

SHERLOCK HOLMES

THE ADVENTURE OF
THE DYING DETEC-
TIVE · A NEW SHER-
LOCK HOLMES STORY
BY SIR A. CONAN
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THE
ADVENTURE
OF THE DYING
DETECTIVE

By

Sir A. Conan Doyle



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The Adventure of the Dying Detective

By SIR A. CONAN DOYLE

MRS. HUDSON, the landlady of Sherlock Holmes, was a long-suffering woman. Not only was her first-floor flat invaded at all hours by throngs of singular and often undesirable characters, but her remarkable lodger showed an eccentricity and irregularity in his life which must have sorely tried her patience.

His incredible untidiness, his addiction to music at strange hours, his occasional revolver practice within doors, his weird and often malodorous scientific experiments, and the atmosphere of violence and danger which hung around him made him the very worst tenant in London. On the other hand, his payments were princely. I have no doubt that the house might have been purchased at the price which Holmes paid for his rooms during the years that I was with him.

The landlady stood in the deepest awe of him, and never dared to interfere with

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him, however outrageous his proceedings might seem. She was fond of him, too, for he had a remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women. He disliked and distrusted the sex, but he was always a chivalrous opponent. Knowing how genuine was her regard for him, I listened earnestly to her story when she came to my rooms in the second year of my married life and told me of the sad condition to which my poor friend was reduced.

"He's dying, Dr. Watson," said she. "For three days he has been sinking and I doubt if he will last the day. He would not let me get a doctor. This morning when I saw his bones sticking out of his face and his great bright eyes looking at me, I could stand no more of it. 'With your leave or without it, Mr. Holmes, I am going for a doctor this very hour,' said I. 'Let it be Watson, then,' said he. I wouldn't waste an hour in coming to him, sir, or you may not see him alive."

I was horrified, for I had heard nothing of his illness. I need not say that I rushed for my coat and my hat. As we drove back I asked for the details. "There

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is little I can tell you, sir. He has been working at a case down at Rotherhithe in an alley near the river and he has brought this illness back with him. He took to his bed on Wednesday afternoon and has never moved since. For these three days neither food nor drink has passed his lips."

"Good God! Why did you not call in a doctor?"

"He wouldn't have it, sir. You know how masterful he is. I didn't dare to disobey him. But he's not long for this world, as you'll see for yourself the moment that you set eyes on him."

He was indeed a deplorable spectacle. In the dim light of a foggy November day the sick room was a gloomy spot, but it was that gaunt, wasted face staring at me from the bed which sent a chill to my heart. His eyes had the brightness of fever, there was a hectic flush upon either cheek, and dark crusts clung to his lips, the thin hands upon the coverlet twitched incessantly, his voice was croaking and spasmodic. He lay listlessly as I entered the room, but the sight of me brought a gleam of recognition to his eyes.

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"Well, Watson, we seem to have fallen upon evil days," said he in a feeble voice, but with something of his old carelessness of manner.

"My dear fellow!" I cried, approaching him.

"Stand back! Stand right back!" said he, with the sharp imperiousness which I had associated only with moments of crisis. "If you approach me, Watson, I shall order you out of the house!"

"But why?"

"Because it is my desire. Is that not enough?"

Yes, Mrs. Hudson was right. He was more masterful than ever. It was pitiful, however, to see his exhaustion.

"I only wished to help," I explained.

"Exactly! You will help best by doing what you are told."

"Certainly, Holmes."

He relaxed the austerity of his manner.

"You are not angry?" he asked, gasping for breath.

Poor devil, how could I be angry when I saw him lying in such a plight before me.

"It's for your own sake, Watson," he croaked.

"For *my* sake?"

"I know what is the matter with me. It is a coolie disease from Sumatra—a thing that the Dutch know more about than we, though they have made little of it up to date. One thing only is certain. It is infallibly deadly and it is horribly contagious."

He spoke now with a feverish energy, the long hands twitching and jerking as he motioned me away.

"Contagious by touch, Watson—that's it, by touch. Keep your distance and all is well."

"Good heavens, Holmes, do you suppose that such a consideration weighs with me for an instant? It would not affect me in the case of a stranger. Do you imagine it would prevent me from doing my duty to so old a friend?"

Again I advanced, but he repulsed me with a look of furious anger.

"If you will stand there I will talk. If you do not you must leave the room."

I have so deep a respect for the extraordinary qualities of Holmes that I

have always deferred to his wishes, even when I least understood them. But now all my professional instincts were aroused. Let him be my master elsewhere, I at least was his in a sick room.

"Holmes," said I, "you are not yourself. A sick man is but a child and so I will treat you. Whether you like it or not, I will examine your symptoms and treat you for them."

He looked at me with venomous eyes.

"If I am to have a doctor whether I will or not, let me at least have some one in whom I have confidence," said he.

"Then you have none in me?"

"In your friendship, certainly. But facts are facts Watson, and, after all, you are only a general practitioner with very limited experience and mediocre qualifications. It is painful to have to say these things, but you leave me no choice."

I was bitterly hurt.

