



## An Inquiry into: “The Adventure of the Red Circle”

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“The Adventure of the Red Circle” was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in March 1911. It is part of *His Last Bow*.

The chronology for this case is not unanimous. The various estimates appear on the table. If the case took place

in 1902, as the majority of our Canon chronologists state, then at the time Holmes was 48 years old and Watson 50.

### Main Characters:

Mrs. Warren, elderly, respectable landlady of the boarding house where Emilia Lucca was taken to hide. Gennaro Lucca, young Italian man who fled to New York, then to London with his wife. Emilia Lucca, Gennaro’s wife. Giuseppe Gorgiano, a senior member of the Red Circle, a notorious Neapolitan criminal society. Inspector Tobias Gregson, Scotland Yard detective. Leverton, a skilled American private detective working the Pinkerton National Detective Agency.

### Notable Quotes:

“Bleat, Watson—unmitigated bleat!”

Holmes was accessible upon the side of flattery, and also, to do him justice, upon the side of kindness.

“I had heard that you can read great things out of small ones.”

“Ah, yes, Watson—severely practical, as usual!”

“Education never ends, Watson. It is a series of lessons with the greatest for the last.”

“I’ll do you this justice, Mr. Holmes, that I was never in a case yet that I didn’t feel stronger for having you on my side.”

### The Adventure of the Red Circle

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	None given
Baring-Gould	Wednesday, September 24, 1902
Bell	January 1897
Blakeney	1881-1887
Brend	January 1896
Christ	January 1893
Dakin	1897, possibly February
Folsom	February 1902
Hall	Mid-February 1902
Keefauver	Tuesday, January 6, 1885
Klinger	1902
Zeisler	Winter 1895-1902

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.

## *Deductions Regarding Language and Peril*

Holmes deduced that the mystery lodger did not speak English well, based upon the fact that she asked for “match” instead of “matches.” This might be stretching things a bit. Perhaps it was not so much of a deduction as it was an inspiration. In any case, it proved to be accurate.

I tend to attribute his conclusion more to inspiration than deduction, because he came to it by supposing that Emilia had to use a dictionary to look up the English word for “match” and, according to Holmes, she asked for them in the singular instead of the plural because “a dictionary would give the noun but not the plural.”

Unfortunately, the dictionaries that I have of that time are not bilingual; however, they provide the plural form of the words that they define. My modern bilingual dictionaries all provide the plural of the words they translate, particularly if—like matches—the noun in question is one that almost invariably comes in numbers: cigarettes, grapes, shoes, earrings, etc.

Still, the Great Detective was correct.

I expect that most people would react to a message that warns, “Beware! Danger!” in a more decisive manner than did our sleuth. Incredibly, Holmes shrugged off the message commenting that a message such as “Beware! Danger!”—“may bear some more innocent interpretation.” This truly is quite disconcerting.

## *The Redoubtable Pinkerton and the Police*

Pinkerton agents appear in two of the canonical stories, portrayed as indefatigable instruments of justice.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Considering that Holmes had to have been acquainted with the history of this private, non-governmental organization and their record of violence for hire, his admiration appears ill placed.

This, in turn, brings us to another unanswered question: why were the Pinkertons after Gorgiano? Although they would not doubt have liked to collar him, it was not the American police that was trying to get him but a private entity—an entity that acted in behalf of a client, not the common good.

The question then becomes, who was the Pinkertons client? Whoever he or she was must have had fairly consid-

erable resources. Pinkertons were not cheap and sending someone across the Atlantic in chase of Gorgiano could not have been an inexpensive undertaking.

So, was it someone whom the Italian had wronged? Or could it have been some of his former accomplices? As long as they got paid, the Pinkertons were not too fastidious about who they took on as clients.

There is something further to consider. It is unlikely that whoever it was that wanted to locate Gorgiano was doing it out of concern for the hoodlum’s health; especially bearing in mind that the

American police was not trying to capture him (there does not appear to have been any warrant for his arrest). This leads me to think that the interested party had to have been an enemy.

And what would have happened had Leverton captured Gorgiano? Even within the United States Leverton had no official standing to go about capturing miscreants; this would have been even truer in another country. Certainly, British authorities were under no compulsion to grant him any special recognition other than the one given to any foreigner. So why, then, was Gregson so willing to cooperate with Leverton?

Another puzzle is Gennaro's intentions. According to his wife, he secreted her away because he "wished to be free that he might communicate with both the American and with the Italian police."

