



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

**An Inquiry into:
"The Adventure
of Wisteria Lodge"**

Vol. XIII No. 39 • May 11, 2023

"The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" was first published in the September-October 1908 issue of *The Strand Magazine*, and in *Collier's Magazine's* August 15, 1908 issue. It is part of *His Last Bow*.

As the table shows, there is no clear agreement amongst our chronologists. For this reason, whenever we discuss this case I give precedence to Doctor Watson's dating; in

this instance, 1892. The different estimates of our experts reflect the fact that Holmes vanished into the Great Hiatus between April 1891 and April 1894. During all this time, Watson (as did most of the world) believed the Great Detective to have been dead and if he engaged in any kind of investigation, the facts of it are forever lost to us.

Had the case taken place in 1892, Sherlock Holmes would have been 38 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 40.

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. Inspector Baynes, of the Surrey Constabulary. Aloysius Garcia 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, member 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."

<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>

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.

“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.”

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

A Man of Letters

Although Holmes has, on more than one occasion, been unnecessarily heavy-handed in his criticism of Watson’s literary efforts on his behalf this time, however, it seems it is being done with a different tone.

His comment, “I suppose, Watson, we must look upon you as a man of letters,” and “If you cast your mind back to some of those narratives with which you have afflicted a long-suffering public. . .” sounds more like bantering than criticism. Perhaps it was born out of a grudging recognition of the positive effect that Watson’s narrations must have had upon his professional life.

While originally, our sleuth’s comment might have been motivated by a trace of envy, he eventually had to realize that although his own writing skills were sufficiently adequate for monographs and other types of formal writing, when it came to fictionalizing his cases for publication to the general public, he was not nearly as successful as his friend and colleague. It is not difficult to imagine that someone like Holmes would have



deemed himself capable of doing well in anything that he might embark upon, and his inability to produce fiction on a par of that of his friend’s however lightly, must have stung his pride.

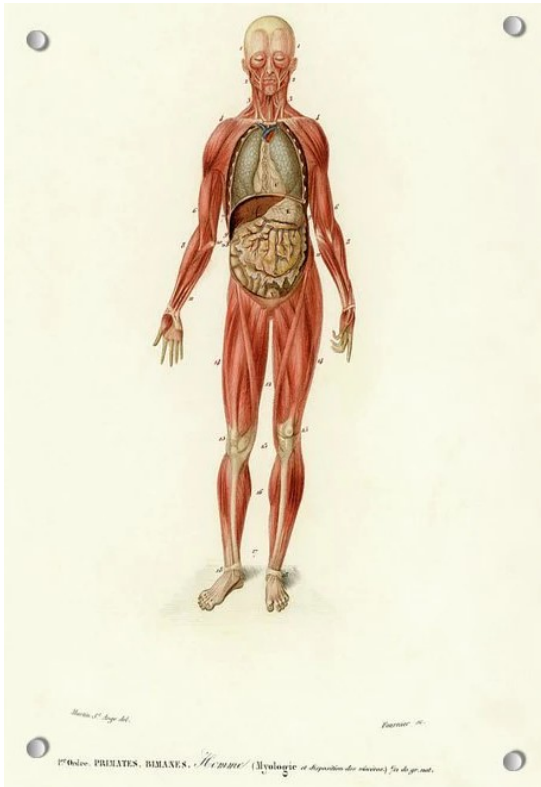
That being said, when one considers the way in which this time he framed his opinion of Watson’s writings it would seem that he is saying this more in a joking manner than as criticism. Perhaps by this time he had come to terms with his limited literary ability.

An Apropos Quote

Holmes counsels patience to Watson by saying, “Well, we can only *possess our soul in patience [italics mine]* until this excellent inspector come back for us.” Most Canon scholars attributed the source of this quote to Luke 21:19 in the Bible: “In your patience possess ye your souls.”

However, I tend to lean, as a source, to Charles Edward Montague, an English journalist of the time, who wrote novels and essays. He wrote, “To possess your soul in patience, with all the skin and some of the flesh burnt off your face and hands, is a job for a boy compared with the pains of a man who has lived pretty long in the exhilarating world that drugs or strong waters seem to create and is trying to live now in the first bald desolation created by knocking them off.”

This somehow seems to fit our detective best, considering some of his proclivities.



A Review of Gross Anatomy?

Perennially I am surprised by Doctor Watson's seeming inability to identify human remains in this case. When he examines the voodoo implements found in the house is surprisingly undecided regarding one of the items: "At first, as I examined it, I thought that it was a mummified negro baby, and then it seemed a very twisted and ancient monkey. Finally, I was left in doubt as to whether it was animal or human."

I believe that—overwhelmingly—most civilians could have identified the remains as human or not. Granted, a single bone would have been far more difficult matter, but a *complete* specimen?

Perhaps the Good Doctor should have returned to his *alma mater* for a refresher course on Gross Anatomy.

Murillo's Peculiar Hesitation

Considering the kind of savage beast that he was, it seems strange that Murillo would have hesitated in getting rid of Miss Burnett, especially when he found out who she really was. And later, why would he risk taking her with

him—drugged—on a public conveyance, in this case as passenger on a train? It would have been much simpler (and safer) for him to send her to her Maker and stuff what's left in a trunk bound for Land's End. For someone so adept in avoiding enemies, he did not seem to be thinking very logically when it came to *señora* Durando.

