contempt...                                 | 5:56 |
| 6  | <b>The Wonderful Toy</b> by David Timson                                    | 5:54 |
| 7  | Our friend, whose eyes had been twinkling...                                | 5:28 |
| 8  | I have often remarked that Holmes was a born...                             | 4:08 |
| 9  | Two weeks has elapsed...  | 7:07 |
| 10 | 'But surely this is a little far-fetched?'                                  | 5:45 |
| 11 | Before we left Baker Street...  | 7:45 |
| 12 | It was already past nine o'clock...   | 4:27 |
| 13 | Interesting as her performance was, however...                              | 4:37 |
| 14 | Whilst Mansfield sat in front of the mirror...                              | 3:14 |
| 15 | In the early hours of the morning...  | 5:52 |

**Total time on CD 8: 78:59**

**Total time on CDs 1–8: 9:59:08**

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**Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**  
**THE CASEBOOK OF**  
**SHERLOCK HOLMES**  
**VOLUME I**

To think of Sherlock Holmes, conjures up an image of a gas-lit room, filled with tobacco smoke from the sleuth's pipe, and the gentle clip-clop of a Hansom Cab passing outside beneath the grimy fog-ridden window of No. 221b Baker Street. A time caught in aspic, a sepia tinted image from the end of the nineteenth century.

It seems amazing therefore that a new series of Sherlock Holmes stories should have appeared as late as the 1920s. But despite the 1920s being the age of jazz and the flapper, where such items as telephones, electric light, electric bells, motor cars, and gramophones were becoming commonplace, the Holmes phenomenon showed no signs of diminishing. The stories, despite being

set for the most part in the early 1900s, were still as eagerly read as ever. Indeed, modern technology was encouraging Holmes's popularity. 'By 1921 the developing silent film industry already had 15 Sherlock Holmes adaptations on its shelves, including a full-length Hound of the Baskervilles. Between 1921 and 1927 Conan Doyle once again returned to his great creation for 12 more stories which were first published in *The Strand*, and then published collectively as *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* in 1927.

In these stories, Conan Doyle seems to be struggling to find a new narrative style. Nine are related by Watson as the reader would expect, but one is narrated in the third person, and two by Holmes himself. Watson is at pains in the opening narrative

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to *Thor Bridge* to explain the change: 'In some [cases] I was myself concerned and can speak as an eye-witness, while in others I was either not present or played so small a part that they could only be told as by a third person.'

The experiment of allowing Holmes to write up his own cases was not met with unmitigated delight by the reading public. Watson had his own admirers. *The Times* reviewer wrote: 'Why is Holmes the only proloner of his own life, the only survivor of his own biographer, the only personage privileged to be his creator's never-failing resource?'

Conan Doyle's struggle to ring the changes on what had become for him a tired formula reflected his personal literary journey: he was reluctant to write fiction at all by the 1920s in view of his commitment to spiritualism. He poured money into the furtherance of the spiritualist cause, which may well account for the appearance of these last twelve Sherlock Holmes stories. By the 1920s he was being paid £800 per story for the British rights alone, a dozen pot-boilers hurriedly dashed off would

result in considerably increased funds.

Indeed, some devoted followers have suggested that these stories are not by Conan Doyle at all, but mere pastiche by lesser hands, and certainly there is an inconsistency in the characterisation of Holmes, or had Conan Doyle reached the point with his creation of deliberately writing to shock his reading public? Perhaps he had realized that Holmes was immortal and however he chose to represent him the public would lap it up anyway.

## **THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE**

Conan Doyle knew this collection of stories would be the last, but he could not help dangling a carrot before his faithful readers and tantalising them with the contents of Watson's tin-box as described at the start of *Thor Bridge*.

Likewise, could Sherlock Holmes's public ever have had a surfeit of stories about their favourite detective as Watson feared in his opening narrative to this tale? 'A surfeit which might react upon

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the reputation of the man whom above all others I revere.' Watson wrote, and misjudged his readers. Conan Doyle no doubt chuckled as he mercilessly teased his public.

Cox and Co.'s Bank was destroyed by an air raid in World War 2. It is hoped that Watson's box was not among the casualties. If it was, it may account for the non-appearance of any more Watson cases, and the modern proliferation of those based on the titles he has left us.

