



An Inquiry into:  
*“The Adventure of the  
 Blanched Soldier”*

“The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier” was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in November 1926. It is part of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*. Canonical scholarship informs us that this is one of two cases written by

Sherlock Holmes himself.

As may be seen from the chart, all our chronologists agree upon the year in which this case took place.

At the time Holmes was 49 years old and Watson 47.

**Main Characters:**

James Dodd, Godfrey Emsworth and Colonel Emsworth, Mrs.Emsworth, and Sir James Saunders

**Notable Quotes:**

The ideas of my friend Watson, though limited, are exceedingly pertinacious. For a long time he has worried me to write an experience of my own. Perhaps I have rather invited this persecution, since I have often had occasion to point out to him how superficial are his own accounts and to accuse him of pandering to popular taste instead of confining himself rigidly to facts and figures.

<i>The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>A Wednesday in January 1903</i>
<i>Baring-Gold</i>	<i>Wednesday, January 7, 1903</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>January 1903</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>January 1903</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>January 1903</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Wednesday, January 7, 1903</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>January(?) 1903</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>A Wednesday in January 1903</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>January 1903</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Wednesday, January 21, 1903</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1903</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Wednesday, January 7, 1903</i>

Speaking of my old friend and biographer, I would like to take this opportunity to remark that if I burden myself with a companion in my various little inquires it is not done out of sentiment or caprice, but it is that Watson has some remarkable characteristics of his own to which in his modesty he has given small attention amid his exaggerated estimates of my own performances. A confederate who foresees your conclusions and course of action is always dangerous, but one to whom each development comes as a perpetual surprise, and to whom the future is always a

closed book, is indeed an ideal helpmate.



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The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I can recall in our association. I was alone.

“When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

### *Why “Desertion”?*

It is puzzling that Holmes would view Watson’s (second?) marriage as a desertion; especially considering that he does not appear to have felt that way with the others—certainly not in the case of Mary Morstan. Then, again they hadn’t been together that long back then, and later the absence might have been more sharply noticed. There can be no question that, for all his wonderful abilities and great heart, Holmes was extremely self-absorbed.

### *The Erroneous Diagnosis*

It is puzzling to me that poor Godfrey was diagnosed with leprosy. Even if he had gone to a physician and gasped, “Ye gods, I’ve leprosy—help me!” a thorough examination would have indicated otherwise. Kent’s statement that he had “the ordinary knowledge of the educated medical man” where it comes to leprosy would have been sufficient, if true. This makes me wonder whether his conclusion, based on his spending the night on a leper’s bed, wasn’t taken at face value and no diagnostic examination actually took place.



The fact is that a number of people who served as soldiers and civil servants in parts of the Empire, in which the disease commonly existed such as India and Africa, came back with the disease. While it most certainly was not an everyday occurrence in the British Isles, it was common enough for it to be familiar to medicos of the time; lest we forget, there were leprosariums in England as well.

And even if Kent had persisted in his diagnosis, eventually the lack of progression of the malady alone would have been a giveaway that his patient was not afflicted by the disease.

### *An Ottoman Aside*

Holmes tells Dodd that was clearing up the “Abbey School” case, in which the Duke of Greyminster (a friend of the Duke of Holderness, no doubt) was so deeply involved. Then he added that he also had a commission from the Sultan of Turkey which called for immediate action, as political consequences of the gravest kind might arise from its neglect.



Because of the date, our sleuth had to have been engaged by Abdul Hamid II, who was lovingly referred to as “Abdul the Damned” by his faithful (and terrorized) subjects. He was the last absolute ruler of the Ottoman Empire.

Abdul came to the throne by deposing his brother Murad V, who was said to have been insane. He ruled from 1876 to 1909, and among other things that endeared him to the Western World was his use of pan-Islamism to solidify his internal absolutist rule and to rally Muslim opinion outside the Ottoman Empire, thus creating difficulties for European imperial powers in their Muslim colonies. He savagely suppressed a Bulgarian uprising, and his successes in Serbia and Montenegro aroused the indignation of Western powers and Russia.

After a disastrous war with Russia he became convinced that little good could be expected from the West, so he dismissed the Parliament and suspended the constitution. For the next 40 years, he ruled

in seclusion from his Yildiz Palace (in Constantinople), assisted by a system of secret police, an expanded telegraph network, and severe censorship.