Miss Burnet does not appear to have acted any better. Considering all the risks she was willing to take—and knowing the barbarity and violent cruelty exhibited in the killing that these desperate men were capable of—she acted very peculiarly. How could she possibly claim that she would not have given them Garcia's address if she had known what they were going to do to him? What did she expect they were going to do—invite him over for tea?

Murillo's minions also did not particularly shine in the IQ spectrum. There can be no question that Lopez acted stupidly by attacking Miss Burnett before she finished addressing the envelope. This then forced him to extract the address out of her, which led to his ending with an envelope addressed in a different hand.

This endemic foolishness extended to Garcia as well. Considering the kind of prey that he and his companions were after the different writing on the envelope should have raised his suspicions. This surely led to his death.



Then there is the matter of body disposal. Instead of leaving it lying in plain sight one much wonder why they would not see to it that Garcia's body be impossible, or at least difficult, to find? If they wanted to avoid burial surely there had to have been somewhere in a country setting a convenient well or better yet, outhouse in which to dispose of the corpse.

From their perspective, murdering Garcia was understandable; the man was an immediate danger to them. However, Miss Burnet was as dangerous to Murillo and his cohorts as the rest of her band—it should be recalled that it was she who led the others to him—which makes irrational his decision to keep her alive and not disposing of her as well. However one may have looked at the question, she certainly was more dangerous to them alive than dead.

An Atypical Case

From whichever corner one considers it, there can be no question that on this case Holmes and Watson were more than just slightly off their game. We witness the Good Doctor unable to tell man from beast when he examined the voodoo implements found in García's house, then we have Holmes—arguably the top detective of his (or any) generation—being humiliated by Baynes (who is essentially

a country cop) whom Holmes initially viewed patronizingly with some amusement. Of all the unpublished cases it is truly peculiar that our biographer would have selected this one and, even more peculiar, that Holmes would have agreed to its publication considering that it does not exactly enhance his reputation.

It is abundantly obvious that on practically every aspect of this investigation Baynes was one or more steps ahead of the Great Detective. It was Baynes (to Holmes' surprise) who



identified Murillo, who came up with the ruse of arresting the mulatto to expose the others, and who, from a comfortable hideout observed our sleuth approaching the house.

Finally, our sleuth misses the governess who, had it not been by Warner, would surely have been murdered.

Except for Baynes, practically everyone else seemed to have difficulties thinking straight. Even the Tiger of San Pedro, whom Watson described in the worst possible terms: "He had made his name as the most lewd and bloodthirsty tyrant that had ever governed any country with a pretense to civilisation." This dangerous, ruthless, astute ex-dictator, who has successfully avoided his enemies, uncharacteristically endangers himself by not having his acolytes dispose of Miss Burnett quickly and permanently. He has her drugged instead, risking unwanted attention as she is helped on to the train in an obviously wobbly condition. Why not just break her neck and take her with them in a trunk? With

his practice in disappearing into a different identity, aided by his considerable resources, leaving two bodies behind instead of only one would not have added much to his difficulties and risks.

Any efforts by the police to find the murderers of Garcia and Miss Burnet would have quickly declined as new felonious cases made their appearance.

All this goes to Holmes' somewhat unfounded deduction that “. . . Miss Burnet's age and character make it certain that my first idea that there might be a love interest in our story is out of the question.”

It is not impossible that in her quest to remain with Murillo in order to keep track of him, she might have been willing to sacrifice herself and had become more than a simple governess in his household. Such a theory could explain why the so-called Tiger of San Pedro did not have her promptly join Garcia. He might have prized her very personal services well-above the possible risk that her continued existence might represent; especially if her freedom was firmly under his control.



So one must celebrate Baynes' perspicacity. Throughout the case he kept at least one step ahead of Holmes. To his credit, however, Holmes did not hesitate to recognize the inspector's excellence, "You will rise high in your profession. You have instinct and intuition."

What else happened in 1892:

Empire

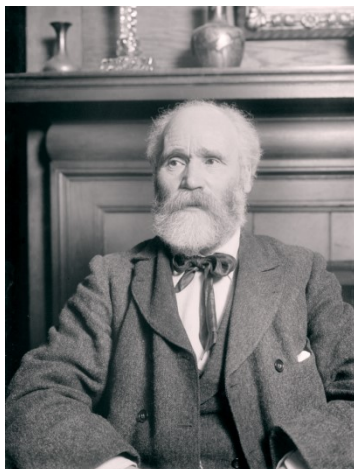
Britain and Germany agree on Cameroons.

Cape-Johannesburg railroad completed.

Durand Agreement defines the frontier between India and Afghanistan.

Matabele War.

Britain



National Mining strike.

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

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

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.

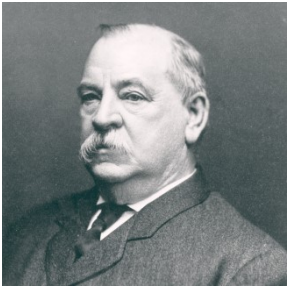
Prince Ito becomes Premier of Japan.

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.

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.

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

◀ Grover Cleveland elected U.S. president.

Baseball is officially invented.

France captures Dahomey.

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.



Rudolf Diesel patents his internal combustion engine.

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

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

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

First automatic telephone switchboard introduced.

Henry Ford designs his first motor vehicle.

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..."

All Sherlock Holmes photos have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.

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

Copyright © 2023 Alexander E. Braun