



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

then at the time Holmes was 48 years old and Watson 50.

Main Characters:

Mrs Mrs. Warren, elderly, respectable landlady of the boarding house where Emilia Lucca was taken to hide. Gennaro Lucca, young Italian man who fled to New York, then to London with his wife. Emilia Lucca, Gennaro's wife. Giuseppe Gorgiano, a senior member of the Red Circle, a notorious Neapolitan criminal society. Inspector Tobias Gregson, Scotland Yard detective. Leverton, a skilled American private detective working for the Pinkerton National Detective Agency.

Notable Quotes:

"Bleat, Watson—unmitigated bleat!"

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

"I had heard that you can read great things out of small ones."

"Ah, yes, Watson—severely practical, as usual!"

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

"I'll do you this justice, Mr. Holmes, that I was never in a case yet that I didn't feel stronger for having you on my side."

An Inquiry into:

"The Adventure of the Red Circle"

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"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 is not unanimous. The various estimates appear on the table. If the case took place in 1902, as the majority of our Canon chronologists state,

The Adventure of the Red Circle

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	None given
Baring-Gould	Wednesday, September 24, 1902
Bell	January 1897
Blakeney	1881-1887
Brend	January 1896
Christ	January 1893
Dakin	1897, possibly February
Folsom	February 1902
Hall	Mid-February 1902
Keefauver	Tuesday, January 6, 1885
Klinger	1902
Zeisler	Winter 1895-1902

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.



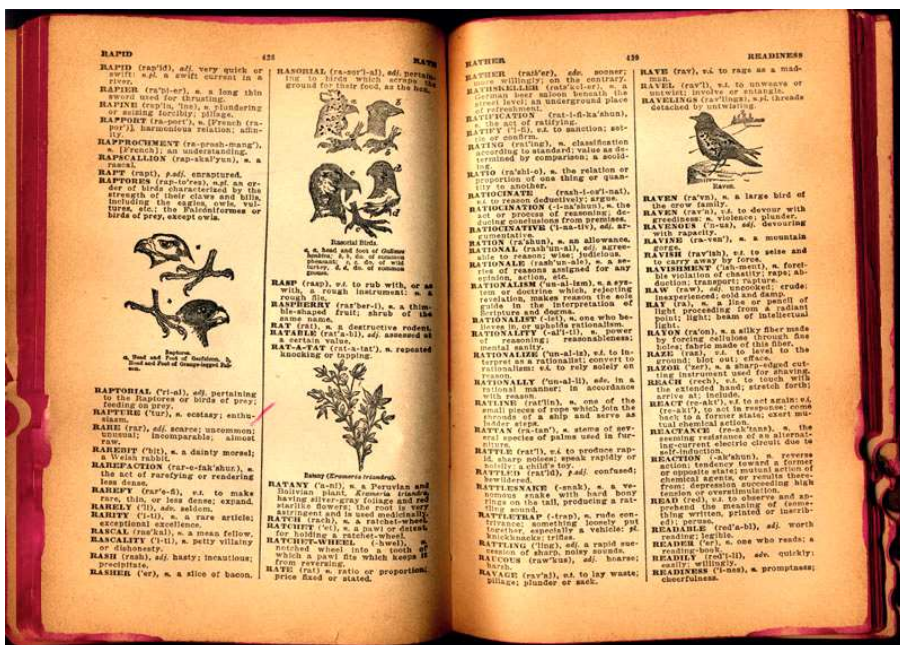
Regarding Language and Peril

Holmes' deduction that the mysterious lodger was not a native English speaker, based on her request for a single "match" rather than the plural "matches," is one of those moments in the Canon where the Great Detective's reasoning teeters more on the edge of inspiration rather than pure logic. As he explains to Watson, "She evidently knew so little English that she was compelled to use a dictionary, and a dictionary would give the noun, and not the plural." This insight proved to be uncannily accurate, revealing Emilia Lucca's Italian origins, but it also invites scrutiny when viewed through the lens

of historical linguistics and lexicography.

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!). Contemporary English dictionaries from the Edwardian era, such as the 1900 edition of *Webster's International Dictionary* or the *Oxford English Dictionary's* early fascicles, routinely provided plural forms for countable nouns like "match."