This ingenious case may well be based on the writings of Hans Gross, a professor of criminology who published a book on criminal investigation in the 1890s. he was one of the founders of modern police science.

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE MAZARIN STONE**

Things certainly seem to have changed at Baker Street since Watson moved out to pursue his medical practice. A bow window seems to have been installed, of which no mention is made in any other story. Connecting doors between

bedrooms have been constructed too, and Holmes, displaying an uncharacteristic aptitude to move with the times, now has an electric bell and a gramophone, still a luxury item in the year in which this story is set, 1902. The 'gramophone' was not a player of cylinders, but flat discs and was invented by Emil Berliner in 1887. It was Berliner who first used the logo of the dog listening to a gramophone, popularly known as 'His Master's Voice.' As there is no recording listed of a solo violin version of the Barcarolle from *The Tales of Hoffman*, perhaps Holmes paid for a private recording of the piece as rendered by himself, indicative, along with the employment of the page Billy, of the success Holmes has made of the detective business.

The changes to the familiar Baker Street room may well be as a result of the stage-set designed and constructed for Conan Doyle's play *The Crown Diamond; or an evening with Sherlock Holmes*, which had had a modest success when produced in 1921. This story seems to have been based on the play. The fact that the whole case takes place in one setting

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(unique in the canon) supports this. It may also account for the very theatrical way in which Holmes behaves and speaks in this story. Never has Holmes been more manic or 'impish' than in the *Mazarin Stone*, and one feels that he might even have resorted once more to the 7% solution!

The diamond of the title is associated with the great French Cardinal Jules Mazarin (1602-1661) who was chief minister to the young Louis XIV. He exercised enormous political power and at his death bequeathed his jewels to the French Crown, including 18 diamonds, known as the 'Mazarin Diamonds'. Apparently none of them were apparently yellow as the one identified here!

Despite its idiosyncrasies, Lloyd George, the Liberal Prime Minister, considered *The Mazarin Stone* 'one of the best Sherlock Holmes stories I have read.'

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE CREEPING MAN**

The use of monkey-glands as related in this story to recapture lost youth may seem extreme, and a very 19th century idea,

but it also reminds us of the placebos, ointments and moistures advertised daily in the 21st century with similar claims to hold back the ageing process. Nevertheless, the perverted science of this story places it firmly in the era of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, with a tribute to Conan Doyle's great mentor Edgar Allan Poe's tale *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

Holmes seems by 1902, the year of this case, to have reconsidered his attitude towards dogs. Having poisoned one as an experiment in *A Study in Scarlet*; shot one in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and also in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* he here says that they are 'the mirror of the household' and plans to write a monogram on the subject.

Once again we are in an unidentified University town called Camford, just as it was in *The Missing Three-Quarter* a poorly veiled attempt by Watson to amalgamate features of both Oxford and Cambridge, and thus not offend presumably either institution or cast aspersions on dons at Holmes's old college, whichever one that was! For what it is worth Holmes does call 'Camford' – 'this charming town',

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whereas in *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*, which is definitely set in Cambridge, he refers to it as ‘this inhospitable town’, which might indicate that ‘Camford’ is really Oxford and that is Holmes’s *alma mater*.

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE SUSSEX VAMPIRE

Vampires were a source of endless fascination for the Victorians. The first fictional account was in *The Vampyre* (1816) by John Polidori, based on an idea of Byron’s.

In 1872, Sheridan Le Fanu had written *Carmilla* about a female vampire, but Bram Stoker’s epic *Dracula* was not published until a year after this case, and would have been unknown to Holmes. Conan Doyle would have known it however, writing in the 1920s and may have even seen the celebrated silent film *Nosferatu* loosely based on *Dracula* which was first shown in 1922.

Despite his own unshakeable belief in spiritualism, Doyle could not finally ‘grasp the nettle’ and convert Holmes, the great

rationalist, to the cause. In fact he goes out of his way to make Holmes in this story dismissive of anything that smatters of the occult. ‘This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain,’ says Holmes. ‘This world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply...’

But though Conan Doyle eschewed converting Holmes, he had no such qualms in converting his other popular literary creation, the sceptical Professor Challenger to an absolute believer in the psychic novel *The Land of Mist* in 1926. If it had had Holmes at its centre it would have guaranteed its success. As a result of Conan Doyle’s reticence to cheapen his greatest creation, the novel failed.