"Such a remark is unworthy of you, Holmes. It shows me very clearly the state of your own nerves. But if you have no confidence in me, I would not intrude my services. Let me bring Sir

Jasper Meek or Penrose Fisher, or any of the best men in London. But some one you *must* have, and that is final. If you think that I am going to stand here and see you die without either helping you myself or bringing anyone else to help you, then you have mistaken your man."

"You mean well, Watson," said the sick man, with something between a sob and a groan. "Shall I demonstrate your own ignorance? What do you know, pray, of Tapanuli fever? What do you know of the black Formosa corruption?"

"I have never heard of either."

"There are many problems of disease, many strange pathological possibilities in the East, Watson." He paused after each sentence to collect his failing strength. "I have learned so much during some recent researches which have a medico-criminal aspect. It was in the course of them that I contracted this complaint. You can do nothing."

"Possibly not! But I happen to know that Dr. Ainstree, the greatest living authority upon tropical disease, is now in London. All remonstrance is useless,

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Holmes. I am going this instant to fetch him." I turned resolutely to the door.

Never have I had such a shock! In an instant with a tiger spring the dying man had intercepted me. I heard the sharp snap of a twisted key. The next moment he had staggered back to his bed, exhausted and panting after his one tremendous outflame of energy.

"You won't take the key from me by force, Watson. I've got you, my friend. Here you are and here you will stay until I will otherwise. But I'll humor you." (All this in little gasps with terrible struggles for breath between.) "You've only my own good at heart. Of course I know that very well. You shall have your way, but give me time to get my strength. Not now, Watson—not now. It's four o'clock. At six you can go."

"This is insanity, Holmes."

"Only two hours, Watson. I promise you will go at six. Are you content to wait?"

"I seem to have no choice."

"None in the world, Watson. Thank you, I need no help in arranging the

clothes. You will please keep your distance. Now, Watson, there is one other condition that I would make. You will seek help not from the men you mention but from the one that I choose."

"By all means."

"The first three sensible words that you have uttered since you entered this room, Watson. You will find some books over there. I am somewhat exhausted; I wonder how a battery feels when it pours electricity into a nonconductor. At six, Watson, we resume our conversation."

But it was destined to be resumed long before that hour and under circumstances which gave me a shock hardly second to that caused by his spring to the door. I had stood for some minutes looking at the silent figure in the bed. His face was almost covered by the clothes and he appeared to be asleep. Then, unable to settle down to reading, I walked slowly round the room, examining the pictures of celebrated criminals with which every wall was adorned. Finally, in my aimless perambulation I came to the mantelpiece. A litter of pipes, tobacco pouches, syringes, penknives, revolver cartridges,

and other débris was scattered over it. In the midst of these was a small black and white ivory box with a sliding lid. It was a neat little thing, and I had stretched out my hand to examine it more closely, when—

It was a dreadful cry that he gave—a yell which might have been heard down the street. My skin went cold and my hair bristled at that horrible scream. As I turned I caught a glimpse of a convulsed face and frantic eyes. I stood paralyzed with the little box in my hand.

“Put it down! Down, this instant, Watson, this instant, I say!” His head sank back upon the pillow and he gave a deep sigh of relief as I replaced the box upon the mantelpiece. “I hate to have my things touched, Watson. You know that I hate it. You fidget me beyond endurance. You a doctor—you are enough to drive a patient into an asylum. Sit down, man, and let me have my rest!”

The incident left a most unpleasant impression upon my mind. The violent and causeless excitement followed by this brutality of speech, so far removed from his usual suavity, showed me how deep

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was the disorganization of his mind. Of all ruins that of a noble mind is the most deplorable. I sat in silent dejection until the stipulated time had passed. He seemed to have been watching the clock, as well as I, for it was hardly six before he began to talk with the same feverish animation as before.

"Now, Watson," said he, "have you any change in your pocket?"

"Yes."

"Any silver?"

"A good deal."

"How many half crowns?"

"I have five."

"Ah, too few! Too few! How very unfortunate, Watson! However, such as they are you can put them in your watch pocket. And all the rest of your money in your left trouser pocket. Thank you. It will balance you so much better like that."

This was raving insanity. He shuddered and again made a sound between a cough and a sob.

"You will now light the gas, Watson, but you will be very careful that not for one instant shall it be more than half on.

I implore you to be careful, Watson. Thank you, that is excellent. No, you need not draw the blind. Now you will have the kindness to place some letters and papers upon this table within my reach. Thank you. Now some of that litter from the mantelpiece. Excellent, Watson! There is a sugar tongs there. Kindly raise that small ivory box with its assistance. Place it here among the papers. Good! You can now go and fetch Mr. Culverton Smith of 13 Lower Burke Street."

To tell the truth, my desire to fetch a doctor had somewhat weakened, for poor Holmes was so obviously delirious that it seemed dangerous to leave him. However, he was as eager now to consult the person named as he had been obstinate in refusing.

"I never heard the name," said I.

