



### The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

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*.

Unsurprisingly, the chronology for this case is not unanimous. The various estimates are shown on the table. 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.

### Main Characters:

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."

## 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.

“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.”



### *The Linguistic Deduction*



Holmes deduced that Mrs. Warren’s mysterious lodger did not speak English well, because she asked for “match” instead of “matches.” This conclusion is not only solid, but inspired. However, according to him, it is based 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.” Often, our sleuth’s most interesting deductions have been based on minutiae like this.

However, it seems that in this case he did not carry it to a full conclusion. Already suspecting that the original lodger had been substituted, why didn’t he go the extra step and deduce that the reason the lodger printed in block letters instead of using cursive writing was a decision taken to avoid revealing her feminine handwriting? As Holmes later tells Watson, “The printed messages, as is now evident, were to prevent her sex being discovered by her writing.”



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

### *Lost and Found*



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

Even in our days of the intrusive Internet and evaporating privacy, anyone who decides to disappear and is willing to leave everything behind, can do so successfully. There are sundry ways of obtaining a new identity, the oldest and most basic one being getting the birth certificate of someone who is dead and using it as one’s own. 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!

The overhanging mystery in all this is how Gorgiano was able to find the Luccas. Even if one con-



**Tracking two people intent in disappearing across the wilderness of Imperial London would pose problems almost impossible to solve.**

would he be near his wife; in fact, he would not even write to her instead using a newspaper's agony column to communicate with her in code. Gorgiano's success appears to be somewhat inexplicable.

Although it is highly unlikely that Gorgiano was able to command London minions in amounts approaching the resources of Scotland Yard, it has been postulated that he was able to extend a net of searchers skilled enough to have located Emilia's hideout at Mrs. Warren's.

The question arises then how, after such a feat of detection, they ineptly kidnapped poor Mr. Warren instead of Gennaro. This could not have been a case of mistaken identity, because they released him almost immediately, which shows that they knew what Gennaro looked like. Had they spent two or three days surveilling the house they would have realized—from his comings and goings—that Mr. Warren was not their target.

cedes that it might not have been difficult to track their moves all the way to the ship in which they left the United States, once they landed on English soil, this would have become practically impossible. At the time London was a diverse city of more than 4,000,000 inhabitants. The East End alone had a population of some 900,000, which—conspiracy theories aside—could explain why the Metropolitan Police was unable to lay a glove on Saucy Jack, a.k.a. the Ripper.

How then could Gorgiano have possibly have tracked the Luccas—Emilia in this case—to Mrs. Warren's? Considering the way Gennaro secreted away his wife into her hiding place and the fact that she would not even peek through the window, makes the whole thing appear highly improbable. Added to this is the fact that even had Gennaro been located and followed, he ensured that at no time



## *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 very mottled history of this group.

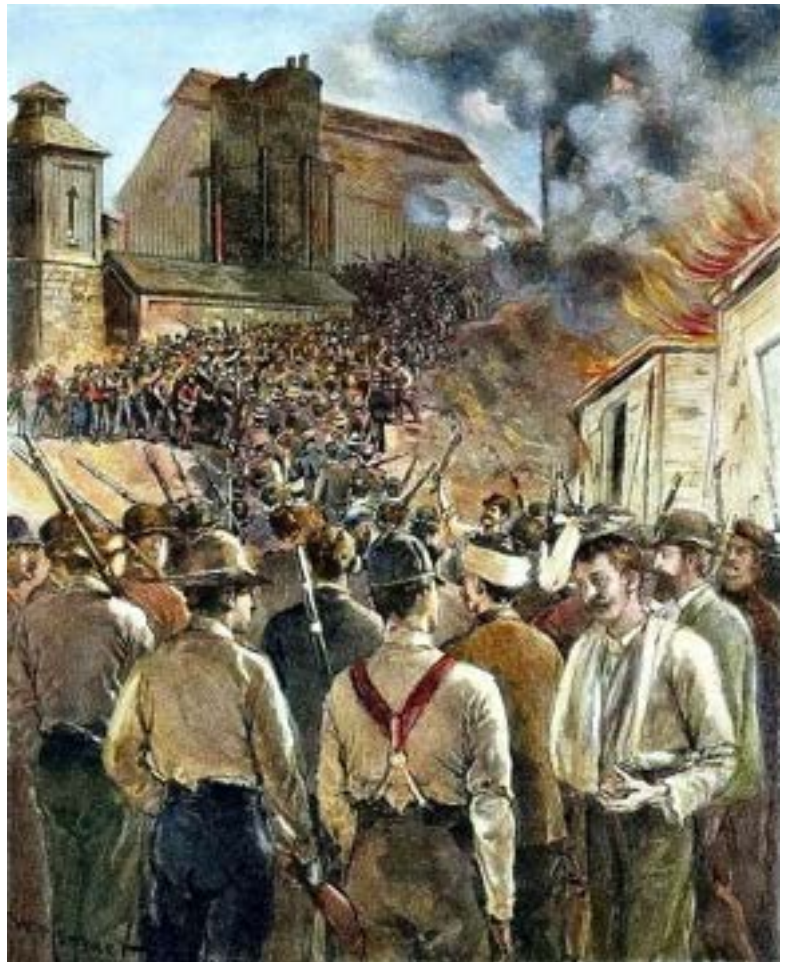
We are not told why the Pinkertons were after Gorgiano, there seems to have been little or no interest in him on the part of the American or English police; especially considering that the hunt extended offshore. The only logical conclusion is that someone whom Watson left unmentioned must have hired the detective agency specifically to get Gorgiano—possibly preferably dead instead of alive.