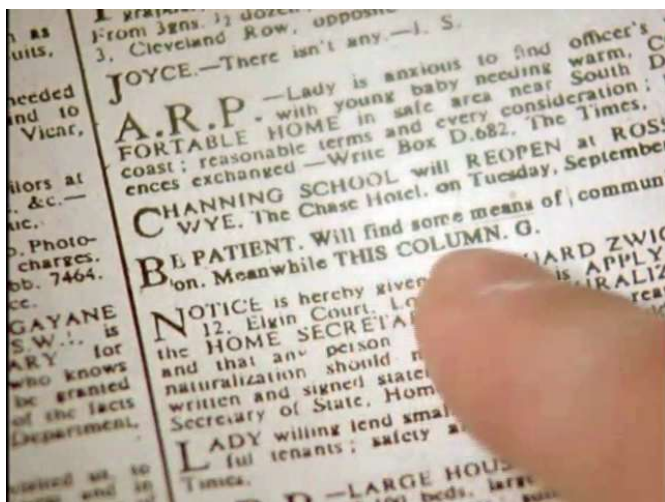
While it is understandable that he would have wanted to let the police of both those countries know where Gorgiano was, why not go to the English authorities as well? The process that would be needed for both the American and Italian police authorities to intervene would have been long and drawn out. Extradition has always been a complicated matter.

However, if Gennaro had gone to Scotland Yard and told them his story, a couple of telegrams would have brought quick replies about who Gorgiano was, which would have certainly led to the Yard arrest him considering that Britain had little patience with foreign criminals.

Again, it appears that Watson left out some details which, for some reason or another, he deemed superfluous.

### *A Perennial Conundrum*

Among the published cases that make up the Canon this one, in which we find someone frantically



Courtesy of ITV Granada



Courtesy of ITV Granada

trying to escape from an enemy, who exerts almost superhuman measures to escape the pursuer and vanish, only to be found by the foe, is hardly unique. DANC, GLOR, and STUD are good examples of this.

One wishes that Watson had taken the time to let us know how Gorgiano was able to track Emilia to Mrs. Warren's. Until Holmes appeared, even the gender of the boarder was unknown, thanks to the way in which Gennaro got his wife into her hiding place; she did not even look out through the window!

Considering that Gennaro would not get close to his wife or even write to her for fear of being found, communicating with her through the

agony column of a newspaper, the question of how Gorgiano was able to track them down slips into the realm of the improbable.

### *What else happened in 1902:*

#### *Empire*



First celebration of Empire Day (renamed “Commonwealth Day” in 1959).

First meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence in London.

◀ Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.

Anglo-German fleet seizes Venezuelan fleet to recover debts and reparations.

Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.

#### *Britain*

Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.

The Anglo-Japanese Treaty recognizes the independence of China and Korea.

Institution of the Order of Merit by King Edward for distinguished service to the state; limited to 24 holders at one time.

Education Act abolishes School Board system. Local control goes to town and county councils.

Secondary Education authorized out of rates.

British Academy granted Royal Charter.

Esperanto introduced to England.

Establishment of Metropolitan Water Board, supplying London.

Boer War casualties: 5,774 British and 4,000 Boers killed.

Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.

#### *World*

Franco-Italian secret treaty—Italy agrees to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.

Failure of second Belgian General Strike.

Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, and Italy) renewed to 1914.

Italian designs on Tripoli conditionally approved by France and Austria.

Russo-Japanese Convention, Russia agrees to evacuate Manchuria in 18 months.

Leon Trotsky escapes from Siberia, settles in London.

Martinique volcanic eruption destroys town of St. Pierre.

Coal strike in U.S.A.

National bankruptcy declared in Portugal.

French work day reduced to 9 1/2 hours.

U.S.A. acquires perpetual control over Panama Canal. Control is held until 1977.

Public Health Act in France improves artisan living conditions.

White settlement of Kenya begins.

Aswan Dam opened.

St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.

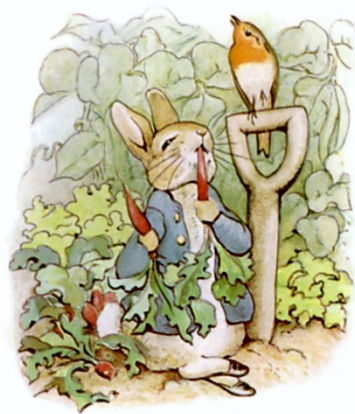
Abdul Hamid gives Germany concessions to build railway to Baghdad; rail system to stretch from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf.

Tientsin Sanitary Police established; first Chinese public health measure.

F.A. Krupp takes over Germania shipbuilding yard at Kiel; great armaments firm develops.

## ***Art***

Conan Doyle publishes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.



Kipling publishes *Just So Stories*.

Arthur Edward Woodley Mason publishes *The Four Feathers*.

◀ Beatrix Potter publishes *Peter Rabbit*.

Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record—he afterwards makes 154 recordings in all.

Elgar composes the first of his *Pomp and Circumstance* marches, composes the *Coronation Ode*.

Monet, *Waterloo Bridge*.

Gauguin, *Riders by the Sea*.

Gauguin paints *The Call*.

Debussy composes *Pelléas et Mélisandé*.

Picasso paints *Nude, Back View*.

## ***Science and Technology***

Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.

Oliver Heaviside, English physicist, reveals the existence of an atmospheric layer which aids the conduction of radio waves.

Trans-Pacific Cable is laid.

The Aswan Dam in Egypt is completed.

## ***Next week's case: LADY***

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](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**