The unhealthy father/son relationship at the centre of this story is worthy to be referred as a test-case for Dr. Sigmund Freud, whose psychological examinations were contemporary with this story, c.1896. Would Freud have prescribed Holmes’s very practical solution to Jacky’s problems – ‘a year at sea’ – one wonders?

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## THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE GARRIDEBS

Watson roots this story very specifically in June 1902, when Sherlock Holmes was offered a knighthood for services rendered. Why did Holmes refuse it? Ever since *A Scandal in Bohemia*, when he was given a 'snuff-box of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid' by the King of Bohemia, Holmes had been the recipient of gifts from grateful clients in high places. From France, we learn in *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-nez* he had received the Order of the Legion of Honour – so why not an accolade from his own country? Alongside these tributes, there runs a counter current of anti-establishment attitudes on the part of Holmes. It was his obvious dislike of the Duke of Holderness's attitude towards him that led Holmes to sting him for an enormous £6,000 fee – the largest recorded by Watson. Did Holmes have socialist or radical tendencies? Or was it that he was such an independent spirit he could not be beholden to anyone – least of all the government of the day? It might

have been bad for business – Sir Sherlock Holmes on the brass plate outside the door of 221b Baker Street may well have deterred his less well-off clients from approaching him – and as the stories testify, that door was open to all walks of life. 'I play the game for the game's own sake,' he told his brother Mycroft in *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*, when an honour seemed a probability for his services. Instead, Holmes preferred to receive 'a remarkably fine emerald tie-pin' from his grateful monarch, rather than a tap on the shoulder.

Conan Doyle too was at first reluctant when offered a knighthood by the new king, Edward VII, in the same year as Holmes's invitation. Conan Doyle was convinced that it would compromise his position, as he saw it, as a free-lance guardian of the State. The knighthood was not in recognition of his creating Sherlock Holmes as the general public mostly believed, but for his expert analysis in print of the Boer War. In a pamphlet he had answered tricky questions convincingly, concerning the British use of concentration camps.

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The American geography connected to the background of Killer Evans is pure fiction on Conan Doyle's part, as elsewhere in the canon. Fort Dodge, for instance, is not in Kansas but Iowa.

The telephone, that essential component of modern society, features strongly in this story. Although invented as long ago as 1876, Holmes seems only to have acquired one at Baker Street with some reluctance. The police had relied on telephones since 1889, but Holmes always preferred to send telegrams. As late as 1895, in the *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans* he was still sending them. Maybe Doyle writing these stories in the 1920s, when telephones were becoming common household objects, decided it was time to bring Holmes's methods of communication up-to-date. He featured it again in *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman* and *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client*

The most moving part of this story, indeed one of the most touching moments in the whole canon, is Holmes's expression of his deep feelings for his old friend Watson when he is wounded

by Killer Evans. His anger and threat to kill his attacker is a completely believable reaction, despite reservations by some that it is not in Holmes's temperament to go so far in breaking the law. There are many other occasions in the stories when he is prepared to bend the law, if not actually break it. One wonders, however, with Nathan Garrideb, Holmes's client, suffering terminally from the shock of the experience, if Holmes ever received a fee for the case?

In the original story as published in *The Strand*, Killer Evans's accomplice is named as Presbury. Conan Doyle could be careless in his use of names: this is also the name of the Professor who features in *The Adventure of the Creeping Man*, a story also included in this collection. Conan Doyle corrected this repetition when the stories were published in book-form, changing 'Presbury' to 'Prescott'. Although the texts for these recordings are based on the original *Strand* texts, it seemed unnecessarily pedantic not to follow Conan Doyle's correction.

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## THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLANCHED SOLDIER

The soldier of the title, Godfrey Emsworth, is a casualty of the South African War, better known as the Boer War (1899–1902). This was a struggle between the Boers, who were Dutch settlers, and the British for dominion over the riches of the South African gold and diamond mines. The Boers led by their President Paul Kruger were not prepared to be pushed around by the British and demanded that British settlers should leave South Africa all together. Kruger presented an ultimatum in October 1899, which the British government defied. War was thus declared. The British with considerably larger numbers in their forces expected a short and decisive conflict, but their tactics were old-fashioned and unsuited to the rugged terrain of the Transvaal. The Boers, by contrast, knew their country and fought a guerrilla war, weakening the larger British force by surprise attacks. The British army found itself, as so often, in a conflict that was considerably more dangerous and protracted, than it had

bargained for. Lord Roberts, briefly referred to in this case, took over as commander-in-chief from Redvers Buller and turned an imminent British defeat into a victory.

