



An Inquiry into:
“The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter”

“The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter” was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in August 1904. It is part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

Due to Watson’s faulty memory (“...a gloomy February morning some seven or eight years ago...”), our

chronologists are far from agreement regarding the date in which this case took place. The spread is noted on the table.

The majority points to 1896 as the year in which this adventure took place. That being the case, then at the time Sherlock Holmes would have been 42 years old and his friend and colleague Doctor John H. Watson 44.

Main Characters:

Cyril Overton, captain of the Cambridge University rugby team; Godfrey Staunton, the missing three-quarter, the university’s star player; Lord Mount-James, Staunton’s penny-pinching uncle; Dr. Leslie Armstrong, renowned physician and man of science, close friend of Staunton; Pompey the draghound, a canine sniffer with a nose for aniseed.

<i>The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>February 1896 or 1897</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Tuesday, December 8, 1896</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>February 1897</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>February 1898</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>December 1897</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Tuesday, December 7, 1897</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>December 1897</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Tuesday, December 8, 1896</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>December 8, 1896</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Saturday, February 6, 1897</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1896</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Tuesday, December 8, 1896</i>

Notable Quotes:

Things had indeed been very slow with us, and I had learned to dread such periods of inaction, for I knew by experience that my companion’s brain was so abnormally active that it was dangerous to leave it without material upon which to work. For years I had gradually weaned him from that drug mania which had threatened once to check his remarkable career. Now I knew that under ordinary conditions he no longer craved for this artificial stimulus, but I was well aware that the fiend was not dead, but sleeping; and I have known that the sleep was a light one and the waking near when in periods of idleness I have seen the drawn look upon Holmes’s ascetic face, and the brooding of his deep-set and inscrutable eyes.

Scotland Yard's Referral

According to Overton, when he asked Scotland Yard to look into Staunton's disappearance, inspector Hopkins declined to look into the case, telling Overton that although the circumstances of Staunton's disappearance might not merit the Yard's attention, it would be just the kind of case in which Sherlock Holmes would be interested.

This is interesting for two reasons, the first being the unexplainable disinterest on the part of the official police on what was a genuine missing person report that had what might very logically be considered as ominous possibilities. Consider that the missing man, although not wealthy, was the only relation of one of the richest men in England. In such a case, the specter of a kidnapping for ransom or some other illegal attempt upon his person cannot be that easily dismissed. One must also remember what Overton said about a mysterious note handed to Staunton by a "rough-looking man with a beard," and that his reaction was so obvious and distressing that a stranger--the porter--became sufficiently concerned to attempt to go for help; then this star player disappears and cannot be found at any of his usual haunts. Come now, Scotland Yard!

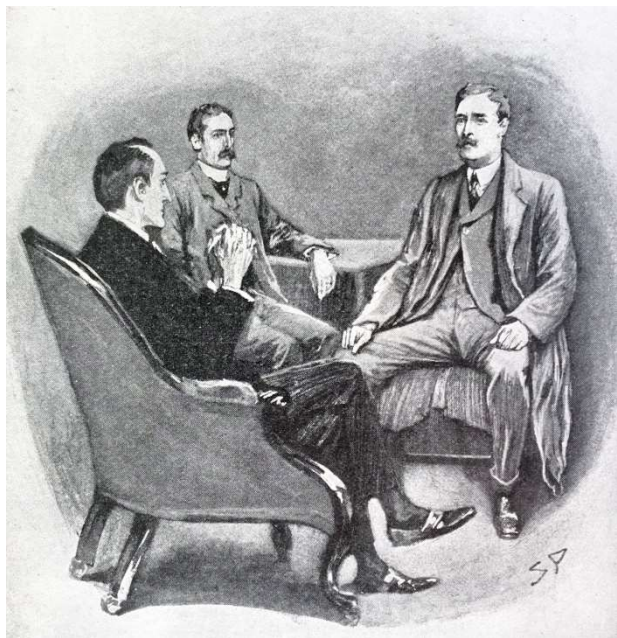
The second interesting aspect is Inspector Hopkins' referral of Overton to Holmes, because "so far as he could see, was more in your line than in that of the regular police." This isn't the only time in the Canon in which the official police refers someone to the Great Detective. It would seem that relations between Holmes and the Scotland Yarders had attained a friendly truce.

The Telegraphic Counterfoil

I am always gratified when a Sherlockian or Holmesian scholar (as opposed to yours truly, a mere student) has addressed some detail in the Sacred Writings that had also occurred to me; then, of course, I usually find that they thought about it decades before the thing occurred me.

For example, the formidable D. Martin Dakin wonders in his cornerstone reference work, *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary*:

What, one wonders, were the six other schemes for getting a glimpse of Godfrey's telegram? (The Editor of The Sherlock Holmes Journal once offered a price for suggestions; but to judge from the silence in subsequent numbers, there were no takers.) As it was, Holmes risked getting the clerk into serious trouble for showing it to him: the redoubtable Dr Leslie Armstrong might easily have taken the matter up. It is to be suspected that, as with his seven explanations for the mystery of The Copper Beeches and the seven clues Phelps had given him in The Naval Treaty, Holmes was using the traditional perfect number in a grandiloquent sense rather than with any mathematical accuracy.