"Possibly not, my good Watson. It may surprise you to know that the man upon earth who is best versed in this disease is not a medical man but a planter. Mr. Culverton Smith is a well-known resident of Sumatra, now visiting London. An outbreak of the disease

upon his plantation, which was far distant from medical aid, caused him to study it himself with some rather far-reaching consequences. He is a very methodical person and I did not desire you to start before six because I was well aware that you would not find him in his study. If you could persuade him to come here and give us the benefit of his unique experience of this disease, the investigation of which has been his dearest hobby, I cannot doubt that he could help me."

I give Holmes's remarks as a consecutive whole, and will not attempt to indicate how they were interrupted by gaspings for breath and those clutchings of his hands which indicated the pain from which he was suffering.

His appearance had changed for the worse during the few hours that I had been with him. Those hectic spots were more pronounced, the eyes shone more brightly out of darker hollows, and a cold sweat glimmered upon his brow. He still retained, however, the jaunty gallantry of his speech. To the last gasp he would always be the master.

"You will tell him exactly how you have left me," said he. "You will convey the very impression which is in your own mind: a dying man—a dying and delirious man. Indeed, I cannot think why the whole bed of the ocean is not one solid mass of oysters, so prolific the creatures seem. Ah, I am wandering! What was I saying, Watson?"

"My directions for Mr. Culverton Smith."

"Ah, yes, I remember. My life depends upon it. Plead with him, Watson. There is no good feeling between us. His nephew, Watson—I had suspicions of foul play and I allowed him to see it. The boy died horribly. He has a grudge against me. You will soften him, Watson. Beg him, pray him, get him here by any means. He can save me—only he."

"I will bring him in a cab if I have to carry him down to it."

"You will do nothing of the sort. You will persuade him to come. And then you will return in front of him. Make any excuse so as not to come with him. Don't forget, Watson. You won't fail me. You never did fail me. No doubt there are

natural enemies which limit the increase of the creatures. You and I, Watson, we have done our part. Shall the world then be overrun by oysters? No, no, horrible! You'll convey all that is in your mind."

I left him full of the image of this magnificent intellect, babbling like a foolish child. He had handed me the key, and with a happy thought I took it with me lest he should lock himself in. Mrs. Hudson was waiting, trembling and weeping in the passage. Behind me, as I passed from the flat, I heard Holmes's high, thin voice in some delirious chant. Below, as I stood whistling for a cab, a man came on me through the fog.

"How is Mr. Holmes, sir?" he asked.

It was an old acquaintance, Inspector Morton of Scotland Yard, dressed in unofficial tweeds.

"He is very ill," I answered.

He looked at me in a most singular fashion. Had it not been too fiendish, I could have imagined that the gleam of the fanlight showed exultation in his face.

"I heard some rumor of it," said he. The cab had driven up, and I left him.

Lower Burke Street proved to be a line

of fine houses lying in the vague borderland between Notting Hill and Kensington. The particular one at which my cabman pulled up had an air of smug and demure respectability in its old-fashioned iron railings, its massive folding door, and its shining brass work. All was in keeping with a solemn butler, who appeared framed in the pink radiance of a tinted electric light behind him.

"Yes, Mr. Culverton Smith is in. Dr. Watson! Very good, sir, I will take up your card."

My humble name and title did not appear to impress Mr. Culverton Smith. Through the half-open door I heard a high, petulant, penetrating voice.

"Who is this person? What does he want? Dear me, Staples, how often have I said that I am not to be disturbed in my hours of study!"

There came a gentle flow of soothing explanation from the butler.

"Well, I won't see him, Staples. I can't have my work interrupted like this. I am not at home. Say so. Tell him to come in the morning if he really must see me."

Again the gentle murmur.

"Well, well, give him that message. He can come in the morning, or he can stay away. My work must not be hindered."

I thought of Holmes tossing upon his bed of sickness, and counting the minutes perhaps until I should bring help to him. It was not a time to stand upon ceremony. His life depended upon my promptness. Before the apologetic butler had delivered his message I had pushed past him and was in the room.

With a shrill cry of anger a man rose from a reclining chair beside the fire. I saw a great yellow face, coarse-grained and greasy, with heavy double chin and two sullen, menacing gray eyes, which glared at me from under tufted and sandy brows. A high, bald head had a small velvet smoking cap poised coquettishly upon one side of its pink curve. The skull was of enormous capacity, and yet as I looked down I saw to my amazement that the figure of the man was small and frail, twisted in the shoulders and back like one who has suffered from rickets in his childhood.

"What's this?" he cried in a high,

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screaming voice. "What is the meaning of this intrusion? Didn't I send you word that I would see you to-morrow morning?"

"I am sorry," said I, "but the matter cannot be delayed. Mr. Sherlock Holmes—"

The mention of my friend's name had an extraordinary effect upon the little man. The look of anger passed in an instant from his face. His features became tense and alert.

"Have you come from Holmes?" he asked.

"I have just left him."

"What about Holmes? How is he?"

"He is desperately ill. That is why I have come."

The man motioned me to a chair and turned to resume his own. As he did so I caught a glimpse of his face in the mirror over the mantelpiece. I could have sworn that it was set in a malicious and abominable smile. Yet I persuaded myself that it must have been some nervous contraction which I had surprised, for he turned to me an instant later with genuine concern upon his features.

