



*An Inquiry into:
"The Naval Treaty"*

"The Naval Treaty" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* from October to November 1893. It is part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

As may be seen from the table, the majority of our Canon chronologists are in agreement that this adventure took place in 1889. If that were the case, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 35 years old and Doctor John H.

Watson 37.

Main Characters:

Percy Phelps, trusted clerk in the Foreign Office. Lord Holdhurst, Foreign Minister and Phelps' uncle. Annie Harrison, Phelps' fiancée and devoted nurse. Joseph Harrison, Annie's brother. Mr. and Mrs. Tangey, Foreign Office commissioner and his wife. Charles Gorot, Phelps' colleague at the Foreign Office. Mr. Forbes, Scotland Yard detective.

Notable Quotes:

"You are the stormy petrel of crime, Watson."

"What a lovely thing a rose is! There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers."

(Holmes) "Look at those big, isolated clumps of buildings rising up above the slates, like brick islands in a lead-coloured sea."

(Watson) "The board-schools."

<i>The Naval Treaty</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Late July</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Tuesday, July 30, 1889</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late July 1888</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>July 1889</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>July 1888</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Monday, July 29, 1889</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Monday, July 29, 1889</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Monday, July 29, 1889</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>July 1888</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Friday, July 29, 1887</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1889</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Monday, July 29, 1889</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

(Holmes) “Light-houses, my boy! Beacons of the future! Capsules with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, out of which will spring the wiser, better England of the future.

“[O]ut of my last fifty-three cases my name has only appeared in four, and the police have had all the credit in forty-nine. I don’t blame you for not knowing this, for you are young and inexperienced, but if you wish to get on in your new duties you will work with me and not against me.”

The Delicate Mr. Percy Phelps

Of all the victims in the Canon, I daresay Percy Phelps is probably the least likeable one; he is someone towards whom generating any sympathy would require considerably more than just a modicum of effort.

To begin with, he blithely boasts that his appointment to the Foreign Office was not a result of his



Courtesy of ITV Granada

own efforts, but obtained through the influence of an important close relative—Lord Holdhurst in this case. The nobleman also appears to have been responsible for his nephew’s rapid advancement once in he got him into the Foreign Office. It is interesting to note that by this time, civil service entrance exams had been instituted in Great Britain. However, from what Phelps himself said, it seems quite obvious that he did not have to concern himself with such bagatelles.

He is markedly feeble and high-strung—a tendency which he boasts to have had since boyhood (“Watson there would tell you that I was a nervous, sensitive boy at school”). He is prone to self-pity and

hysterical outbursts; all this during an era that celebrated and worked to inculcate into young boys manly virtues and stiff-upper-lip attitudes while deploring any sort of weakness in a male. The kindest thing that one can say about Percy is that even by today’s rather androgynous standards he comes through as, well, an unlikable wimp.

Phelps’ reaction upon getting back the treaty is, to say the least, somewhat over the top—*He caught it up, devoured it with his eyes, and then danced madly about the room, passing it to his bosom and shrieking out in his delight. Then he fell back into an arm-chair so limp and exhausted with his own emotions that we had to pour brandy down his throat to keep him from fainting.* Evidently, that gulp of brandy allowed him to sufficiently recover to kiss the Great Detective’s hand.

Small wonder Watson enjoyed hitting him over the shins with a wicket!



Courtesy of ITV Granada

One must wonder exactly what mysterious quality his fiancée, Annie, may have detected in him to display such devotion in her care of him. Then again, she may have been blessed with an overwhelmingly strong maternal instinct.

Lord Holdhurst

Despite Watson’s description of him as “a nobleman who is in truth noble,” Percy Phelps’ eminent uncle appears to have been somewhat thoughtless and careless, besides not being averse to nepotism. He certainly did not hesitate to use his influence to benefit his nephew and to further his career.

Holmes observes that the eminent cabinet minister appeared to be a little short of money, basing this clever deduction on the fact that his lordship's boots had been re-soled. Back then, the average yearly salary of such a minister was £5,000 (≈\$1,900,000) or more, which leads one to wonder why he was so financially strapped, especially when one considers the ridiculously low taxes of those days. It is very doubtful that this salary, as a notable nobleman with aspirations to the premiership, could have been his only source of income. So what was his problem? Too many baccarat sessions with the Prince of Wales and several great houses and mistresses to maintain?