A. 1.		POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.			
Prefix	Code	Words.		Sent.	
Office of Origin and Service Instructions.		(Inland Telegrams.)			
GPO Grimsen		24	At	08.58 a.	
URGENT		Charge.	To		
		1/-	By		
NOTICE.—This Telegram will be accepted for transmission subject to the Regulations made pursuant to the 2nd Section of the Telegraph Act, 1865, and to the Notice printed at the back hereof.					
TO { Detective Inspector Lestrade, CID Scotland Yard, London					
Urgent, make haste GWR to					
Coombe Tracey. Will meet upon					
arrival. Danger at hand, assistance					
to apprehend murderer. Bring warrant.					
Holmes					
FROM { Mr S. Holmes Esq. .					
The Name and Address of the Sender, IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED, should be written in the Space provided at the Back of the Form.					

12 words, 6D. Every additional word 1 2D. Every word telegraphed is charged for, whether in address or text.



Printed by SPICER & CO. Limited

Farewell to Medicine?

Watson wrote, *It argues the degree in which I had lost touch with my profession that the name of Leslie Armstrong was unknown to me. Now I am aware that he is not only one of the heads of the medical school of the University, but a thinker of European reputation in more than one branch of science.* Did our Boswell write this purely for effect, in order to build up Armstrong even more? Somehow, I cannot see Watson forsaking his profession to that extent. While it is true that thanks to Holmes he no longer needed to practice it, scattered across the Canon are references to his attention to the medical literature.



He may have not kept up with who the new luminaries of his profession were, but I think that at heart he never ceased being the consummate physician.

The Highly Visible Mr. Holmes

How is it possible that the supreme detective of his time (very likely of *all* time!), who once boasted of his invisibility when tracking someone by remarking, “That is what you may expect to see when I follow you,” did not think that Dr. Armstrong would have had no problem realizing that the deerstalked gentlemen on a bicycle behind his carriage was following him.

Nothing to See Here

This is one of the ten cases set down by Watson in which no crime has been committed. It is probable also one investigation for which Holmes received no fee. Although lamentable in its end, it is also one of the least exciting of the Good Doctor’s efforts. Why this one and not the occurrences connected with the giant rat of Sumatra?

What else happened in 1896:

Empire

Jameson Raid failure in South Africa provokes crisis; British negotiations with Boers (to 1899) fail.

Kaiser Wilhelm’s telegram to Kruger, congratulating him on the defeat of the Jameson Raid.

Matabele Revolt suppressed (1896-97).

Protectorate established in Sierra Leone and East Africa.

Conquest of the Sudan begins with the start of Kitchener’s campaign against the Madhi (1896-99).

Anglo-French treaty settles boundaries in Siam.

Sudanese railway extended to Wadi Haifa.

Widespread famine in India, to 1897.

Britain

Hotel Cecil, the Strand, built.

National Portrait Gallery moves to present site in Trafalgar Square.

Beginning of period of rising prices and falling wages (until 1914).

Truck Act: regulates deductions from wages or fines for bad workmanship.

Conciliation Act: boards can settle industrial disputes if both sides are willing.

First all-steel English building erected at West Hartlepool.

Royal Victorian Order founded as Personal Order of Sovereign.

World

First modern Olympic Games are held at Athens.



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

◀ Klondike Gold Rush in Canada.

France annexes Madagascar.

State visit of Tsar Nicholas to France (Paris).

Van Houten's Franchise Bill extends the Dutch franchise.

French Tunisian protectorate recognized by Italy.

Italians are defeated by Menelek of Abyssinia at Battle of Adwa, resulting in Treaty of Addis-Ababa and end of Italian protectorate.

Massacre of Armenians by Kurds and Circassians supported by the Sultan.

Insurrection in Crete against Turkish rule.

Foundation of Russo-Chinese Bank.

Cassini Treaty: China gives Russia the right to build a railway through Manchuria to Port Arthur.

Russian newspapers granted temporary licenses; imported books and newspapers are strictly censored.

First public film exhibition, in U.S.

Philippine Revolution ends declaring Philippines free from Spanish rule.

Art

Wells publishes *Island of Dr. Moreau*.

Gilbert and Sullivan debut *The Grand Duke*.

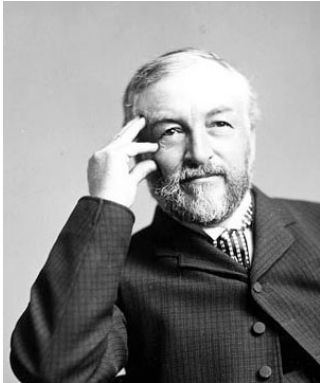
Giacomo Puccini debuts *La Bohème at Turin*.

Toulouse-Lautrec paints *Maxime Dethomas*.

R. Strauss debuts *Also Sprach Zarathustra*.

Science and Technology

Antoine Henri Becquerel, observes radiation from uranium affects photographic plates; discovery of radioactivity.



Nobel Prizes started, for physics, physiology or medicine, chemistry, literature, furtherance of the cause of peace.

Guglielmo Marconi demonstrates on Salisbury Plain the practicability of wireless telegraphy.

J.J. Thompson identifies the electron, though not by name.

Emile Achard first describes paratyphoid fever.

◀ Samuel Langley (U.S.A.), successfully flies a steam-driven model aircraft.

Rehn, of Frankfort, sutures a heart wound; beginning of heart surgery.

Zeeman observes that light emitted by a substance placed in a magnetic field undergoes changes.

Earliest record of water chlorination, during typhoid outbreak in Italy.

Next week's case: ABBE

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..."

Email: CourageousMurray@aol.com