Discontent with Abdul the Damned's despotic rule and resentment against European intervention in the Balkans finally led to the military revolution of the Young Turks in 1908. He was deposed, and his brother was proclaimed sultan as Mehmed V; as such, he reigned but did not rule.

It would be interesting to reflect upon exactly what service Holmes was performing for this Eastern Potentate.

### *BLAN as a Case*

There can be no doubt that Holmes truly realized, through this somewhat feeble effort, that writing something that will keep readers at the edge of their chairs is not, after all, such a simple endeavor.

### *What else happened in 1903:*

#### *Empire*

Coronation Durbar for Edward III, King-Emperor, at Delhi.

Britain and France agree to settle disputes through International Court at The Hague.

British expeditionary force sent to Tibet. ►

Alaskan frontier question between Canada and U.S. settled by arbitration.

Exchange of visits between London and Paris; Arbitration Treaty establishes Entente Cordiale.



#### *Britain*

Joseph Chamberlain begins Tariff Reform Campaign.



Women's Social and Political Union formed to demand votes for women.

Foundation of universities at Liverpool and Manchester.

◀ Road speed limit in England increased to 20 mph.

Establishment of Workers' Educational Association.

GRW introduces early motor-bus service from Helston to the Lizard; the initiation of bus services largely originates from railway companies.

Wyndham's Act--Irish landlords to be bought out; peasant ownership; repayments over 68-and-a-half years.

#### *World*

Dutch Democratic Labor Party formed; general strike suppressed by troops.

Russia refuses to evacuate Manchuria under terms of Russo-Japanese Convention.

Murstep Program--Austro-Russian proposals to solve Macedonian problems fails.

Belgium introduces Old Age Pension plan.

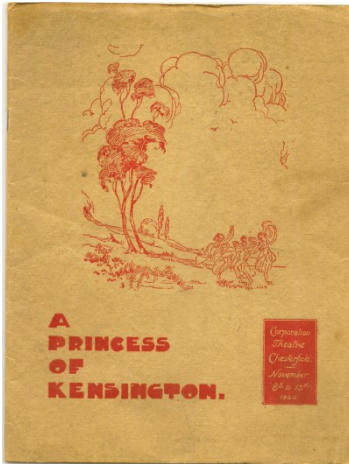
Foundation Bank of Persia loans with large Russian interests.

Alexander Obrenovitch and Queen Draga of Serbia assassinated; Peter Karageorgevitch elected king.

Russian massacre of Jews at Kishinyov.

## Art

Barrie writes his play, *The Admirable Critchon*.



Degas, *Dancers in Yellow Skirts*.

First recording of an opera, Verdi's *Ermani*.

Elgar, *The Apostles*, an oratorio.

◀ German, *A Princess of Kensington*, operetta.

Pisarro, *Bridge at Bruges*.

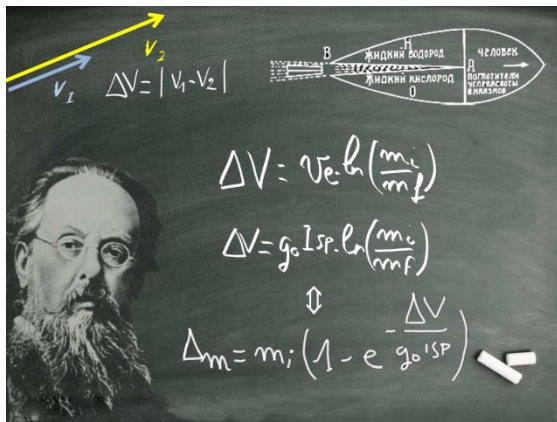
Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, a semi-autobiographical novel of middle-class life is published posthumously.

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild*.

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands*, a novel.

Shaw, *Man and Superman*.

## Science and Technology



First radio press messages published by *The Times*.

Orville and Wilbur Wright make their first flight in a heavier-than-air machine.

◀ Tsiolkovski publishes paper on astronautics.

Henry Ford founds his motor company.

Wilhelm Einthoven invents the electro-cardiograph.

J.J. Thomson publishes *Conduction of Electricity through Gases*.

Bertrand Russell publishes *Principia Mathematica*.

Phenobarbitone, a long lasting sedative, developed.

## Next week's case: LION

Respectfully submitted,

## Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly..."

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