"I am sorry to hear this," said he. "I only know Mr. Holmes through some business dealings which we have had, but I have every respect for his talents and his character. He is an amateur of crime, as I am of disease. For him the villain, for me the microbe. There are my prisons," he continued, pointing to a row of bottles and jars which stood upon a side table. "Among those gelatin cultures some of the very worst offenders in the world are now doing time."

"It was on account of your special knowledge that Mr. Holmes desired to see you. He has a high opinion of you and thought that you were the one man in London who could help him."

The little man started, and the jaunty smoking cap slid to the floor.

"Why?" he asked. "Why should Mr. Holmes think that I could help him in his trouble?"

"Because of your knowledge of Eastern diseases."

"But why should he think that this disease which he has contracted is Eastern?"

"Because, in some professional inquiry,

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he has been working among Chinese sailors down in the docks."

Mr. Culverton Smith smiled pleasantly and picked up his smoking cap.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said he. "I trust the matter is not so grave as you suppose. How long has he been ill?"

"About three days."

"Is he delirious?"

"Occasionally."

"Tut, tut! This sounds serious. It would be inhuman not to answer his call. I very much resent any interruption to my work, Dr. Watson, but this case is certainly exceptional. I will come with you at once."

I remembered Holmes's injunction.

"I have another appointment," said I.

"Very good! I will go alone. I have a note of Mr. Holmes's address. You can rely upon my being there within half an hour at most."

It was with a sinking heart that I re-entered Holmes's bedroom. For all that I knew, the worst might have happened in my absence. To my enormous relief he had improved greatly in the interval. His

appearance was as ghastly as ever, but all trace of delirium had left him, and he spoke in a feeble voice, it is true, but with even more than his usual crispness and lucidity.

"Well, did you see him, Watson?"

"Yes, he is coming."

"Admirable, Watson. Admirable! You are the best of messengers."

"He wished to return with me."

"That would never do, Watson. That would be obviously impossible. Did he ask what ailed me?"

"I told him about the Chinese in the East End."

"Exactly! Well, Watson, you have done all that a good friend could. You can now disappear from the scene."

"I must wait and hear his opinion, Holmes."

"Of course you must. But I have reasons to suppose that this opinion would be very much more frank and valuable if he imagines that we are alone. There is just room behind the head of my bed, Watson."

"My dear Holmes!"

"I fear there is no alternative, Watson."

The room does not lend itself to concealment, which is as well, as it is the less likely to arouse suspicion. But just there, Watson, I fancy that it could be done." Suddenly he sat up with a rigid intentness upon his haggard face. "There are the wheels, Watson. Quick, man, if you love me! And don't budge whatever happens—whatever happens, do you hear? Don't speak! Don't move! Just listen with all your ears." Then in an instant his sudden access of strength departed and his masterful, purposeful talk droned away into the low, vague murmurings of a semidelirious man.

From the hiding place into which I had been so swiftly hustled I heard the foot-falls upon the stair, with the opening and the closing of the bedroom door. Then, to my surprise, there came a long silence, broken only by the heavy breathing and gaspings of the sick man. I could imagine that our visitor was standing by the bedside and looking down at the sufferer. At last that strange hush was broken.

"Holmes!" he cried. "Holmes!" in the insistent tone of one who awakens a sleeper. "Can't you hear me, Holmes?"

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There was a rustling as if he had shaken the sick man roughly by the shoulder.

"Is that you, Mr. Smith?" Holmes whispered. "I hardly dared hope that you would come."

The other laughed.

"I should imagine not," he said. "And yet, you see, I am here. Coals of fire, Holmes—coals of fire!"

"It is very good of you—very noble of you. I appreciate your special knowledge."

Our visitor sniggered.

"You do. You are fortunately the only man in London who does. Do you know what is the matter with you?"

"The same," said Holmes.

"Ah, you recognize the symptoms?"

"Only too well."

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised, Holmes. I shouldn't be surprised if it *were* the same. A bad lookout for you if it is. Poor Victor was a dead man on the fourth day—a strong, hearty young fellow. It was certainly, as you said, very surprising that he should have contracted an out-of-the-way Asiatic disease in the heart of London—a disease, too, of which

I had made such a very special study. Singular coincidence, Holmes. Very smart of you to notice it, but rather uncharitable to suggest that it was cause and effect."

"I knew that you did it."

"Oh, you did, did you? Well, you couldn't prove it anyhow. But what do you think of yourself spreading reports about me like that, and then crawling to me for help the moment you are in trouble? What sort of a game is that—eh?"

I heard the rasping, labored breathing of the sick man. "Give me the water!" he gasped.

"You're precious near your end, my friend, but I don't want you to go till I have had a word with you. That's why I give you water. There, don't slop it about! That's right. Can you understand what I say?"

Holmes groaned.

"Do what you can for me. Let bygones be bygones," he whispered. "I'll put the words out of my head—I swear I will. Only cure me and I'll forget it."

"Forget what?"

"Well, about Victor Sav^uage's death. You as good as admitted just now that you had done it. I'll forget it."

