



An Inquiry into:
“The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge”

“The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge” was first published in the September – October 1908 issue of *The Strand Magazine*. It is part of *His Last Bow*.

The table shows how our chronologists date this case. Because there is no clear agreement, Doctor Watson’s

dating must take precedence. Therefore, if the case took place in 1892 as he states, Sherlock Holmes was 38 years old and Dr. John H. Watson 40. It should be noted, however, that Watson’s dating of the case appears to be in conflict with what we know of the Great Hiatus (1891 to 1894). Perhaps he meant to say the case occurred in 1895 instead.

Main Characters:

Scott Eccles, a respectable, dull English bachelor; Inspector Tobias Gregson of Scotland Yard, an energetic, gallant, and, within his limitations, a capable officer, and his friend Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary; Aloysius García a young Latin, living in Surrey, one of Don Murillo’s pursuers;

Mr. Henderson, a.k.a. Don Murillo, the so-called “Tiger of San Pedro,” former brutal dictator of that country; Miss Burnett, a.k.a. señora Victor Durando, one of the band of avengers pursuing Murillo.

Notable Quotes:

“I suppose, Watson, we must look upon you as a man of letters.”

“My mind is like a racing engine, tearing itself to pieces because it is not connected up with the work for which it was built. Life is commonplace, the papers are sterile; audacity and romance seem to have passed forever from the criminal world.”

“You are like my friend, Dr. Watson, who has a bad habit of telling his stories wrong end foremost.”

“It is an error to argue in front of your data. You find yourself insensibly twisting them round to fit your theories.”

<i>The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Late March 1892</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Monday, March 24, 1890</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late March 1895</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1896, or 1898-1902</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>March 1894</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Monday, March 21, 1892</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Late March 1894</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Late March 1890</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>End of March 1895</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Thursday, March 24, 1892</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1895</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Monday, March 24, 1902</i>

“But how come you into this matter, Miss Burnet? How can an English lady join in such a murderous affair?”

The Man of Letters

Once again we witness Holmes seemingly reproaching Watson about his literary efforts. Throughout the Canon, in view of the good that the Good Doctor’s writings did to his reputation, this is somewhat



Courtesy of ITV Granada

of a peculiar attitude on the part of our sleuth. Originally, this may have been motivated by a trace of envy. Early on, Holmes probably realized that although his writing may have been sufficiently adequate for monographs and other types of formal writing, when it came to fictionalizing his cases for publication to the general public, his efforts weren’t as successful as those of his friend and colleague. One gets the impression that Holmes felt himself capable of doing well in anything that he might embark upon, and it must have stung (however lightly) his pride.

That being said, when one considers the way in which this time he framed his opinion of Watson’s writings (“If

you cast your mind back to some of those narratives with which you have afflicted a long-suffering public...”) it would seem that he is saying this more in a joking manner than as criticism. Perhaps by this time he had come to terms with his limited literary ability.

An Uncharacteristic Case

This is an atypical case, in that both Holmes and Watson seem to have been slightly off their game. We have our biographer unable to tell man from beast when he examined the voodoo implements found in García’s house: “At first, as I examined it, I thought that it was a mummified Negro baby, and then it seemed a very twisted an ancient monkey. Finally, I was left in doubt as to whether it was animal or human.” Really, Doctor? The fact is that any educated layman would have been able to tell the difference between the remains of an animal, such as a monkey, and those of a human being. The hands would be a dead (no pun intended) giveaway—man is the only primate with an opposable thumb. The shape of the legs and feet would have been another clue; few humans have what would appear as a set of four hands!

Then we have Holmes—arguably the top detective of his (or any) generation—being topped by what is essentially a country cop—Baynes. It is somewhat strange that Watson would have chosen to publish this case (we assume with Holmes’ accord), which does little to enhance his reputation.



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Consider that Baynes was one or more steps ahead of Holmes in just about every aspect of this investigation. He was the one who identified Murillo, he was the one to come up with the ruse of arresting

the mulatto to expose the others, and he was comfortably hidden while observing Holmes' approach to the house.

