



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

“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 varies, depending on which Canon expert one consults. However, there is a majority as to the year in which the case took place, 1902, as can be seen on the table on the right.

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.

Notable Quotes:

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

“Bleat, Watson — unmitigated bleat!”

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

<i>The Adventure of the Red Circle</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>None</i>
<i>Baring-Gold</i>	<i>Wednesday, September 24, 1902</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>January 1897</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1881-1887</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>January 1896</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>January 1893</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>1897, possibly February</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>February 1902</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Mid-February 1902</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Tuesday, January 6, 1885</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1902</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Winter 1895-1902</i>

The Linguistic Deduction



Holmes’ deduction that the mysterious lodger did not speak English well, because she asked for “match” instead of “matches” is not only solid, but inspired. However, according to him, he based this deduction upon the belief that she probably had to look up the English word for “match” out of a dictionary, because “a dictionary would give the noun but not the plural.”

I have English dictionaries dating back to the time (one of which defines uranium as “a yellow oxide of little value, first isolated from pitchblende by Klaproth in 1789.” Wonderful!), and they invariably provide a word’s plural. Not owning any bilingual dictionaries of the time, I can only go by my experience with modern dictionaries, and these also provide the plural of the words; this is especially true if the noun in question stands for something that almost always comes in numbers, such as matches, cigarettes, eyes, and grapes.

“I caught a glimpse of a dark, beautiful, somewhat fair-looking girl leaning at the narrow opening of the doorway.”

The Incredible Discovery

This is not the only case we find in the Sacred Writings in which someone desperate to escape from some nemesis from a previous life (DANC, GLOR, and STUD pop into mind right away), takes extreme measures and exerts great efforts to disappear, but is nevertheless found by the foe.

How could Gorgiano have possibly have tracked the Luccas—Emilia in this case—to Mrs. Warren's? When one considers the way Gennaro secreted away his wife into her hiding place and the fact that she would not even peek through the window, the whole thing appears improbable. Added to this is the fact that even had Gennaro been located and followed, he ensured that he would not be near his wife—would not even write to her—and solely used the newspaper's agony column to communicate with her. The result seems to be rather improbable.

Sexual Writing

== Sexual Writing ==

According to Holmes, "The printed messages, as is now evident, were to prevent her sex being discovered by her writing." I always have problems with this. This kind of comment was fairly common in the literature of the time. However, I remain unconvinced. While it is true that often (not always) an expert is able to make a determination of the writer's sex, it still requires an expert.

Doubtless, Holmes would have been able to do this at a glance, but I rather suspect that this would be easier today than it was back then. I caught the tail end of the requirement to master calligraphy using pen and ink (blotches, blotches!). We learnt from exercise books intended for *both* boys and girls, not different ones for each sex. The result was that the forming of the letters was the same for both sexes.

While eventually, of course, one did develop a personal style, the result did not resemble what is in fashion today, when some ladies affect cutesy little curlicues over the letter "i" or write with colored, often odoriferous, inks. What say you, Hounds?

The Peculiar Interpretation



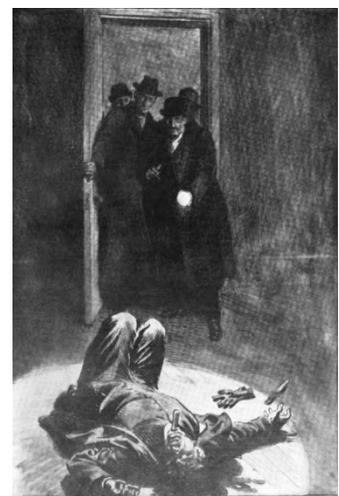
It always puzzles me how Holmes did not call in the police, because everything that had been going on—including a message stating, "Beware! Danger!"—may bear some more innocent interpretation"! What did the Great Detective need to call the law, ... --- ...?

The Pinkertons

Members of this organization appear in two of the canonical stories, as intrepid bloodhounds of the law. Holmes' admiration seems somewhat ill-placed considering the somewhat mottled history of the group.

That being said it is interesting that it is not the American police that are after Gorgiano, but a private detective agency with no official standing. This makes me believe that our Italian thug was just that—a thug, run-of-the-mill murderer. Someone the police would be very happy to collar, but would not exert an international effort to accomplish.

Conclusion? The Pinkertons did not act unless they had a client. If they were searching for Gorgiano beyond the borders of the United States it had to be because someone—individual or group and not the government—was footing the bill. Whoever wanted Gorgiano found most likely had a strong interest in ruining his health—probably an enemy or a



"My opinion! It's black, couldn't it? From the American collection!"

rival criminal organization; the Pinkertons weren't too choosy about their clients as long as they had ready cash.

Something else to consider is that a Pinkerton agent in England would have had no authority whatsoever; he would be just another private citizen—a foreigner (American!) at that. Since there was no mention that Leverton had any authority or backing from any level or branch of the American government that British authorities might recognize, why was Gregson so ready to cooperate with him, including Leverton in an official investigation? It does not appear that there was even an outstanding warrant for Gorgiano's arrest!

A Odd Communication with the Police

Emilia told Holmes that her husband "wished to be free that he might communicate with both the American and with the Italian police." This is understandable from the perspective that the police of either country would have been happy to get a hold of Gorgiano. But that why would Gennaro not contact the English police as well? Even if he had been able to reveal the whereabouts of Gorgiano to the Americans and Italians that would have done him no good, because they still would have been unable to do anything to intervene.

Even if at first Scotland Yard did not believe him, a check with their colleagues on both continents would have soon confirmed the story and Gennaro would have had a somewhat more substantial ally at his back. Leverton must have approached the Yarders; however, he would have later encountered the problem that Gorgiano would have been arrested by British authorities, and it is very unlikely that he would have been given custody.

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.

◀ Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War. Casualties: 5,774 British and 4,000 Boers killed.

Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.

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

Britain

Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.

Anglo-Japanese Treaty, for mutual defense and to maintain status quo in Far East recognizes the independence of China and Korea.



Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designs Liverpool Cathedral.

◀ 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.

Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.

World

Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France is 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.

Public Health Act in France improves artisan living conditions.



Aswan Dam opened.

St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.

◀ U.S.A. acquires perpetual control over Panama Canal. Control is held until 1977, when President Jimmy Carter turns canal over to Panama, which assumes final control in 1999.

White settlement of Kenya begins.

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—154 recordings in all.

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

Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

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

Trans-Pacific Cable laid.

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..."

Email: CourageousMurray@aol.com