"You can forget it or remember it. Just as you like. I don't see you in the witness box. Quite another shaped box, my good Holmes, I assure you. It matters nothing to me that you should know how my nephew died. It's not him we are talking about. It's you."

"Yes, yes."

"The fellow who came for me—I've forgotten his name—said that you had contracted it down in the East End among the sailors."

"I could only account for it so."

"You are proud of your brains, Holmes, are you not? Think yourself smart, don't you? You came across some one who was smarter this time. Now cast your mind back, Holmes. Can you think of no other way you could have got this thing?"

"I can't think. My mind is gone. For heaven's sake help me!"

"Yes, I will help you. I'll help you to understand just where you are and how you got there. I'd like you to know before you die."

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"Give me something to ease my pain."

"Painful, is it? Yes, the coolies used to do some squealing toward the end. Takes you as cramp, I fancy."

"Yes, yes, it is cramp."

"Well, you can hear what I say, anyhow. Listen now! Can you remember any unusual incident in your life just about the time your symptoms began?"

"No, no, nothing."

"Think again."

"I'm too ill to think."

"Well, then, I'll help you. Did anything come by post?"

"By post?"

"A box by chance?"

"I'm fainting, I'm gone."

"Listen, Holmes!" There was a sound as if he was shaking the dying man, and it was all that I could do to hold myself quiet in my hiding place. "You must hear me. You *shall* hear me. Do you remember a box—an ivory box? It came on Wednesday. You opened it—do you remember?"

"Yes, yes, I opened it. There was a sharp spring inside it. Some joke—"

"It was no joke, as you will find to

your cost. You fool, you would have it and you have got it. Who asked you to cross my path? If you had left me alone I would not have hurt you."

"I remember," Holmes gasped. "The spring! It drew blood. This box—this on the table."

"The very one, by George! and it may as well leave the room in my pocket. There goes your last shred of evidence. But you have the truth now, Holmes, and you can die with the knowledge that I killed you. You knew too much of the fate of Victor Savage, so I have sent you to share it. You are very near your end, Holmes. I will sit here and I will watch you die."

Holmes's voice had sunk to an almost inaudible whisper.

"What is that?" said Smith. "Turn up the gas. Ah, the shadows begin to fall, do they? Yes, I will turn it up that I may see you the better." He crossed the room and the light suddenly brightened. "Is there any other little service that I can do you, my friend?"

"A match and a cigarette."

I nearly called out in my joy and my

amazement. He was speaking in his natural voice—a little weak, perhaps, but the very voice I knew. There was a long pause and I felt that Culverton Smith was standing in silent amazement, looking down at his companion.

"What's the meaning of this?" I heard him say at last in a dry, rasping tone.

"The best way of successfully acting a part is to be it," said Holmes. "I give you my word that for three days I have tasted neither food, nor drink, until you were good enough to pour me out that glass of water. But it is the tobacco which I find most irksome. Ah, here *are* some cigarettes." I heard the striking of a match. "That is very much better. Hullo, hullo! do I hear the step of a friend?"

There were footfalls outside, the door opened, and Inspector Morton appeared.

"All is in order and this is your man," said Holmes.

The officer gave the usual cautions:

"I arrest you on the charge of the murder of one Victor Savage," he concluded.

"And you might add of the attempted

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murder of one Sherlock Holmes," remarked my friend with a chuckle. "To save an invalid trouble, Inspector, Mr. Culverton Smith was good enough to give our signal by turning up the gas. By the way, the prisoner has a small box in the right-hand pocket of his coat which it would be as well to remove. Thank you! I would handle it gingerly if I were you. Put it down here. It may play its part in the trial."

There was a sudden rush and a scuffle, followed by the clash of iron and a cry of pain.

"You'll only get yourself hurt," said the inspector. "Stand still, will you?" There was the click of the closing handcuffs.

"A nice trap!" cried the high, snarling voice. "It will bring *you* into the dock, Holmes, not me. He asked me to come here to cure him. I was sorry for him and I came. Now he will pretend, no doubt, that I have said anything which he may invent which will corroborate his insane suspicions. You can lie as you like, Holmes. My word is always as good as yours."

"Good heavens!" cried Holmes. "I had totally forgotten him. My dear Watson, I owe you a thousand apologies. To think that I should have overlooked you! I need not introduce you to Mr. Culverton Smith, since I understand that you met somewhat earlier in the evening. Have you the cab below? I will follow you when I am dressed, for I may be of some use at the station."

"I never needed it more," said Holmes, as he refreshed himself with a glass of claret and some biscuits in the intervals of his toilet. "However, as you know, my habits are irregular and such a feat means less to me than to most men. It was very essential that I should impress Mrs. Hudson with the reality of my condition, since she was to convey it to you, and you in turn to him. You won't be offended, Watson. You will realize that among your many talents dissimulation finds no place, and that if you had shared my secret you would never have been able to impress Smith with the urgent necessity of his presence, which was the vital point of the whole scheme. Knowing his vindictive nature, I was perfectly certain

that he would come to look upon his handiwork."

"But your appearance, Holmes—your ghastly face?"