Conan Doyle was eager to become actively involved in the war. Bluntly turned down as an able-bodied soldier, he found an opportunity to be near the action as an army doctor working in a privately-funded hospital unit being sent to the front. He arrived as the British took Bloemfontein. His hospital unit was overwhelmed with wounded, and those sick of disease, predominantly typhoid, who formed the majority. Typhoid is not leprosy, but the experience of seeing men debilitated and demoralized by disease may have been recalled when he was working on *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*. Doyle was determined to write a book about the war. On his return, the book duly appeared as an 'interim history' as the war was still in progress.

Watson, we are told begrudgingly by Holmes, has married again. We know that Mary Morstan whom Watson had met and married during the case of *The*

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*Sign of Four* had died some time between 1891 and 1894, for in *The Adventure of the Empty House* Watson mentions his 'sad bereavement.' But who is this mysterious new wife? Speculation is rife among Sherlockian scholars. There are many candidates in the stories themselves, for Watson was ever susceptible to a pretty face, a 'noble figure' or a queenly presence!

The absence of Watson from this story has prompted Holmes, for the first time, to write his own version of the account. As he freely confesses himself, he is no Watson when it comes to literary talent. An academic monograph on Cigars, or Lassus's motets, is child's play for him compared to constructing a convincing narrative. For instance, Holmes confuses the Duke of Greyminster with the Duke of Holderness at one point, who had featured in the case of *The Adventure of the Priory School* not the 'Abbey School'. This error could charitably be put down to his not keeping notes of his cases; that had always been Watson's job. But why, once persuaded to take up his pen, did he choose a case that shows so little of

his deductive powers, when the world was longing for, whether ready or not, his account of the Great Rat of Sumatra!

### **Notes by David Timson**

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**Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**  
THE CASEBOOK OF  
SHERLOCK HOLMES  
VOLUME I I

For the last decade-and-a-half of his life, Conan Doyle devoted himself heart and soul to the cause of spiritualism. He published more than twelve books on the subject, bemusing his readers, family and friends alike as to how the creator of such a rational fictional character as Sherlock Holmes could be deluded by this fake-science, and become the victim of charlatans and con-men.

In the year of his death, Conan Doyle gave an interview: 'I am rather tired of hearing myself described as the author of 'Sherlock Holmes'. Why not, for a change, the author of *Rodney Stone* or *The White Company* or *The Lost World*? One would think I had written nothing but detective stories.' He had, by the end of his life, decided that his greater purpose was to

preach the new religion of spiritualism; the writing of fiction was definitely the lesser calling. He was convinced that it was as a reformer and exponent of a great religion that he would be remembered by posterity.

'I consider spiritualism to be infinitely the most important thing in the world, and the particular thing which the human race in its present state of development needs more than anything else.'

The editor of *The Strand*, Greenhough Smith, ever reluctant to accept that there would be no more cases for Sherlock Holmes to solve, persistently asked Conan Doyle: 'More Holmes?' In reply he would

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say: 'I can only write what comes to me.' What came to him was an endless flow of words, both written and spoken, that furthered the spiritualist cause. His obsession cost him a peerage, and lost him many friends who couldn't square his beliefs with the man they thought they knew. When he publicly declared that he believed photographs of fairies, taken by two young girls in Cottingley, were genuine, many thought he had gone mad. The photographs were later proved fakes.

In *Search for Truth* by Harry Price, written in 1939, which contains a not uncritical account of Doyle's attraction to spiritualism, Price wryly observes: 'the spiritualists themselves have almost forgotten him, and have not even troubled to establish a memorial to his memory.'

Conan Doyle's zeal for the spiritualist cause exhausted and eventually killed him. The stubbornness he could occasionally show increased when illness finally caught up with him in 1929, and against his doctor's advice he continued to lecture and preach the doctrine of spiritualism without regard for his health.