Bilingual dictionaries of the period, including Italian-



English ones like those published by Hoepli or Cassell's, also typically included plurals, especially for everyday items that are seldom singular—matches, cigarettes, shoes, or grapes. However, Holmes may have had in mind the limitations of pocket phrasebooks or rudimentary tourist dictionaries, common among immigrants and travelers in the early 1900s, which often prioritized basic vocabulary without grammatical nuances like irregular plurals. Influenced by Latin, Italian's language of origin, Italian nouns, for instance, follow distinct pluralization rules (e.g., masculine nouns ending in -o become -i), and a non-native speaker translating directly from a sparse bilingual aid might indeed default to the singular form. This deduction echoes Holmes' linguistic acuity in other tales, such as "A Scandal in Bohemia," where he discerns accents and dialects with precision, or "The Greek Interpreter," involving multilingual deceptions.

More disconcerting, however, is Holmes' apparently nonchalant response to the lodger's urgent signal: "Beware! Danger!" Rather than acting decisively, he dismisses it as potentially innocuous, opting for observation over intervention. This contrasts sharply with his proactive stance in cases like "The Speckled Band," where warnings of peril prompt immediate action. Such a message would likely elicit a more urgent reaction from most, yet Holmes' composure underscores his methodical nature—prioritizing evidence over alarm. One might speculate that Watson, ever the dramatist, underplayed the tension to heighten the narrative reveal, a technique seen throughout the Canon.

Fractured Escapes

The theme of fugitives desperately fleeing vengeful pursuers from their past lives recurs throughout the Sacred Writings. In the present case, Gennaro and Emilia Lucca's elaborate efforts to vanish—fleeing New York for London's teeming anonymity, using newspaper agony columns for communication, and ensuring physical separation—ultimately fail against Giuseppe Gorgiano's relentless tracking. Similar developments take place in “The Dancing Men,” where Abe Slaney pursues Elsie Cubitt across the Atlantic; “The Gloria Scott,” where Hudson's blackmail revives old sins; and *A Study in Scarlet*, where Jefferson Hope methodically hunts his enemies from Utah to London. In each, the past proves inescapable, a narrative device Watson uses in his exploration of fate and justice.

Even in these days of the intrusive Internet and the evaporation of privacy, if someone desires to disappear—even in a First World country—and is willing to leave everything behind, it is possible to do so successfully. There are many ways of obtaining a new identity, starting by getting the birth certificate of someone who is dead and using it as one's own to procure other documentation. Another successful example is that of the sleeper spy or saboteur who surreptitiously enters a country and for years leads the life of a law-abiding citizen, sometimes even acquiring an innocent spouse in the process!



Yet, how did Gorgiano locate Emilia in a city of over 6.5 million souls in 1902, with the East End alone housing nearly a million immigrants? London's vast population and lack of modern surveillance made tracking fugitives notoriously difficult during the Edwardian era. Victorian police relied on cumbersome criminal registers and informant networks, often failing spectacularly—as in the unsolved Jack the Ripper case amid Whitechapel's dense underbelly. Without passports, fingerprint databases (only emerging post-1902), or widespread photography, disappearance was feasible for those willing to sever ties.

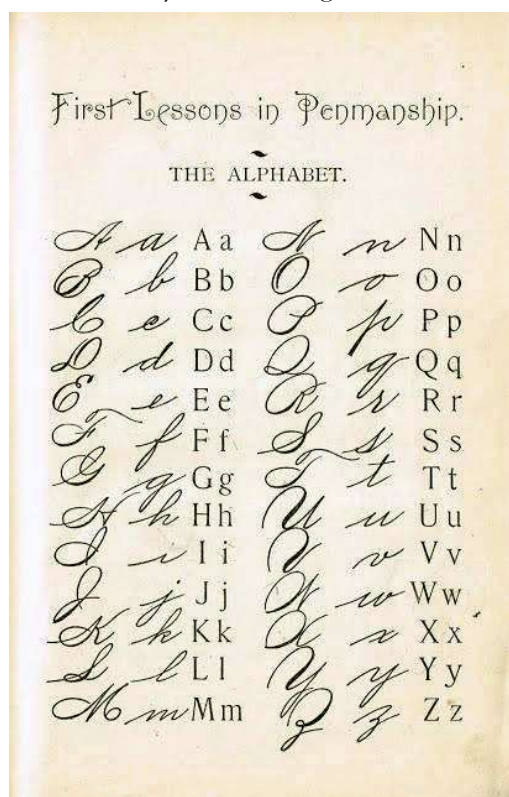
When one considers the way Gennaro secreted away his wife into her hiding place and the fact that she would not even peek through the window, the whole thing appears improbable. Added to this is the fact that even had Gennaro been located and followed, he ensured that he would not be near his wife—would not even write to her—and solely used the newspaper’s agony column to communicate with her, the result seems to be rather improbable.