"Three days of absolute fast does not improve one's beauty, Watson. For the rest there is nothing which a sponge may not cure. With vaseline upon one's forehead, belladonna in one's eyes, rouge over the cheekbones, and crust of beeswax round one's lips, a very satisfying effect can be produced. Malingering is a subject upon which I have sometimes thought of writing a monograph. A little occasional talk about half crowns, oysters, or any other extraneous subject produces a pleasing effect of delirium."

"But why would you not let me near you, since there was in truth no infection?"

"Can you ask, my dear Watson? Do you imagine that I have no respect for your medical talents? Could I fancy that your astute judgment would pass a dying man who, however weak, had no rise of pulse or temperature? At four yards I could deceive you. If I failed to do so who would bring my Smith within my

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grasp? No, Watson, I would not touch that box. You can just see it if you look at it sideways where the sharp spring like a viper's tooth emerges as you open it. I dare say it was by some such device that poor Savage, who stood between this monster and a reversion, was done to death. My correspondence, however, is, as you know, a varied one and I am somewhat upon my guard against any packages which reach me. It was clear to me, however, that by pretending that he had really succeeded in his design I might surprise a confession. That pretense I have carried out with the thoroughness of the true artist. Thank you, Watson, you must help me on with my coat. When we have finished at the police station. I think that something nutritious at Simpson's would not be out of place."

COMMENTARY ON THE
COLLIER'S CHRISTMAS
1913 REPRINT OF THE
ADVENTURE OF THE
DYING DETECTIVE • A
THEN-NEW SHERLOCK
HOLMES STORY BY SIR
A. CONAN DOYLE • RE-
PRINTED AGAIN HERE,
IN 2025, AND PRESENT-
ED TO YOU WITH THE
COMPLIMENTS OF THE
GREEN BAG, INC.

EASTER MMXXV

A Small Case-Book

By ROSS E. DAVIES

Readers of the November 22, 1913 issue of *Collier's Weekly* magazine had the joy of taking in Arthur Conan Doyle's new Sherlock Holmes story, "The Adventure of the Dying Detective."

Recipients of the nifty little Christmas 1913 keepsake booklet of "The Dying Detective" put out by the advertising department at *Collier's* (and reproduced here) got to read almost exactly the same story. The typesetters did a near-perfect job of making sure that the text of "The Dying Detective" in the booklet matched the text in the magazine. Indeed, there are just three notable differences between the booklet and magazine texts. The first two differences appear to be intentional and definitely are not defects. The third is, alas, a typographical finish-line fail.

Difference No. 1: Capital letters. In the magazine version, "The Dying Detective" opens with a three-line dropped capital letter and is

broken into sections by 14 two-line dropped capitals, each accompanied by one or two words in all capitals. In the booklet, the story opens with a three-line dropped capital and two words in all capitals, and contains no other dropped capitals or words in all capitals.

Difference No. 2: Paragraphing. The first paragraph in the magazine is split into two paragraphs in the booklet, and the fourth and fifth paragraphs in the magazine are combined into one paragraph in the booklet.

Difference No. 3: Punctuation. The comma in the last sentence in the magazine — “When we have finished at the police station, I think that something nutritious at Simpson’s would not be out of place.” — is replaced with a period in the booklet, converting a grammatical ending to the story into an ungrammatical one: “When we have finished at the police station. I think that something nutritious at Simpson’s would not be out of place.” Tragic.

So, differences between the texts of the *Collier’s* magazine and booklet versions of “The Dying Detective” do not provide much room for interesting investigation.

THE STRAND

While there is not much worthy of study in the textual differences between the two *Collier's* versions of "The Dying Detective," there is at least one difference between both *Collier's* versions and the one in *The Strand Magazine* of December 1913 that might merit a closer look. On page 609 of *The Strand*, while conversing with Dr. John Watson, Holmes says, "Strange how the brain controls the brain!"

That sentence does not appear in the *Collier's* magazine or booklet.

It is, however, in the autograph manuscript of "The Dying Detective," on page 8 of the facsimile published by the Westminster Libraries and the Arthur Conan Doyle Society in 1991. It also appears in some American newspapers — for example, the *Chicago Inter Ocean* on December 21, 1913, and the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on January 4, 1914 — but not others — for example, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Minneapolis Journal* on December 21, 1913. And it is in the version of the story published a bit later, in 1917, by the George H. Doran Company in *His Last Bow*.

These inconsistencies may be of no greater moment than the typo at the end of the *Collier's* booklet, but we can only test their value by further inquiry, which is beyond the scope of this brief introduction.

BACK TO THE BOOKLET

In any event, the *Collier's* booklet reproduced here is replete with interest all by itself — its commercial and cultural contexts, its functions, its physical characteristics, and so on. Randall Stock explores these topics and others in his scholarly essay about the booklet, which you can read here, starting on the next page, and (with illustrations) in the 2025 edition of the *Baker Street Almanac*. Enjoy the story, and the scholarship!

The First Edition of ‘The Dying Detective’: A 1913 Christmas Gift

By RANDALL STOCK

When is a Sherlock Holmes first edition not a first edition? Collectors can argue about English and American editions, or authorized versus pirate copies. Some might debate what constitutes the first American edition of *The Sign of [the] Four*.

