



An Inquiry into:
“The Adventure of the Six Napoleons”

“The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” was first published in *Collier’s Weekly Magazine* on April 30, 1904, and in *The Strand Magazine* in May 1904. It is part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

The majority of our chronologists estimate that this case

took place in 1900. Assuming that the majority of our experts are correct, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 46 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 48.

Main Characters:

Inspector Giles Lestrade, Scotland Yard Inspector. Morse Hudson, shop owner, buyer of three of the six busts. Horace Harker, elderly journalist working for the Central Press Syndicate, owner of one of the busts. Beppo, Italian craftsman. Manager of Gelder & Co., Beppo’s former employer. Pietro Venucci, powerful Mafioso of Neapolitan descent. Josiah Brown, owner of the fifth bust. Mr. Sanderson, owner of the sixth bust, which he sold to Holmes, giving him possession of the priceless black pearl of the Borgias.

<i>The Adventure of the Six Napoleons</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>May 20</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Friday, June 8, 1900</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>July 1900</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1895 (or after)</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>Late Summer 1900</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Friday, August 29, 1902</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>July 1900</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Late June 1900</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Late June 1900</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Wednesday, June 4, 1902</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1900</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Monday, June 11, 1900</i>
<small><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.</i></small>	

Notable Quotes:

In rapid succession we passed through the fringe of fashionable London, hotel London, theatrical London, literary London, commercial London, and, finally, maritime London, till we came to a riverside city of a hundred thousand souls, where the tenement houses swelter and reek with the outcasts of Europe.

“The Press, Watson is a most valuable institution, if you only know how to use it.”

“Well, I’ve seen you handle a good many cases, Mr. Holmes, but I don’t know that I ever knew a more workmanlike one than that. We’re not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very

proud of you, and if you come down to-morrow there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

A Very Special Case

This is why we read Watson's accounts of Sherlock Holmes' cases. Holmes is absolutely brilliant in his deductions and conclusions, and in his skillful use of the press. Although it makes us realize that we could never be like him, we can still envy the Good Doctor.

Lestrade's Visits

According to Watson, by this time the relationship between Holmes and Lestrade had progressed to



Courtesy of ITV Granada

a level akin to friendship. They of course found it impossible to ignore the class differences that separated them. The most obvious proof of this being that the inspector still referred to our sleuth as "Mr. Holmes," whereas for Holmes he was simply "Lestrade." Nothing further should be read into this, other than the fact that they both were creatures of their time.

The fact that now Lestrade regularly dropped by 221B during some evenings to discuss police business, thus giving Holmes a very welcome update on the goings-on of Scotland Yard show that both of them were at a completely different footing than before in their relationship.

Just Being Curmudgeonly (Again)

Am I the only one, or does it also strike any of the Barkers as curious that Mr. Harding of Kensington was so easily and promptly able to inform Holmes of the names and addresses of the customers to whom he sold the two remaining busts? This certainly was crucial in enabling our sleuth to catch Beppo at Chiswick and acquire the pearl from Reading.

While it is understandable that a wholesaler would keep a record of his retailers, or even for a retailer to keep a record of some very expensive purchase, how likely is it that a shopkeeper would have made an effort to preserve the particulars of customers who bought such trivial objects as a 15s (\approx \$280) bust?

And what was Gained?



Courtesy of ITV Granada

It is interesting to note that of all the recorded Canonical cases, there are at least nine, ABBE, BLAC, CARD, DYIN, GOLD, REIG, STUD, VALL, and SIXN, in which Holmes appears to have participated in a *pro bono* fashion—solely to help the authorities, receiving no fee. In this instance it seems that the Great Detective kept to his claim that his professional charges are upon a fixed scale, and that the only variation is when he remits them altogether.

Although Watson does not indicate it in any way in this case, however, Holmes may have managed to recoup something for his recovery of the "famous black pearl of the Borgias," which was described to us as an "enormously valuable" jewel. It is difficult to believe

that such a trinket would not have been insured for a small fortune. Also, it is not farfetched to sup-

pose that Holmes looked “up the dates in the old files of the paper,” to refresh himself on the facts of the case, but also to look for the insurance company’s advertised request for information on the stolen jewel and the offer of a reward for its return.

Had this not been so, then his meticulous care in procuring a documented transfer signed in the presence of two witnesses would have made little sense, even though Mr. Sandeford could not have, in any case, retained any right to stolen property. If one solely considers possession—not ownership—then Holmes would undoubtedly have had the superior claim to having the pearl.

In past discussions of this case, I estimated the value of the Borgia black pearl at roughly \$250,000 in today’s money; possibly more considering its checkered history—its mythos—which would have further added to its value. In Victorian currency, the pearly would then have been worth ≈£800.

