



An Inquiry into:  
*“The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane”*

“The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane” was first published in *Liberty Magazine* on November 27, 1926. The Strand Magazine published it in December of that same year. It is part of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*.

Canon expert one consults. However, in this case, the majority of our experts indicate that this adventure took place in 1907, as may be seen on the table on the right.

If the case took place in 1907, as the majority of these Canon chronologists state, then at the time Holmes was 53 years old and Watson 55.

**Main Characters:**

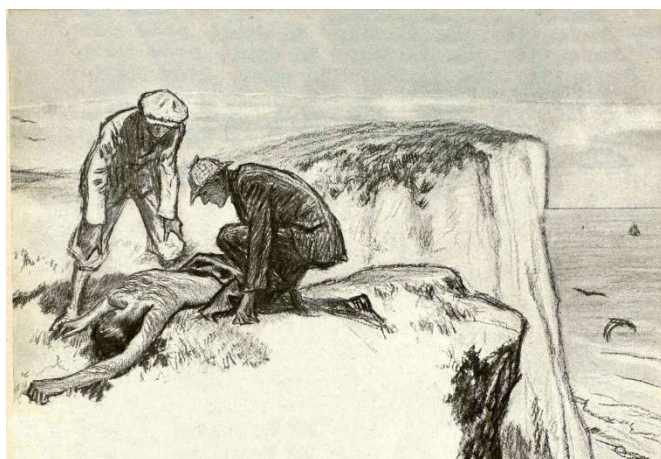
Harold Stackhurst, Fitzroy McPherson, Ian Murdoch, Maud Bellamy, Inspector Bardle.

**Notable Quotes:**

“At this period of my life the good Watson had passed almost beyond my ken. An occasional week-end visit was the most that I ever saw of him. Thus I must act as my own chronicler. Ah! had he but been with me, how much he might have

The chronology for this case varies, depending on which

<i>The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>A Tuesday in late July 1907</i>
<i>Baring-Gold</i>	<i>Tuesday, July 27, 1909</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Tuesday, July 21, 1907</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1903 - 1912</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>July 1907</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Tuesday, June 25, 1907</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>1907, probably July</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Tuesday, July 27, 1909</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>The end of July 1907</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Tuesday, July 30, 1907</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1907</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Tuesday, July 27, 1909</i>



made of so wonderful a happening and of my eventual triumph against every difficulty!”

**“Beyond My Ken”**

Holmes opens this story by lamenting Watson’s absence. While he admits, somewhat self-absorbedly that Watson’s authorship of this case would have made him seem far more brilliant in his deductions and findings than he had been able to accomplish, it appears to go beyond that.

Canon scholars have long (and endlessly) wondered whether this separation of the two friends wasn’t due to more than just the Great Detec-

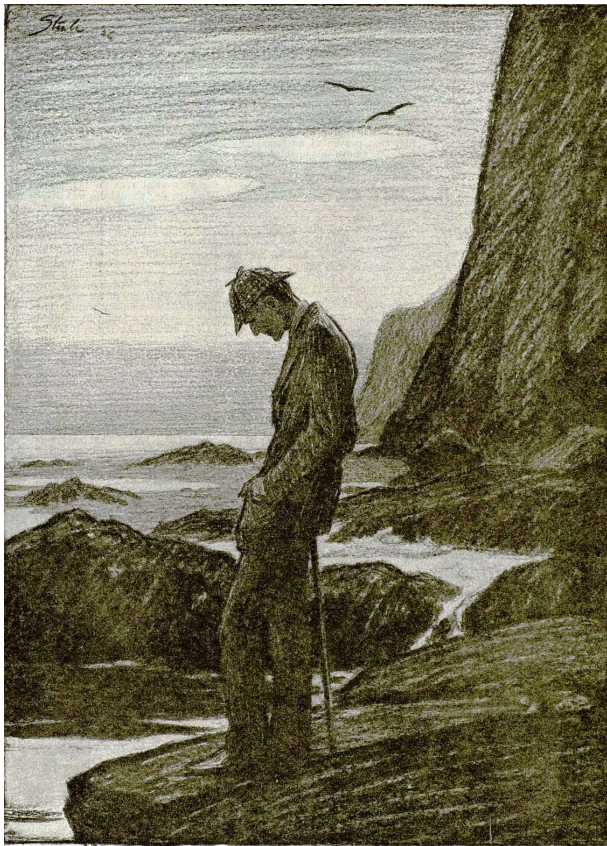
tive's retirement. I don't believe that there was a falling-out if for no other reason that Holmes mentions that Watson would visit him on "an occasional week-end."

This seems to fit in well with the fact that, according to my Atlas, the South Downs is roughly 40 or so miles away from London. While this is a relatively short and not uncomfortable trip by train, it is not something one would undertake regularly; especially if Watson, unlike Holmes, was still in harness, attending to patients.

It is somewhat reminiscent of friends who have gone through combat together vowing to stay in touch and then slowly drifting apart propelled by different interests and circumstances.

### *The Changed Holmes*

Evidently, retirement considerably changed Holmes—a not too uncommon occurrence. We all remember how much he detested useless exertion; yet now he goes out swimming with friends and acquaintances. And his social habits now make him accepting of evening visitations without invitation!



I am particularly fond this illustration of Holmes, mostly because it was used as the front cover for my book, *The Adventure of the Maiden Voyage*.

matters he could use in his work? Only information he could immediately lay a hand on.