In a moment of reflection on a

crowded life, Conan Doyle drew a cartoon of an old work-horse struggling to pull a cart piled high with his life's achievements. Under the sketch he wrote: 'The old horse has pulled a heavy load a long way.'

He died in July 1930, no doubt faithful to his belief that death was merely a gateway to eternal life. He was buried in his Sussex garden. On the headstone over the grave was an epitaph representing his life's creed: 'Steel true, blade straight.'

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE VEILED LODGER**

The world of the 19th-century circus is recalled in this case, a form of entertainment much changed since its heyday in the era of Holmes and Watson, when animal acts and freak shows were commonplace. 'Lord' George Sanger became a millionaire from his circus, which was still in existence in the 1950s. Sanger was the first to introduce lions into the ring, and created the three-ring circus copied by P.T. Barnum. Wombwell's Menagerie toured the kingdom, giving opportunities for people in remote parts

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of the country to see exotic animals at close quarters. Wombwell's wife met the same fate as 'Mrs. Ronder', but did not survive.

Suicide was still a crime in 1896, the probable year of this case, and Holmes shows his own strong feelings about the subject when he feels that Mrs. Ronder might be contemplating taking her own life. 'Your life is not your own' he tells her. Holmes has never really shown any strong religious conviction throughout the canon, so his response here is unusual. In *The Sign of Four*, Holmes had recommended that Watson should read *The Martyrdom of Man*, which he described as one of the most remarkable works ever written. It is against orthodox Christian thinking and talks of the death of the soul and the impossibility of immortality. Such convictions may well have contributed to Holmes's frequent bouts of depression and the attractions of the '7% solution'. Ten years later, however, we find that Holmes has had a conversion: 'The ways of fate,' he says in this case, 'are indeed hard to understand. If there is not some form of compensation hereafter, then the world is

a cruel jest.' It is one of many occasions in *The Casebook* where Conan Doyle shows Holmes's increasingly philosophical nature.

Watson tells us that by the time of Holmes's retirement in 1903, he had been twenty-three years in service, which, if one allows for the three years he disappeared after his supposed death at the Reichenbach falls, would give a date of 1877 as the beginning of Holmes's career as a detective.

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT**

In *The Sign of Four* Holmes had declared: 'Love is an emotional thing... opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things', and throughout the canon Holmes displays a disregard for, even an irritation with, the opposite sex, referring them to Watson as 'your department'. Yet he was not a misogynist. He showed sympathy to many a young woman who came to Baker Street with a distressing problem to be solved, and on one notable occasion was almost conquered by one

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of them – Irene Adler in *The Adventure of the Scandal in Bohemia*. Holmes does, however, seem unusually taken with Violet de Merville; she gets under his skin. ‘She is beautiful,’ he tells Watson, ‘but with the ethereal other-world beauty of some fanatic whose thoughts are set on high...’. In his middle-age, she is an ideal for him, though he is aware of the age difference: ‘I thought of her... as I would have thought of a daughter of my own.’

Violet is one of a veritable bloom of Violets that blossom throughout the canon, and Conan Doyle, in this, one of his last stories, could not shake off the charm and significance the name obviously had for him. The first was the capable Miss Violet Hunter in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*; the others were the elegant Miss Smith who was *The Solitary Cyclist*, and the unhappy Miss Westbury in *The Bruce-Partington Plans*.

Who is the Illustrious, but anonymous, Client? Possibly the former Prince of Wales, now, in the year of this case – 1902 – newly crowned as King Edward VII.

He may have been involved in earlier cases too: *The Adventure of the Beryl*

*Coronet* also has an anonymous client, and *if* he was the Lord Balmoral referred to in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, who had been gambling with the murdered Ronald Adair, he narrowly escaped being involved in a scandal himself. His motivation in *this* case seems obscure, apart from helping a pretty girl (which was probably motivation enough for King Edward).

Despite Damery covering the heraldic arms on the side of his coach with his overcoat, Watson is, with a mere glimpse, instantly able to recognise the client’s identity – another hint that it could indeed be the King himself.