Yet there is also a rather obscure volume produced between the initial magazine appearance of a Holmes short story and its later publication in a collected edition. The original of that rare volume, the first separate American edition of “The Dying Detective,” remains beyond the reach of most people. The facsimile that fills the first 38 pages of the booklet you are holding now makes this artifact available to a wider audience.

HOLMES IN AMERICA

The American magazine *Collier's Weekly* famously made Conan Doyle an offer he could not refuse in 1903. He resurrected Holmes, initially with an 8-story commitment, then extended it to 12 tales, and eventually finished with a 13-story series. *Collier's* carried all the stories for *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, publishing them from September 1903 to January 1905.

Conan Doyle produced two more Holmes adventures in 1908, and *Collier's* again published them in America. However, the firm did not obtain the next three Holmes tales. The New York edition of *The Strand Magazine* carried "The Devil's Foot" and "The Red Circle" in early 1911, while *The American Magazine* brought out "Lady Frances Carfax" that December.

Holmes finally returned to *Collier's* after a five-year hiatus. Conan Doyle wrote "The Dying Detective" in the summer of 1913. He signed and dated its manuscript on July 27, 1913. The story appeared a few months later in the November 22, 1913 issue of *Collier's*.

At only 5,800 words, it is one of the shortest tales in the Canon. Yet *Collier's* managed to ex-

tend it across five large pages, in part by including four Frederic Dorr Steele illustrations. The magazine also featured the story on its cover along with another Steele illustration.

Like many Holmes short stories, “The Dying Detective” appeared in American newspapers after its initial magazine publication. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Minneapolis Journal*, *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, *Pittsburgh Press*, *Detroit Free Press*, and the *New York World* all reprinted the story on December 21, 1913. It probably also appeared in other newspapers, but it is an additional publication by *Collier’s* that deserves special attention.

PAYING THE BILLS

Advertising was an important part of the *Collier’s* business model. The magazine carried more automobile ads from 1903 through 1908 than competitors such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, *McClure’s*, and *Scientific American*. Advertisements made up one-third of the issue with “The Dying Detective.”

While *The Strand Magazine* also included advertising, its ads generally appeared at the front and back of an issue. American magazines

like *Collier's* gave greater prominence to their advertisements, and often placed them next to the text of a story or article. That increased the effectiveness of the ads and allowed magazines to charge more for the ad space.

A *Collier's* reader initially saw three full-page ads before getting to "The Dying Detective." The first three pages of the story did not include any ads. However, *Collier's* frequently split their main stories and articles, continuing them in the second half of the magazine alongside ads. The text of "The Dying Detective" jumps from page 7 to page 24, and concludes on page 25, with ads on both pages.

Many *Collier's* issues included material targeted at potential advertising customers. A long-running series of numbered "bulletins" promoted good practices for businesses, including the use of advertising. Signed by the magazine's advertising manager, number 145 in the series appeared on page 37 of the issue with "The Dying Detective."

People selling ads often provide business gifts to their customers. At *Collier's*, the advertising department produced special publications that they probably gave to both existing and potential

ad buyers. These publications reprinted material from the magazine.

For Christmas 1905, this took the form of a 30-page booklet entitled *Mr. Dooley on Timely Topics of the Day*. It reprinted three humorous pieces by Finley Peter Dunne from the November 4, November 18, and Christmas issues of *Collier's*. In 1908, the company produced the 22-page *Bridge Whist* by George Fitch, “compliments of E.C. Patterson, manager [of the] advertising department.” That humorous depiction of bridge whist came from the August 1 issue of the magazine.

While *Collier's* probably churned out similar material in other years, most recipients likely disposed of such ephemera. The 1913 publication stands out as probably the most elaborate, and certainly the most collectible, of these promotional items. It included the first separate American edition of “The Dying Detective.”

A CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

The 1913 production consists of four bound booklets held in a plain gray cardboard slipcase. That slipcase carries a white paper label on its

right side measuring approximately 3.5 x 2.75 inches. The label gives the title of each booklet and credits *Collier's*. Printed in black ink within a triple-ruled frame, it reads:

Salesmanship. Your House in Order. Editorial Gems. Sherlock Holmes. These booklets containing reprints of articles and editorials from *Collier's Weekly* are sent to you as a greeting from the Advertising Department. Christmas MCMXIII.

Smaller than mass-market paperbacks, the booklets measure about 5.75 x 4.1 inches. They are bound in gray paper over boards with a vellum spine, although a copy of "Your House in Order" held by Glen Miranker uses tan-colored paper. The booklet title appears in gilt on the front cover, and on the spine in black ink on a white label. Spine labels read upwards from the bottom. Cover and spine titles match the titles on the slipcase label.

Booklet length ranges from 36 to 45 pages. While the booklets clearly make up a set, including volume numbers on their title pages, their front matter reveals minor style and wording variations. The title page for each booklet

identifies the publisher as the “Advertising Department *Collier’s Weekly*,” and provides the following information:

Vol. I: Salesmanship: Rule-of-Thumb Science
by William Maxwell.

Vol. II: Your House in Order by Peter Clark
Macfarlane.

