



THE SCIENCE OF DETECTION.

CHAPTER I. THE SCIENCE OF DETECTION. THE LOCK HOLMES took his bottle from the corner of the mantel-piece and his by-podometer sprang from a neat morose case.

Three times a day for many months I had witnessed this performance, but custom had not reconciled my mind to it. On the contrary, from day to day I had become more irritated at the sight, and my conscience swelled mightily within me at the thought that I had lacked the courage to protest.

Yet upon that afternoon, whether it was the breeze which I had taken with my lunch, or the additional exertion produced by the extreme deliberation of his manner, I suddenly felt that I could hold out no longer.

"What is it to-day?" I asked—"morphine or cocaine?" He raised his eyes languidly from the old black-letter volume which he had opened. "It is cocaine," he said, "a seven per cent. solution. Would you care to try it?"

"No, indeed," I answered, brusquely. "My constitution has not got over the Afghan campaign yet. I cannot afford to throw any extra strain upon it." He smiled at my vehemence. "Perhaps you are right," he said, "but I suppose that its influence is physically a bad one. I find it, however, so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment."

"But consider!" I said, earnestly. "Count the cost! Your brain may, as you say, be roused and excited, but it is a pathological and morbid process, which involves increased tissue-change and may at last leave a permanent weakness. You know, too, what a black reaction comes upon you. Surely the game is hardly worth the candle. Why should you risk mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of the great powers with which you have been endowed? Remember that I speak not only as one comrade to another, but as a medical man to one for whose constitution he is to some extent answerable."

He did not seem offended. On the contrary, he put his finger-tips together and leaned his elbows on the arms of his chair, like one who has a relish for conversation. "My mind," he said, "rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram of the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I labor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation. That is why I have chosen my own particular profession—or rather created it for I am the only one in the world."

"The only unofficial detective?" I said, raising my eyebrows. "The only unofficial consulting detective," he answered. "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection. When Gregson or Lestrade or Athelny Jones are out of their depths—which by the way is their normal state—the matter is laid before me. I examine the data, as an expert, and pronounce a specialist's opinion. I claim no credit in such cases. My name figures in no newspaper. The work itself, the pleasure of finding a field for my peculiar powers, is my highest reward. But you have yourself had some experience of my methods of work in the Jefferson Hope case."



HE BALANCED THE WATCH IN HIS HAND.

the back, and examined the works, first with his naked eyes and then with a powerful convex lens. I could hardly keep from smiling at his crest-fallen face when he finally snapped the case to and handed it back.

"There are hardly any data," he remarked. "The watch has been recently cleaned, which robs me of my most suggestive facts."

"You are right," I answered. "It was cleaned before being sent to me." In my heart I accused my companion of putting forward a most lame and impotent excuse to cover his failure. What data could he expect from an uncleaned watch?

"I had hoped my month to reply to this trade, when, with a crisp knock, our landlady entered, bearing a card upon the brass tray."

"I have come to you, Mr. Holmes," she said, "Miss Mary Morstan, he read. "I am I have no recollection of the name. Ask the young lady to step up, Mrs. Hudson. Don't go, doctor. I shall prefer that you remain."

"What you gather, no doubt, from the 'H. W. upon the back?' "Quite so. The 'W.' suggests your own name. The date of the watch is nearly fifty years back, and the initials are as old as the watch; so it was made for the last generation. Jewellery usually descends to the eldest son, and he is most likely to have the same name as the father. Your father has, if I remember right, been dead many years. It has, therefore, been in the hands of your eldest son."

"Right, so far," said I. "Anything else?" "He was a man of untidy habits—very untidy and careless. He was left with good prospects, but he threw away his chances, lived for some time in poverty, with occasional intervals of prosperity, and finally, taking to drink, he died. That is all I can gather."

"I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness. 'This is unworthy of you, Holmes,' I said. 'I could not have believed that you would have descended to this. You have made inquiries into the history of my unhappy brother, and you now pretend to deduce this knowledge in some fanciful way. You cannot expect me to believe that you have read all this from his old watch! It is unkind, and to speak plainly, has a touch of charlatanism.'

was a little domestic complication. She was much impressed by your kindness and skill. "Mrs. Cecil Forrester," he repeated, thoughtfully. "I believe that I was of some slight service to her. The case, however, as I remember it, was a very simple one."

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had retired some little time before, and lived at Upper Norwood. We communicated with him, of course, but he did not even know that his brother officer was in England."

"A singular case," remarked Holmes. "I have not yet described to you the most singular part. About six years ago—to be exact, upon the 4th of May, 1882—an advertisement appeared in the Times asking for the address of Miss Mary Morstan, and stating that it would be to her advantage to come forward. There was no name or address appended. I had at that time just entered the family of Mrs. Cecil Forrester in the capacity of governess. By her advice I published my address in the advertisement column. The same day there arrived through the post a small cardboard box addressed to me, which I found to contain a very large and lustrous pearl. No word of writing was enclosed. Since then, every year, upon the same date, there has always appeared a similar box, containing a similar pearl, without any clue as to the sender. They have been pronounced by an expert to be of a rare variety and of considerable value. You can see for yourselves that they are very handsome." She opened a tin box as she spoke, and showed me six of the finest pearls that I had ever seen.

"[To be Continued.]

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