

ADVENTURE OF THREE STUDENTS—BY HOLMES

(Continued from Page One)

"I can follow the other points," said he, "but really, in this matter of the length—"

Holmes held out a small clip with the letters NN and a space of clear wood after them.

"No, I fear that even now—" Watson, I have always done you an injustice. There are others. What could this NN be? It is at the end of a word. You are aware that Johann Faber is the most common maker's name. It is not clear that there is just as much of the pencil left as usually follows the Johann? He held the small table sideways to the electric light.

"What could he have wanted there?" I think it is clear enough. You came back by an unexpected way, and so he had no warning until you were at the very door. What could he do? He caught up everything which would betray him, and he rushed into your bedroom to conceal himself.

"Good gracious, Mr. Holmes, do you mean to tell me that all the time I was talking to Bannister in this room we had the man prisoner if we had only known it?"

"Surely there is another alternative, Mr. Holmes. I don't know whether you observed my bedroom window?"

"Lattice-paned, lead framework, three separate windows, one swimming on hinges, and large enough to admit a man."

"Exactly. And it looks out on an angle of the courtyard so as to be white, you change nothing—nothing at all partly invisible, but might have effected his entrance there, left traces as he passed through the bedroom, and finally, finding the door open, have escaped that way."

Holmes shook his head impatiently. "Let us be practical," said he. "I understand you to say that there are three students who use their stair, and are in the habit of passing your door?"

shaven, grizzly haired fellow of fifty. He was still suffering from this sudden disturbance of the quiet routine of his life. His plump face was twitching with his nervousness, and his fingers could not keep still.

"We are investigating this unhappy business, Bannister," said his master. "Yes, sir."

"I understand," said Holmes, "that you left your key in the door?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it not very extraordinary that you should do this on the very day when there were these papers inside?"

"It was most unfortunate, sir. But I have occasionally done the same thing at other times."

"When Mr. Soames returned and called for you, you were very much disturbed?"

"Yes, sir. Such a thing has never happened during the many years that I have been here. I nearly fainted, sir."

"So I understand. Where were you when you began to feel bad?"

"That is singular, because you sat down in that chair over yonder near the corner. Why did you pass these other chairs?"

part. Why should a perfectly honest man—well, well, here is a large stationer's. We shall begin our researches here."

There were only four stationers of any consequence in the town, and at each Holmes produced his pencil chips and bid high for a duplicate. All were agreed that one could be ordered, but that it was not a usual size of pencil and that it was seldom kept in stock.

"Holmes made no further allusion to the matter that day, though he sat lost in thought for a long time after our belated dinner. At eight in the morning he came into my room just as I finished my toilet."

"Well, Watson," said he, "it is time we went down to St. Luke's. Can you do without breakfast?"

"Certainly."

"Soames will be in a dreadful fidget until we are able to tell him something positive."

"Have you anything positive to tell him?"

"You have formed a conclusion?"

"Yes, my dear Watson, I have solved the mystery."

"But what fresh evidence could you have got?"

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