Vol. III: Editorial Gems from *Collier’s*.

Vol. IV: The Adventure of the Dying Detective
by Sir A. Conan Doyle.

Each booklet includes a presentation page with similar wording. For Volume I, it reads:

These articles by William Maxwell are reprinted from the July 12 & July 19, 1913, issues of *Collier’s The National Weekly* & are presented to you in this form with the compliments of the Advertising Department. Christmas MCMXIII. P.F. Collier & Son, Inc.

The comparable page in the Holmes volume reads as follows:

The Adventure of the Dying Detective. A New Sherlock Holmes Story by Sir A. Conan Doyle. Reprinted from the November 22, 1913, issue of *Collier’s The National Weekly*

is presented to you with the compliments of
the Advertising Department. Christmas
MCMXIII. P.F. Collier & Son, Inc.

All the presentation pages include the facsimile signature of A.C.G. Hammesfahr, the *Collier's* Advertising Manager. Hammesfahr started in their advertising department in the early 1900s and became its Western Manager around 1907. The firm promoted him to the overall Advertising Manager position in 1912, and then to General Manager of *Collier's* in 1916. He resigned from the company in 1919.

Two of the booklets include illustrations. The first volume, *Salesmanship*, carries one illustration by W.J. Enright from the associated July 12 issue of *Collier's*. It faces the opening text of the article. The Holmes booklet also contains one illustration facing the story's opening page. See the next section for more about it.

The phrase "with the compliments of the Advertising Department" on each presentation page shows that this set was a gift rather than something sold to the public. The slipcase label mentions "sent to you as a greeting." It suggests they mailed most or all of the sets rather than

having a salesperson give them to the recipients personally.

The slipcase label and presentation pages list a general publication date of “Christmas MCMXIII.” They also describe the content as “reprints.” Given the November 22 magazine date for “The Dying Detective,” the firm probably mailed the booklets in early December.

DYING FOR DATA, DATA, DATA!

The cover, spine, running heads, and title page for each of the first three volumes reflect a standard booklet title. Volume 4 takes a different approach. Instead of “The Adventure of the Dying Detective,” the cover, spine, and running heads use “Sherlock Holmes.”

This is not purely a length issue. A shortened “The Dying Detective” would fit on the cover and spine, and in the running heads. Instead, *Collier's* chose to identify the character rather than the story.

This focus on the iconic brand of “Sherlock Holmes” provides a stronger promotional pitch to ad buyers. That would be true for any Holmes story, but it is even more applicable for this tale.

Its title has both the general negative connotation of “dying” and a suggestion that it could be the last appearance of Holmes. Neither advances the purpose of getting people to think about placing ads in future issues.

After leading with the Holmes brand on the booklet cover, the firm split the difference on the presentation page by mentioning both Holmes and the story title. The presentation page exactly matches the phrasing on both the magazine’s cover and the story’s opening page in that issue:

The Adventure of the Dying Detective
A New Sherlock Holmes Story
By Sir A. Conan Doyle.

The booklet also emphasized the Holmes brand by including a well-known Frederic Dorr Steele illustration. While Steele provided five illustrations in total for the magazine release of “The Dying Detective,” the advertising department did not include any of them. Instead, it chose a variation of Steele’s 1903 cover for “The Norwood Builder.” The firm previously used that cover illustration in 1903 advertising for the series and in volume one of *Conan Doyle’s Best Books*.

The 1903 illustration featured Holmes in his dressing gown looking at a handprint on a wall. This 1913 version replaced the handprint with a thumbnail portrait of Conan Doyle. The portrait almost certainly came from a drawing by “JGS” in *Collier’s* September 12, 1903 issue that was part of a full-page ad for the upcoming “Return of Sherlock Holmes.”

As is common with Holmes stories, the text of “The Dying Detective” varies slightly between the English and American magazines. However, there are no significant textual variations between *Collier’s Weekly* and the advertising department booklet. Compositors either typeset the magazine and the booklet from the same source, or set one from the other.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

For better readability, I standardized capitalization and italics when transcribing labels and text from various booklet pages. The originals could be in all caps or use differing font styles. See the facsimile (and related photos in the 2025 *Baker Street Almanac*) for the original usage.

This paper corrects a few minor errors and omissions about “The Dying Detective” in the

revised Green and Gibson *Bibliography of A. Conan Doyle* (2000). For the first serial appearance in *Collier's Weekly*, the *Bibliography* lists only three Steele illustrations instead of the actual four, and does not mention the fifth (cover) illustration. It only cites the *Detroit Free Press* appearance for the newspaper reprints, and the author's name for *Your House in Order* is actually spelled "Peter Clark Macfarlane."

A version of this paper with photos is available in the 2025 *Baker Street Almanac*. My *Best of Sherlock Holmes* website includes news and details on other Conan Doyle and Sherlockian rarities at <<https://www.bestofsherlock.com>>. Contact me via my website if you have questions or corrections.

Thanks to Glen Miranker and Ross Davies for providing photos of the booklets and answering my numerous questions.

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The online version of this booklet
(available soon at www.greenbag.org)
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