Gorgiano’s success likely stemmed from the tight-knit Italian immigrant networks in London and New York, exploited by secret societies like the Black Hand (*La Mano Nera*), which thrived on extortion and informants within ethnic enclaves. These groups, precursors to the organized Mafia, maintained transatlantic connections, allowing Gorgiano—depicted as a high-ranking thug—to leverage spies or bribes. The kidnapping of Mr. Warren, mistaken briefly for Gennaro before release, suggests imperfect intelligence, perhaps from hasty surveillance rather than a vast minion network outpacing Scotland Yard. This improbability also mirrors Watson’s penchant for dramatic compression, as in *The Valley of Fear*, where international pursuits hinge on coincidences. Watson’s narrative may omit details, such as Gorgiano tailing Gennaro from the docks or interrogating ship manifests, deeming them superfluous to Holmes’ triumph.

== *The Gender of Calligraphy* ==

Regarding Emilia’s notes Holmes explains that, “The printed messages, as is now evident, were to prevent her sex being discovered by her writing.” This has been a perennial bone of contention with me. Although this kind of comment was fairly common in the literature of the time, I remain unconvinced. Holmes’ assertion that Emilia’s printed messages were designed “to prevent her sex being discovered by her writing” reflects a common Edwardian belief in graphology, the pseudoscience of

inferring character—and sometimes gender—from handwriting. While forensic experts of the era, like those at Scotland Yard, could occasionally deduce traits from script, gender determination was far from reliable.



Not being exactly a spring chicken, I caught the tail-end of the requirement to master calligraphy using pen and ink-well (blotches, blotches!). The point is that we were taught from exercise books intended for *both* boys and girls. The result was that the forming of the letters was the same for both sexes. Early 1900s handwriting education, rooted in uniform copperplate or Palmer methods taught to both sexes via shared exercise books, produced standardized letter forms that blurred gender lines. Personal styles emerged later and differentiation required expertise—something Holmes possessed, as in “The Reigate Squires,” where he analyzes unusual notes.

Eventually, of course, one develops a personal style. Even so, in 1902, the results 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, making gender determination far simpler.

During the era of the Literary Agent, graphology was popularized in literature, yet skeptics abounded. Holmes’ confidence may overstate the case; a layperson like Gorgiano would struggle to spot feminine traits in cursive. The case under study uniquely ties it to gender concealment, adding intrigue to Emilia’s precautions.

The Pinkertons

Members of this organization appear in two of the canonical stories, as intrepid bloodhounds of the law—a somewhat imprecise description. Considering the somewhat mottled history of the group, Holmes’ admiration seems somewhat ill-placed.

The Pinkerton National Detective Agency’s presence in “The Red Circle,” with Agent Leverton pursuing Gorgiano, aligns with their storied reputation as “intrepid bloodhounds,” yet belies a checkered history that should have tempered Holmes’ admiration. Founded in 1850 by Allan Pinkerton, the agency rose through Civil War intelligence, foiling the Baltimore Plot against Lincoln, and post-war pursuits of outlaws like the wild West’s James-Younger Gang. By the early 1900s, they handled international cases, crossing borders for clients like railroads or banks, as in the 1856 Adams Express theft.

The Pinkertons were private operatives for hire—little better than hired guns—often serving corporate interests against unions, earning notoriety in strikes like Homestead (1892). In Gorgiano’s case, no official U.S. warrant is mentioned; thus Leverton must be acting on a client’s dime, possibly a rival or victim of the Red Circle society. His inclusion in Gregson’s investigation raises questions: Without



extradition papers or governmental backing, Leverton lacked authority in Britain, yet Gregson cooperates—perhaps due to Holmes’ influence or informal transatlantic ties. This echoes *The Valley of Fear*, where Pinkerton agent Birdy Edwards infiltrates the Scowrers, blending admiration with moral ambiguity.

It must be noted that it was not the American police that were after Gorgiano, but a private detective agency without official standing. This leads to the conclusion that our Italian thug was simply that—a thug, a run-of-the-mill murderer. Unquestionably he was someone the police would be very happy to collar, but would not exert an international effort to accomplish.

If the Pinkertons 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 permanently compromising his good health—probably an enemy or a rival criminal organization; as long as they had ready cash, the Pinkertons weren’t too choosy about their clients.

After hearing Emilia’s tale, Leverton comments that, “I don’t know what your British point of view may be, but I guess that in New York this lady’s husband will receive a pretty general vote of thanks.” Remarkably, Inspector Gregson concurs, “She will have to come with me and see the chief. If what she says is corroborated, I do not think she or her husband has much to fear.”