Then, on top of everything else, Holmes misses the governess altogether, who is fortunately rescued by somebody else.

Except for Baynes, practically everybody in the case seemed to have problems in thinking straight. Even the Tiger of San Pedro, who we are told is a dangerous, ruthless, astute ex-dictator, who has been successfully avoiding his enemies, makes a bad decision which endangers him. It would seem more true to his character and that of his acolytes to have disposed of Miss Burnett in a quick, permanent way. Why drug her and risk attracting attention while helping a wobbly person into the train? It would have been far more logical to break her neck and take her with then in a trunk.

It does appear that with the exception of Baynes, nobody was thinking very logically.

What else happened in 1892:

Empire

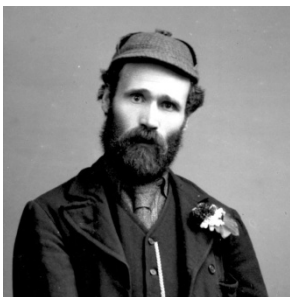
Britain and Germany agree on Cameroons.

Cape-Johannesburg railroad completed.

Durand Agreement defines the frontier between India and Afghanistan.

Matabele War.

Britain



Salisbury resigns, Gladstone forms his fourth (and last) Liberal government.

◀ Keir Hardie, first independent Labour Member of Parliament, takes his seat.

National Mining strike.

Liverpool overhead electric railway built.

Imperial Institute opens in London.

Lottie Collins, music-hall star sings, *Ta-ra-ra boom-de-ay*.

World

Franco-Russian Alliance.

In Pennsylvania a bloody five-month strike fails at one of Andrew Carnegie's steel mills.

Prince Ito becomes Premier of Japan.

U.S. Marines overthrow the native government in Hawaii.

Giolitti becomes Premier of Italy.

Ivory Coast becomes a French colony.

Tewfik, Khedive of Egypt dies; succeeded by Abbas II.

The World's Columbian Exposition is held in Chicago celebrating the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World.

In Russian-ruled Poland, unrest among workers brings an attack sent by authorities that kills 46.

Baseball is officially invented.

France captures Dahomey.

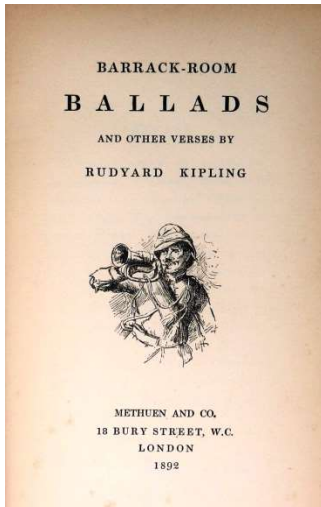
The Sierra Club is founded, with 182 charter members. John Muir is elected president. The club defeats an effort to reduce the boundaries of Yosemite National Park.

Grover Cleveland elected U.S. president.

Pan-Slav Conference held at Cracow.

“Gentleman Jim” Corbett defeats John L. Sullivan, wins heavyweight boxing title.

Art



Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* premières in St Petersburg.

Gerhart Hauptmann publishes *Die Weber*, a German social drama.

Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

Monet begins his series of pictures of the Rouen Cathedral.

◀ Kipling, *Barrack-Room Ballads*.

Leoncavallo premieres his opera, *Il Pagliacci* in Milan.

Munch paints *The Cry*.

Zola, *La Débâcle*.

Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

Toulouse-Lautrec paints *At the Moulin Rouge*.

Science and Technology

American inventor John Froelich develops and constructs the first gasoline-powered tractor.

Diesel patents his internal combustion engine.

Hermann Dresser introduces acetyl-salicylic acid, later to be known by the trade name of “Aspirin.”

First automatic telephone switchboard introduced.

Henry Ford designs his first motor vehicle.

Otto Lilienthal successfully flies a glider, crashes in 1896 after some 2,000 flights.

C.F. Cross and E.J. Bevan produce “viscose,” which will lead to the manufacture of rayon.

Next week's case: BRUC

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

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