Why is Watson living in Queen Anne Street? Is this evidence that Watson had married for a second time? He makes no mention of a wife, however, in this set of stories, and three months earlier in *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs* he was living in Baker Street. Some Sherlockian scholars have posed the idea that he had to move out and set up a practice once more to recover his gambling losses, which he refers to in a light-hearted way in *The Adventure of Shoscombe*

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*Old Place* (see notes). Also, with Holmes heading towards retirement, Watson may have had to look to his own financial future. We learn in *The Adventure of the Creeping Man* that Watson has a practice that is 'not inconsiderable', and a practice in Queen Anne Street, in the purlieu of Harley Street (the mecca of medical specialists), would indicate that by 1902 Watson was doing very well indeed. Good old Watson!

Is this case really the 'supreme moment of my friend's career', as Watson describes it? There are surely ones that involved more deduction and skill, and others that had more at stake. In *The Adventure of The Second Stain*, for instance, the ruin of a cabinet minister and the possibility of war are averted by Holmes; whilst in *The Bruce-Partington Plans* he foils foreign attempts to discover Britain's secret weapon, the submarine. In terms of reward, Holmes has had gifts from the King of Bohemia and Queen Victoria herself. Here he receives no gift, only an undisclosed fee from a grateful monarch. One hopes it was substantial enough to boost his income in retirement.

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE GABLES**

Every fan of the Sherlock Holmes stories today must shudder at the naked display of racism by Holmes when talking to the negro Steve Dixie. Was Conan Doyle striving in these last stories to destroy the idolatry that had developed around Holmes? It seems extreme to turn him into a racist, particularly when in *The Yellow Face* he had shown such sympathy for the young girl's mixed-race origins. The truth is that this story is showing its age. Most Englishmen of the Victorian period, the age of Empire, would have responded to Steve Dixie in a similar way. The white British male's belief in his superiority over the subdued races of the Empire was unquestioned. Holmes is a product of this prevailing 19th-century mood. If there is any mitigating circumstance, it is that Steve Dixie is an unpleasant and violent crook!

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE RETIRED COLOURMAN**

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Who is Barker? Holmes refers to him as his 'hated rival', yet he is not mentioned in any other case. It is evident that by the date of this case, 1898, there were detectives who were adopting Holmes's methods, and perhaps he no longer felt supreme in his field. Maybe that is why Holmes withdrew from the world of crime detection at such a comparatively early age.

The telephone features in this story, and had obviously been installed in Baker Street by this time. It quickly became an indispensable tool of Holmes's trade, as important to him as the telegram was in earlier stories.

This late story shows the closeness and sensitivity that has developed between the two old friends. Holmes can of course still hurl a sarcastic comment Watson's way: 'Cut out the poetry, Watson!'; but he also exerts great care to give Watson his due. 'You can thank Dr. Watson's observation for that... Another of Dr. Watson's bull's-eyes...'

There seems to be no actual singer of the period called 'Carina'. This is strange, as Conan Doyle's musical references

are, with this exception, genuine. It has been suggested (by Mr. A. Boucher) that 'Carina' (which means 'darling' in Italian) is Holmes's own pet-name for the singer, giving us a tantalising glimpse, however unlikely, into a possible love-affair which is never explored by the discreet Dr. Watson!

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE LION'S MANE**

Watson tells us that by the spring of 1897 'the constant hard work' was beginning to tell upon Holmes's iron constitution; six years later, after *The Adventure of the Creeping Man*, Holmes retired to a villa in Sussex, which provides the background to this case. Having survived his creator's attempt to kill him off prematurely in *The Adventure of the Final Problem*, and given the erratic attitude that Conan Doyle continued to have towards his greatest creation, it is a wonder Holmes reached retirement unscathed.

One hopes that the old housekeeper who looks after him is the indomitable Mrs. Hudson!

Holmes in his retirement, however, is

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a changed man. He has convinced himself that he has always had a longing for a life by the sea, but in an earlier case (*The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*), Watson noted that neither 'the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to him. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people.'

Holmes seems now to have become a lover of nature, and, more surprisingly – as he used to experiment on them (see *A Study in Scarlet*) – dogs! Though he describes himself as slow in solving this case, Holmes seems to have lost none of his old incisive powers of deduction, nor his weakness for a dramatic denouement. Finally, albeit in his more mature years, he has developed an appreciation of beautiful women: Violet de Merville as noted in *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client*; and Miss Maud Bellamy here. 'She would have graced any assembly in the world,' says Holmes.