Assuming that was a standard 10% finder’s fee was offered by the insurers (and even if there had been no additional recompense to Holmes from the grateful Prince of Colonna) our sleuth most certainly would have come ahead. The £10 (≈\$3,300) he paid for all rights to the bust would have been more than offset by the insurance company’s finder’s fee of £80 (≈\$26,000). Not a bad return for less than three days’ work!

Theatrical? Possibly

We all know that the Great Detective’s art in the blood sometimes made him lean towards the theatrical. On more than one occasion our cold calculating machine displayed a pronounced dramatic streak in him which one might interpret as a wish for a striking dénouement to a case. There are examples of this in NAVA, MAZA, and SIGN.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

One thing is certain: had he revealed the reason for everything—the Borgia pearl—in any other way, he would not have elicited the simultaneous spontaneous reaction from Watson and Lestrade. Whether or not Holmes had expected the applause, one thing appears certain—Lestrade’s accolade had to have been completely unexpected. It would also explain why it was so moving to him.

And, speaking of Lestrade, even though he tended

to act with his usual lack of perception, it is clear that he had ceased to view Holmes as a professional threat and had, by this time, come to terms with the unavoidable reality that he would never surpass or even equal the Great Detective. However, he had no problem in expressing his sincere admiration (perhaps even his affection?) for Sherlock Holmes.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Somehow, it makes one like the man better, in spite (or perhaps because) of his shortcomings.

What else happened in 1900:

Empire

Tonga placed under British protection.

Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act; establishes federalism.

Roberts replaces Buller in South Africa; relief of Ladysmith, Mafeking, Kimberly; Boer leader Kronje surrenders at Paardeberg; Transvaal and Orange Free State annexed by Britain.

Royal Niger Company's territories are taken over by the British government.

Yangtze Convention: Britain and Germany guarantee freedom of trade to uphold Chinese integrity.

Britain

Wallace collection displayed in current location in Manchester Square



Mount Pleasant postal sorting office opens.

◀ Passmore Edwards Museum in Stratford opens.

Russell Hotel opens.

Central London Railway (Central Line) opens; London's tubes electrified.

Labour Representation Committee, beginning of the Labour Party.

National Brass Band contests instituted at the Crystal Palace.

School made obligatory until age 14.

Birmingham University founded.

Davis Cup presented for men's international lawn tennis.

World



Boxer Rebellion ended by military relief of besieged foreign legations.

Franco-Italian Treaty concerning North African colonies.

Proportionate Representation in Belgium.

◀ Tirpitz induces German Reichstag to pass Navy Act, to double the navy by 1920.

Germany receives Samoa in the Pacific.

Assassination of King Humberto of Italy, accessions of Victor Emmanuel III.

Socialist Revolutionary Party formed in Russia, advocates terrorism.

Russia occupies Manchuria, massacres 45,000 Chinese.

Working day in France is limited to 10 hours.

Since 1876, 2,000 km of new canals are completed in France.

Witte brings 60% of Russian railways under state control.

Art

Conrad publishes *Lord Jim*.

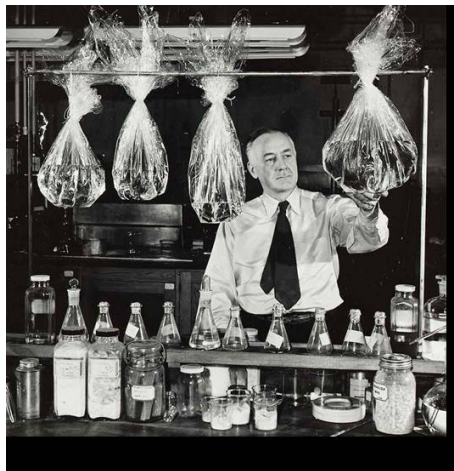
Theodore Dreiser publishes *Sister Carrie*.

Shaw debuts *Three Plays for Puritans: The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, Captain Brassbound's Conversion*.

Puccini debuts *La Tosca*.

Science and Technology

G. Ricci and T. Levi-Civita develop the absolute differential calculus from earlier concept of tensors.



Max Planck proposed quantum theory.

Piotr Lebedev demonstrates the existence of the pressure of light.

◀ J.E. Brandenburger invents cellophane.

First Zeppelin is built.

Escalator, invented in the U.S.A., exhibited in Paris Exhibition.

Hugo de Vries publishes *The Mutation Theory*, leading to the modern evolution theory.

F.E. Dorn discovers radon, a heavy gas.

Benjamin Holt invents the caterpillar tractor.

Sigmund Freud publishes *Traumdeutung*, the interpretation of dreams.

Next week's case: 3STU

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.