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THE ADVENTURE OF THE SPECKLED BAND

(Continued from Page Six)
as we climbed the stile, "that this fellow should think we had come here as architects, or on some definite business. It may stop his gossip. Good-afternoon, Miss Stoner. You see that we have been as good as our word."
Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. "I have been waiting so eagerly for you," she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. "All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening."
"We have had the pleasure of making the doctor's acquaintance," said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.
"Good heavens!" she cried, "he has followed me, then?"
"So it appears."
"He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?"
"He must guard himself, for he may find that there is some one more cunning than himself upon his track. You must lock yourself up from him tonight. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine."
The building was of gray, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion, and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side. In one of these wings the windows were broken, and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided. Some scaffolding had been erected

against the end wall, and the stonework had been broken into, but there were no signs of any workmen at the moment of our visit. Holmes walked slowly up and down the ill-trimmed lawn, and examined with deep attention the outside of the windows.
"This, I take it, belongs to the room in which you used to sleep, the center one to your sister's, and the one next to the main building to Dr. Roylott's chamber?"
"Exactly so. But I am now sleeping in the middle one."
"Pending the alterations, as I understand. By-the-way, there does not seem to be any very pressing need for repairs at that end wall."
"There were none. I believe that it was an excuse to move me from my room."
"Ah! that is suggestive. Now, on the other side of this narrow wing runs the corridor from which these three rooms open. There are windows in it, of course?"
"Yes, but very small ones. Too narrow for any one to pass through."
"As you both locked your doors at night, your rooms were unapproachable from that side. Now, would you have the kindness to go into your room and bar your shutters?"
Miss Stoner did so, and Holmes, after a careful examination through the open window, endeavored in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar. Then with his lens he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. "Hum!" said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity; "my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted. Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter."
A small side door led into the whitewashed corridor from which the three bedrooms opened. Holmes refused to examine the third chamber, so we passed at once to the second, that in which Miss Stoner was now sleeping, and in which her sister had met with

her fate. It was a homely, little room, with a low ceiling and a gaping fireplace, after the fashion of old country-houses. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow white-coupaned bed in another, and a dressing-table on the left-side of the window. These articles with two small wicker-work chairs, made up all the furniture in the room, save for a square of Wilton carpet in the center. The boards round and the paneling of the walls were of brown, worm-eaten oak, so old and discolored that it may have dated from the original building of the house. Holmes drew one of the chairs into a corner and sat silent, while his eyes traveled round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment.
"Where does that bell communicate with?" he asked, at last, pointing to a thick bell-rope which hung down beside the bed, the tassel actually lying upon the pillow.
"It goes to the housekeeper's room."
"It looks newer than the other things."
"Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago."
"Your sister asked for it, I suppose?"
"No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves."
"Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there. You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor." He threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hands, and crawled swiftly backward and forward, examining minutely the cracks between the boards. Then he did the same with the woodwork with which the chamber was paneled. Finally he walked over to the bed, and spent some time in staring at it, and in running his eye up and down the wall. Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.
"Why, it's a dummy," said he. "Won't it ring?"
"No, it is not even attached to a

wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening for the ventilator is."
"How very absurd! I never noticed that before."
"Very strange!" muttered Holmes, pulling at the rope. "There are one or two very singular points about this room. For example, what a fool of a butler must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with the outside air!"
"That is also quite modern," said the lady.
"Done about the same time as the bell-rope?" remarked Holmes.
"Yes, there were several little changes carried out about that time."
"They seem to have been of a most interesting character—dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate. With your permission, Miss Stoner, we shall now carry our researches into the inner apartment."
CHAPTER V
Mr. Grimesby Roylott's chamber was larger than that of his stepdaughter, but was as plainly furnished. A camp-bed, a small wooden shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, an armchair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met the eye. Holmes walked slowly round and examined each and all of them with the keenest interest.
"What's in here?" he asked, tapping the safe.
"My stepfather's business papers."
"Oh! you have seen inside, then?"
"Only once, some years ago. I remember that it was full of papers."
"There isn't a cat in it, for example?"
"No. What a strange idea!"
"Well, look at this!" He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.
"No; we don't keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon."
"Ah, yes, of course! Well, a cheetah is just a big cat, and yet a saucer