Withdrawing from a life crowded with incident, Holmes is content instead to be merely an observer of society – the society in question being the ordered world of bees. He focuses on them all his skills

of analysis and deduction, which had so terrified the criminal fraternity. The result of his studies is *The Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen*. Holmes proudly calls it his *magnum opus*, though the world would probably have preferred the study of criminality that he once promised to write, which was to be called *The Whole Art of Detection*.

He may have escaped the bovine branch of the London police force, with whom he had to deal on so many occasions, but Sussex has its own breed in Inspector Bardle, whose observation that Holmes likes to do things thoroughly in an investigation prompts the acid reply: 'I should hardly be what I am if I did not.' Perhaps Holmes felt that his reputation was suffering because of the activities of a new breed of detective, such as Barker (*The Adventure of the Retired Colourman*), to whom he refers as his 'hated rival'.

If Holmes retired in 1903 then he was not yet fifty years old, and at the height of his powers. His statement that he had always longed for a country lifestyle whilst working in the heart of London

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doesn't quite ring true. He lived for his work, and referred to the countryside in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* as being the place where crime could be more easily committed! Why then such an early retirement? Was he now so wealthy that he could at last indulge his hitherto un-confessed passion for bees? Or was Holmes's retirement a blind to conceal his feverish activity in the Secret Service? In the years between his retirement (in 1903) and 1914, the tension between England and Germany grew to alarming proportions, and Holmes's sharp brain would have been invaluable to counter-espionage, as war inevitably approached. *His Last Bow* deals with just such a scenario.

## **THE ADVENTURE OF SHOSCOMBE OLD PLACE**

And so we come to the last Sherlock Holmes story Conan Doyle ever wrote. The last line is fitting as an unintentional tribute to Holmes in his retirement: '[A career which has] ended in an honoured old age.'

The duo, however, are in good form. Holmes displays his usual lack of respect for the idle rich: 'Sir Robert is a man of an honourable stock. But you do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles'; while Watson amusingly tugs his forelock, metaphorically, at the monstrous supposition that a nobleman like Sir Robert could be a cad.

Even in 1902, the year before his retirement, Holmes is still pushing back scientific boundaries and experimenting with 'a microscope' – a new tool, he admits, for him, in the fight against crime – along with the aforementioned telephone.

Was Watson a heavy gambler? To admit to spending half his wound pension on betting does seem excessive – or is it merely a heavy-handed joke? Watson's wound is variously described as being in the leg or the shoulder, so it is gratifying that the doctors were able to diagnose its exact location, making him eligible for a pension. If he was wounded twice, maybe the pension reflected this and gave him a comfortable income, or at least enough to be able to risk a flutter on the horses

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without too much financial inconvenience. Watson's pension was 11s 6d a day in 1881, the year of *A Study In Scarlet*, which is about £200 a year. Holmes did, however, keep Watson's cheque-book locked in a drawer during *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*. Was this to prevent him from gambling?

## **THE ADVENTURE OF THE WONDERFUL TOY**

No, Sherlockians, this is not an undiscovered Conan Doyle manuscript, but a pastiche – with perhaps just a hint of parody. This collection of stories marks the end of a 10-year project to record the complete Sherlock Holmes stories for Naxos Audiobooks, and I felt I wanted to pay homage to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, for whom (at least, as a writer of crime fiction) my admiration has grown with each succeeding year since I recorded the first selection of stories in 1997.

Conan Doyle wrote a preface to *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* in which he wrote that he hoped there was a 'fantastic limbo' where fictional characters could

continue their lives: 'Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla, Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated.'

The stage was filled: in the very year of the publication of *The Casebook* (1927), Agatha Christie enjoyed her first success with *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, and the torch – carried (unwillingly, perhaps) by Conan Doyle for so long – passed on to a new talent whose prolific output would secure detective fiction as a successful genre forever.

## **Notes by David Timson**

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**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 AudioBooks four Shakespeare plays, 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 reads *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes I, II, III, IV, V* and *VI* and *The Return of Sherlock Holmes I, II* and *III*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Sign of Four* and *The Valley of Fear*.

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The Adventure of the Retired Colourman, The Adventure of the Lion's Mane  
and The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place

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