### *The Paroxysm of Agony*

Having had as a child the most unpleasant experience of a close encounter with a close cousin of *Cyanea capillata*, I can state that the "paroxysm of agony" description is no exaggeration. The sensation is akin to that of an acid burn.

Holmes' stark description of McPherson agonizing death rings true in every detail. The pain and agony immediately starts after the victim is attacked by the creature (although in reality it is not an "attack" as such, but an unplanned underwater collision).

The expectation might logically have been that he would have shut himself off from all human contact and monastically devote himself to profound chemical studies, writings about crime, and the life of bees. However, this does not seem to have been the case.

Reasoning from personal experience, although retirement does not entirely take you away from the Wheel of Life, not having to daily arise to don armor and face the hideous, many-headed Making a Living dragon, one does find oneself with more time to pursue different interests.

This gift does indeed have a life-changing effect.

### *The Unkempt Attic*

According to Holmes, he holds "a vast store of out-of-the-way knowledge, without scientific system, but very available for the needs of my work. My mind is like a crowded box-room with packets of all sorts stowed away within—so many that I may well have but a vague perception of what was there."

Now surely *this* is truly atypical! What became of the Sherlock Holmes who was so careful in limiting his knowledge intake of knowledge exclusively to those



All of the above being said, there are some aspects of this that I wish Holmes had either left out or gone into with a little more detail. The Old Queen being hardly cold in her grave yet, one may safely assume that the proprieties of the time were still in force. This would mean that McPherson was not skinny-dipping. That being the case, if he was properly attired—i.e., wearing a bathing suit—why would he trouble in his agony to put on pants, shoes, and an overcoat? Let us recall that he was in agony, not insane.

Holmes observed that as he was trying to climb back, McPherson fell more than once; however, although it had been simply thrown around his shoulders, he managed to keep his overcoat on. One might also conclude that in his pain and urgent attempt to seek help, McPherson did not pause to dry himself. This would mean that he had to be wet or at least his coat and pants should have been wet, so how could Holmes conclude from the dry towel that he hadn't been in the water? Surely he did not expect that poor bloke to stop to dry himself on the towel going through the torments of the damned.



### *The Marks*

The history of Nelson's navy being one of my pursuits, I find it seems difficult to accept that the



marks made on McPherson's back by what essentially was a chemical burn, could have been mistaken for the welts raised by *any* whip, much less specifically "a very stiff cat-o'-nine-tails with small hard knots upon it."

Flogging was a punishment very much still in living memory back then. The effect of just one stroke of a cat-o'-nine tails should have been sufficient to dismiss such a cause. Properly wielded, a knotted cat-o'-nine-tails could tear pieces of flesh at the first stroke. In the Royal Navy it was used only for one offense: robbery. It was considered worse that drunkenness or mutiny because it could destroy an entire ship's morale.

### *What else happened in 1907:*

#### *Empire*

New Zealand receives Dominion status.



Channel Tunnel Scheme rejected by Parliament.

Responsible government granted to Orange River Colony.

◀ Imperial College of Science and Technology, part of London University, created by amalgamating the Royal College of Science, City and Guilds Technical College, and the Royal School of Mines.

King Edward VII visits Tsar Nicholas II; Anglo-Russian differences settled; the Dual Entente becomes

the Triple Entente with Russia joining Britain and France.

Opening of Northern Line of London Underground Railway.

Brooklands Motor Racing Circuit opened.

Formation of Joint Committee of Oxford and Workers' Educational Association.

### *Britain*

Women allowed to serve on Local Government Councils.

Territorial Army introduced into Britain by War Minister Haldane.

Railway Conciliation Boards established.

Taxicabs are first legally recognized.

United Methodist Church established.

Guaranteeing Treaty between Britain, Russia, Germany, and France.

Companies Act: limited-liability principle applied to private companies.

### *World*

Anarchy in Morocco; murder of French workmen at Casablanca.

General League of German Trade Unions formed.



Oklahoma admitted as state in the U.S.A.

Revolt of Heroes crushed by German troops.

◀ Meeting of Second Russian Duma; Stolypin becomes chief minister; Duma is dissolved, Third Duma is elected.

Parliamentary rule suppressed in Portugal by Carlos I.

The Hague Peace Conference to limit armaments fails; ban on aerial bombing in war rejected.

Germany refuses armament limitations proposed by Hague Peace Conference.

Pope Pius X orders Benedictine Order to revise the Vulgate. Italian bishops are urged to suppress Modernist teachings in schools and the press.

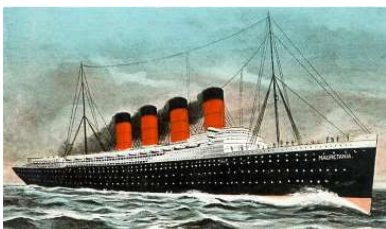
### *Art*

Rousseau paints *The Snake Charmer*.

Singe writes *Playboy of the Western World*, a drama that provokes riots in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin.

### *Science and Technology*

Henri Farman makes a successful biplane.



G. Urbain separates rare metals ytterbium and lutecium.

◀ RMS *Mauretania* launched; 30,700 tons, 26 knots.

Jannsky discovers the four principal blood groups (O, A, B, AB) in humans; it leads to successful blood transfusions. August von Wassermann develops his test for syphilis, determining the seriousness of the infection.

Electric washing machine invented by Hurley Machine Co., of the U.S.A.

First airship flies over London.

First attempts at preservation of fruit by freezing.

William Willett proposes "daylight saving"; adopted in 1916.

Introduction of medical inspection of schoolchildren.

*Next week's case: RETI*

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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