The Pinkerton National Detective Agency was a private security guard and detective agency; it had no official standing anywhere. They did have, however, a notorious history of blood and brutality, having been the muscle of choice of mine owners and industrialists when there was a serious strike to be broken with violence and blood. This is one of the reason why I tend to think that there is a strong likelihood that someone might have hired them to find and kill the Italian thug.

This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that the aforementioned Italian thug was just that—a thug, a run-of-the-mill murderer. Someone the local police would be very happy to collar, but would not merit an international effort to accomplish.

Therefore, since the Pinkertons did not act except on behalf of 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, were footing the bill. Whoever wanted Gorgiano found most likely had a strong interest in permanently compromising his 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.

Something for further consideration 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. This points to another, not-so-minor question: considering that there was no mention that Leverton had any authority or support 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? Even an official member of the American police would probably not have received such courtesy. It does not appear that there was even an outstanding warrant for Gorgiano's arrest!



**Pinkerton men leaving after bloodily put down the Homestead Strike in 1892.**

## *Reasons for Escaping*

The Luccas had good reason for escaping New York. Some of the secret political—certainly the criminal—societies 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 they enforced obedience and secrecy through ruthless methods, which prominently featured murder and torture.

For example, in Sicily the Mafia emerged in the early 1860s as a result of a breakdown of law and order and a corresponding increase in brigandage. To a great extent this resulted from the birth pangs experienced during the unification of Italy after centuries of domination by other countries, which pretty much left the nation's southern areas to their own devices. Landowners had to resort to hiring gangs of mercenaries, many of them criminals, to keep order and track down murderers and burglars. The system worked exceedingly well and as years passed and these organizations institutionalized themselves into society, their members acquired wealth and influence.

As Italians migrated to the New World, besides their language and customs they brought 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, for the Japanese have the Yakuza, there is a bloodthirsty Russian "Mafia," and the drug cartels run Mexico.

More than once governments have entered into uneasy alliances with the devil. During the Second World War, dock workers began striking often. They realized that the war effort required the prompt loading and unloading of freight, and used this as leverage to force salary increases. In desperation, the United States government approached Lucky Luciano who, although in prison still ruled as the *capo di tutti i capi* "boss of all the bosses," was willing to help by asking the godfathers of the various crime families that controlled the unions to cooperate against the common European and Asian enemies. There were no more strikes for the duration.



**Lucky Luciano, the *capo di tutti i capi* "boss of all the bosses."**

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

During Holmes' time, Great Britain was not very welcoming of foreigners so lacking in basic English virtues (although there wasn't unanimous agreement as to exactly what these were). In general, however, if their 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.

## *An 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.

### *Gennaro, the Pinkerton, and the Law*

After hearing Emilia's tale, Agent Leverton of the Pinkertons commented 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." To which Inspector Gregson concurred, "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."

This may probably be true. Unquestionably, Gennaro eliminated Gorgiano in self-defense; however, that would have to be proven to the law's satisfaction. Here, I suspect that more than a simple explanation to Gregson's chief would have been necessary. Although Gorgiano's antecedents seemed to have been well known on both sides of the Atlantic, Gennaro's were not. A check

with American, and possibly Italian, authorities would have become necessary. The fact that he had belonged to the same criminal organization that Gorgiano did would have complicated things.

### *Mrs. Warren's Rates*

A charge of 50s (≈\$940) per week was a very expensive rate for a boarding house of the time. On average, these establishments charged in the neighborhood of 40s (≈\$750) for such accommodations and services. Nevertheless, unquestionably an offer of £5 (≈\$1,900) (more than double the asked-for rate), had to be very attractive to Mrs. Warren.

An old Spanish saying warns that, "When the alms are too great, even the saints distrust the giver." Renters are rarely willing to pay more rent than what is asked for by the landlord. Such largesse should have made Mrs. Warren think that perhaps something was not quite on the up-and-up. She had to have suspected that something had to be amiss and that there had to be a somewhat sizeable possibility that such largesse covered some form of illegal activity. Otherwise, why the larger sum?



One must wonder whether her going to Holmes was not partly driven by fear that she might be accused of being a not too unwilling accessory to a crime.

## *Why Holmes Is the Great Detective*

This is yet another story in which our sleuth shines, although the case itself is of relatively minor importance. His deductions that the lodger was a different person, and that English was a second language for him or her were absolutely brilliant. Also, the way he deduced which messages to read in the newspaper's agony column and his location of the house from which Gennaro was going to signal Emilia equally add to his credit.

However, not everything neatly fits into this pattern. Perennially, whenever we study this case, I must ask myself how could I dismiss a message that reads, "Beware! Danger!" as something that "may bear some more innocent interpretation"?



## *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.

The Anglo-Japanese Treaty recognizes the independence of China and Korea.

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 agrees to remain neutral if France were 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.

U.S.A. acquires perpetual control over Panama Canal. Control is held until 1977.

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*.

◀ Beatrix Potter publishes *Peter Rabbit*.

Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record—he afterwards makes 154 recordings in all.

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

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

Trans-Pacific Cable is laid.

The Aswan Dam in Egypt is completed.



*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..."

*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](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

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