

Marlborough Hill
November 1889

Looking back over my adventures with Sherlock Holmes (as I sit here by the fire in my little house in St. John's Wood, my dear wife warming her muffins on the stove), it occurs to me that the Great Detective has become rather uncommunicative of late. His pretended disdain for my habit of recording our exploits seems to have diminished the regularity of his own contributions to such an extent that he rarely allows me to more than glance at anything written in his own hand. While the habit is not so obvious in this first volume, I now take more care in the acquiring and preserving of all documents relating to our cases. Nevertheless, in an effort to maintain some semblance of continuity, I have occasionally resorted to 'filling in the gaps' myself.

I point this out merely as a precursor to the narratives that follow (detailing as they do a few of the more interesting cases we have encountered over the twelvemonth now past), since I would not wish to imply that, of the two of us, only I take time to put pen to paper. Only the other day, Holmes guffawed loudly at my expense after perusing my account of *The Case of the Curse of the Hound of the Hall of the Baskervilles* in *The Strand Magazine*, a story he deemed nothing more than 'a feast of gore and gullibility.' In solving the mystery, he himself contributed his natural genius (of course), but took great pains in keeping from me any articles that might have proved useful in committing the tale to print.

I trust that you, dear reader, will make up your own mind, and not be swayed either by the derisory comments of Holmes himself (which I have as far as possible preserved), or the recent spate of pun-packed newspaper headlines which pepper our column inches in the gutter press.

John Horatio Watson

Chapter 1

The Butcher of Olde Londen Towne

Marlborough Hill
Friday, November 23rd 1888
Doctor J. Watson to Sherlock Holmes Esq:

Holmes,

Here, as requested, is the first of my journal entries made last evening, detailing the events and our involvement in what must surely be our most grisly case yet. I believe at least one of the dailies is running with the headline 'Jack the Ripper', which I think is mere sensationalism, however, history will demand the truth...

Having been brought up to date in the brougham by the effervescent Sherlock Holmes, he and I made our way to Whitechapel. I began to list some aspects of the crimes reported via our friend Lestrade, Mr Lungcutter the police surgeon and constables Armstrong & Miller (first on the scene at the most recent murder). There have so far been five murders - including the two last night - and various items were found at each murder scene. These items include:

A bucket and spade left near the corpse
A quantity of porridge in the victim's breast pocket
A lock of hair tied round the victim's ring finger
The words - yore neckst - written in porridge across the victim's chest.

Several incisions have been made to the bodies of all the victims, leading Lestrade to believe the murders may have been committed by a crazed doctor. In fact, Lestrade even questioned me, albeit briefly, as to my whereabouts on the dates in question and is satisfied (thank God) that I am not a suspect. He is currently questioning several hundred Doctors to ascertain their movements.

We arrived at Jones the Butchers Yard and were able to inspect the murder scene. Holmes spent several minutes lying prostrate on the ground, examining the cobbles for evidence. Though the police claimed to have been quite thorough, Holmes discovered a quantity of what he suspected might be French tobacco and two cigar stubs bearing a royal crest.

My old war wound is playing up, so I shall continue this narrative in due course.

Baker Street
Monday Nov. 26th
Sherlock Holmes Esq to Doctor J. Watson:

Watson,

Received your missives. Will peruse at some point. Have enclosed a jar of liniment which Hudson assures me will do wonders for your 'war wound'.

SH

Marlborough Hill
Wednesday, November 28th 1888
Doctor J. Watson to Sherlock Holmes Esq:

Holmes,

Many thanks for the ointment which my dear wife has applied liberally to my affected regions. It certainly does have a bit of a pong to it and if it wasn't for my heavy cold and reinforced tweed undergarments, I believe the stench would knock me into the middle of next door's midden!

To continue my account of the 'Jones' case...

Holmes and I took a cab back to Scotland Yard with Lestrade, who by this time had given up on his theory that these heinous crimes might have been perpetrated by a medical man. Spurred on by hot cocoa and a packet of tasty (if insensitively named), Jack the Kipper biscuits picked up from Mrs Miggins, of Miggins' Cakes and Ales, we worked through the clues gathered thus far and concluded that these can be accounted for as follows:

The bucket and spade signify the killer's desire to cast the blame onto small children

The porridge shows his desire to cast doubt on men of Scottish origin

The red hair tied round the victim's ring finger most likely signifies that the killer does indeed have red hair (Holmes was certain this is an attempt by the murderer to claim the killing as his own, without actually owning up to the crime)

The words - yore neckst - written in porridge across the victim's chest were more difficult to explain. Holmes decided they were not, as we first thought, intended to direct us towards the identity of the next victim, but rather, the killer's own signature or place of abode. The possible anagrammatical solutions are thus:

Cyst Ken Roe - a man called Ken Roe who has a cyst

Tony Creeks - a man called Tony Creeks

Coke's Entry - being the entrance to Coke's Yard on Murderer's Row, just off Whitechapel Road.

Having checked out the first two, Lestrade and seven constables accompanied Holmes and I to Coke's Yard. This establishment was located down a dark and inhospitable alley where prostitutes are known to ply their trade. The Yard itself is shuttered by a pair of strong wooden gates, which the constables made heavy work of, before we were able to gain entry to the dire building.

[Mrs Watson has come into the room wearing nothing more than three strategically placed fig leaves. I shall continue this narrative shortly]