Courtesy of ITV Granada

While the disappearance of a government document, especially a treaty that involves other nations, is not a minor matter, there are some aspects of this case that make little sense. Watson (perhaps with his usual discretion) seems to have left out some details.

The Naval Treaty was aimed to counteract the threat of the Triple Alliance, which was a military agreement between Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Italy arrived at in 1882. It was designed to oppose the Triple Entente between Britain, France, and Russia. Each member agreed to support the others should any of the other two

be attacked by any other great power; in Germany and Italy's case, an attack by France.

According to, Lord Holdhurst if the contents of the treaty were made public, it would result in, "Very grave results indeed." Yet, it is also stated that in a few months it would no longer be critical if the document became public. For the most part, treaties of this kind were either public or poorly held secrets, the whole point being to let the countries they were aimed at to know what to expect and refrain from doing something that would set things in motion. This did not always work, of course—although knowing that England and France were prepared to go to war if Poland was attacked, Germany still unhesitatingly invaded that country in 1939.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Milord also seems to have been rather careless with his handling of the treaty, in the tradition of BERY and SECO. He instructs Percy to copy it at night when everyone was gone from the office and, knowing that he will not be able to finish it that night, to lock it

up and return to his study.

overnight in an office desk instead of a safe! What was so important about copying it that could not have waited until the next day? Surely, some private place could have been found for Phelps to write out the copy when he is rested and has a clear mind.

And how is it that the disappearance of a document of that importance for over two months did not cause a stir and bring serious consequences? Did nobody in the government have to consult or study it during that time? According to Holdhurst, aside from the grave international results, this was certain to blast Phelps' career and he would have been unable to do anything to protect him; i.e., he was prepared to cut loose his nephew. Yet, when Holmes asks, the minister tells him that if the treaty is found, Phelps will be out of hot water even though the document has been missing for weeks.

In view of the fact that history does not show him to have occupied that position, it seems very likely that in the end this whole affair crushed milord's aspirations to become Prime Minister.



What else happened in 1889:

Empire

Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

Transvaal claimed to be "encircled" by Rhodes' concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.

At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. Is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Britain

Great London Dockers' Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers' unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers' favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.

Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.

Establishment of telephone company.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

Early use of photographs in newspaper: Illustrated London News runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

World

Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

Wall Street Journal begins publishing.

Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.

U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.



Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.

◀ President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolf refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.

Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.

End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.

King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic “Land Captains” replace elected JPs in Russia.

Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to life imprisonment.

Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.



Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.

Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

◀ New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.

The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.

Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General Hippolyte, who becomes president.

Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

Art

Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.

Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.

Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.

Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

Science and Technology

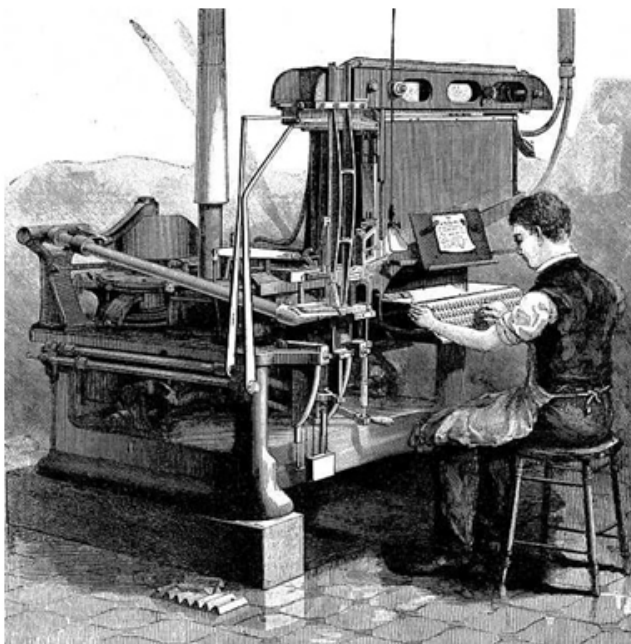
Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.

Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.

Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting in San Francisco, California.



Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his "Navigable Balloon."

◀ First linotype machine in use.

The first jukebox makes its debut at the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.

The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.

William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

Next week's case: FINA

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..."

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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