of milk does not go very far to satisfy its wants. I dare say. There is one point which I should wish to determine." He squatted down in front of the wooden chair, and examined the seat of it with the greatest attention.
"Thank you. That is quite settled," said he, rising and putting his lens in his pocket. "Hello! Here is something interesting. The object which had caught his eye was a small dog lash hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself, and tied so as to make a loop of wire cord.
"What do you make of that, Watson?"
"It's a common enough lash. But I don't know why it should be tied."
"That is not quite so common, is it? Ah, me! it's a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all. I think that I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner, and with your permission we shall walk out upon the lawn."
"I had never seen my friend's face so grim or his brow so dark as it was when we turned from the scene of this investigation. We had walked several times up and down the lawn, neither Miss Stoner nor myself liking to break in upon his thoughts before he roused himself from his reverie.
"It is very essential, Miss Stoner," said he, "that you should absolutely follow my advice in every respect."
"I shall most certainly do so."
"The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance."
"I assure you that I am in your hands."
"In the first place, both my friend and I must spend the night in your room."
Both Miss Stoner and I gazed at him in astonishment.
"Yes, it must be so. Let me explain. I believe that that is the village inn over there?"
"Yes, that is the Crown."
"Very good. Your windows would be visible from there?"
"Certainly."
"You must confine yourself to your

room, on pretence of a headache, when your stepfather comes back. Then when you hear him retire for the night you must open the shutters of your window, undo the hasp, put your lamp there as a signal to us, and then withdraw quietly with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night.
"Oh yes, easily."
"The rest you will leave in our hands."
"But what will you do?"
"We shall spend the night in your room, and we shall investigate the cause of this noise which has disturbed you."
"I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind," said Miss Stoner, laying her hand upon my companion's sleeve.
"Perhaps I have."
"Then for pity's sake tell me what was the cause of my sister's death?"
"I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak."
"You can at least tell me whether my own thought is correct, and if she died from some sudden fright."
"No, I do not think so. I think that there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you, for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us, our journey would be in vain. Goodbye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you."
Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the "Crown Inn." They were on the upper floor, and from our window we could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing of Stoke Moran Manor House. At dusk we saw Dr. Grimesby Roylott drive past, his huge form looming up beside the little figure of the lad who drove him. The boy had some slight difficulty in undoing the heavy iron gates, and we heard the hoarse roar of the doctor's voice, and saw the fury with which he shook his clinched fists

at him. The trap drove on, and a few minutes later we saw a sudden light spring up among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.
"Do you know, Watson," said Holmes, as we sat together in the gathering darkness, "I have really some scruples as to taking you tonight. There is a distinct element of danger."
"Can I be of assistance?"
"Your presence might be invaluable."
"Then I shall certainly come."
"It is very kind of you."
"You speak of danger. You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me."
"No, but I fancy that I may have deduced a little more. I imagine that you saw nothing remarkable save the bell-rope, and what purpose that could answer I confess is more than I can imagine."
"You saw the ventilator, too?"
"Yes, but I do not think that it is such a very unusual thing to have a small opening between two rooms. It was so small that a rat could hardly pass through."
"I knew that we should find a ventilator before ever we came to Stoke Moran."
"My dear Holmes!"
"Oh yes, I did. You remember in her statement she said that her sister could smell Dr. Roylott's cigar. Now, of course that suggested at once that there must be a communication between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, or it would have been remarked upon at the coroner's inquiry. I deduced a ventilator."
"But what harm can there be in that?"
"Well, there is at least a curious coincidence of dates. A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and a lady who sleeps in the bed dies. Does not that strike you?"
"I cannot as yet see any connection."
"Did you observe anything very peculiar about that bed?"
(Continued on Page Eight)

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