Therefore, Leverton’s quip about New York acclaim and Gregson’s leniency toward the Luccas overlook legal hurdles: Self-defense claims required verification, including Gennaro’s Red Circle ties, via cables to U.S. and Italian authorities. Why did Gennaro not approach Scotland Yard directly? Fear of corruption or exposure, common to secret societies, may explain it—though Yard intervention could

have swiftly deported Gorgiano, given Britain's intolerance for foreign agitators. Watson's omissions here, as in many tales, heighten mystery over procedural drudgery.

Lastly, Emilia states that Gennaro was interested, in England, in communicating with the American and Italian police. Considering that Gorgiano, an internationally known criminal of the worse stripe, was already there the most practical and straightforward solution would have been going directly to the English authorities. Had Gennaro had gone to Scotland Yard and told them his story, a couple of telegrams would have brought quick replies about who Gorgiano was, which would have certainly led to the Yard arresting him, considering that Britain had little patience with foreign criminals. The local police could have offered him a more realistic solution and given Emilia immediate protection undoubtedly directly—and officially—communicating with their counterparts in those countries.

Again, it appears that Watson left out some details which, for some reason or another, he deemed superfluous.

The Luccas' Odyssey

The Luccas had the best of reasons for escaping from New York to London. Some of the secret political—and certainly criminal—societies that had been formed during the years predating (and after) Italian unification, were unforgiving of any deviation from their tenets and orders by any of their members, and obedience and secrecy were enforced through ruthless methods, which prominently featured murder and torture.

The Luccas' flight from New York's Italian underworld to London mirrors the era's transatlantic migration of crime. Secret societies like the Black Hand, emerging in the 1890s amid Sicilian immigration, enforced loyalty through terror, extortion, and vendettas—much like the Red Circle. Born from Italy's unification turmoil (1861), these groups filled power vacuums in the south, evolving from mercenary protectors to entrenched syndicates.



Italian migrants not only brought their language and customs with them, but also representatives of the various criminal organizations prospering in the Mother Country, such as the Mafia, *la mano nera* (the Black Hand), the *Camorra*, *'Ndrangheta*, *Sacra Corona Unita*, *Stidda*, etc. Not a purely Italian phenomenon, however, the Japanese have the *Yakuza*, there is a Russian “Mafia,” and the drug cartels have edged Mexico towards failed state status.

London, with its growing Italian population (over 10,000 by 1901), saw spillover, though less organized than in New York. British authorities, wary of “alien” vices, confined oversight to immigrant quarters if crimes stayed internal—this is echoed by

cases like “The Six Napoleons.”

It should be noted that on more than one occasion governments entered into an uneasy alliance with the devil. During the Second World War, realizing that the war effort required the prompt loading and unloading of freight, dock workers began striking often. They used the urgent requirements of the war effort as leverage to force salary increases. Unable to quell this, the United States government approached the godfathers of the families that controlled the dock workers' unions, and asked their cooperation against the common European and Asian enemies. Strikes stopped for the duration.

In Italy, Mussolini practically wiped out the Sicilian mafia. However, when Italy fell, the U.S. Army sought the Mafia's cooperation to keep order there, unwittingly providing the organization a second breath of life.

During Holmes' time, Great Britain was not very welcoming of these foreigners so lacking in the basic English virtues (although there wasn't unanimous agreement as to exactly what these were). In general, however, if these criminal activities mostly affected the immigrants themselves without extending to other parts of the city, the authorities were satisfied with keeping them confined to those quarters.

The Great Detective Succeeds Again!

Though "The Red Circle" ranks among the Canon's lesser adventures—lacking the grandeur of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*—Holmes' brilliance illuminates it. His inference of a substituted lodger from mismatched habits, the non-native English from linguistic slips, and decoding the agony column signals are masterful, rivaling his cryptanalysis in "The Dancing Men." Locating Gennaro's signaling house via candlelight geometry showcases his observational prowess.

Ultimately, the tale affirms Holmes' supremacy, weaving deduction with human drama.



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.

◀ Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.

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

Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.

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.

Boer War casualties: 5,774 British and 4,000 Boers killed.

Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.

World

Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.

Failure of second Belgian General Strike.

Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, 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.

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

Public Health Act in France improves artisan living conditions.

White settlement of Kenya begins.

Aswan Dam opened.

St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.

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*.

◀ Monet, *Waterloo Bridge*.

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.

Gauguin, *Riders by the sea*.

Gauguin paints *The Call*.

Debussy composes *Pelléas et Mélisandé*.

Picasso paints *Nude, Back View*.

Elgar composes *Coronation Ode*.

Science and Technology

Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.

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

Trans-Pacific Cable laid.

Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

Next week's case: LADY.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun, Master of Hounds)

"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.

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