

MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES,

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

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THE MYSTERY OF THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL.

(Continued.)

"Never have I felt such a cold chill of disappointment, Watson. For a moment it seemed to me that there must be some radical mistake in my calculations. The setting sun shone full upon the passage floor, and I could see that the old, foot-worn grey stones with which it was paved were firmly cemented together, and had certainly not been moved for many a long year. Brunton had not been at work here. I tapped upon the floor but it sounded the same all over, and there was no sign of any crack or crevice. But, fortunately, Musgrave, who had begun to appreciate the meaning of my proceedings and who was now as excited as myself, took out his manuscript to check my calculations.

"And under," he said. "You have omitted the 'and under.'"

"I had thought that it meant that we were to dig, but now, of course, I saw at once that I was wrong. 'There is a cellar under this then,' I cried.

"Yes, and as old as the house. Down here, through this door."

"We went down a winding stone stair, and my companion, striking a match, lit a large lantern which stood on a barrel in the corner. In an instant it was obvious that we had at last come upon the true place, and that we had not been the only people to visit the spot recently.

"It had been used for the storage of wood, but the billets, which had evidently been littered over the floor, were now piled at the side, so as to leave a clear space in the middle. In this space lay a large and heavy flagstone with a raised iron ring in the centre to which a thick shepherd's check muffer was attached.

"By Jove!" cried my client. "That's Brunton's muffer. I have seen it on him, and could swear to it. What has the villain been doing here?"

"At my suggestion a couple of the county police were summoned to be present, and I then endeavored to raise the stone by pulling on the cravat. I could only move it slightly, and it was with the aid of one of the constables that I succeeded at last in carrying it to one side. A black hole yawned beneath into which we all peered, while Musgrave, kneeling at the side, pushed down the lantern.

"A small chamber, about seven feet deep and four feet square, lay open to us. At one side of this was a squat, brass-bound wooden box, the lid of which was hinged upwards, with this curious old-fashioned key projecting from the lock. It was furred outside by a thick layer of dust, and damp and worms had eaten through the wood, so that a crop of evil fungi was growing on the inside of it. Several discs of metal, old coins apparently, such as I hold here, were scattered over the bottom of the box, but it contained nothing else.

"At the moment, however, we had no

thought for the old chest, for our eyes were riveted upon that which crouched beside it. It was the figure of a man, clad in a suit of black, who squatted down upon his hams with his forehead sunk upon the edge of the box and his two arms thrown out on each side of it. The attitude had drawn all the stagnant blood to the face, and no man could have recognized that distorted liver-colored countenance; but his height, his dress and his hair were all sufficient to show my client, when we had drawn the body up, that it was indeed his missing butler. He had been dead some days, but there was no wound or bruise upon his person to show how he had met his dreadful end. When his body had been carried from the cellar we found ourselves still confronted with a problem which was almost as formidable as that with which we had started.

"I confess that so far, Watson, I had been disappointed in my investigation. I had reckoned upon solving the matter when once I had found the place referred to in the ritual; but now I was there, and was apparently as far as ever from knowing what it was which the family had concealed with such elaborate precautions. It is true that I had thrown a light upon the fate of Brunton, but now I had to ascertain how that fate had come upon him, and what part had been played in the matter by the woman who had disappeared. I sat down upon a keg in the corner and thought the whole matter carefully over.

"You know my methods in such cases, Watson. I put myself in the man's place and, having first gauged his intelligence, I try to imagine how I should myself have proceeded under the same circumstances. In this case the matter was simplified by Brunton's intelligence being quite first-rate, so that it was unnecessary to make any allowance for the personal equation, as the astronomers have dubbed it. He knew that something valuable was concealed. He had spotted the place. He found that the stone which covered it was just too heavy for a man to move unaided. What would he do next? He could not get help from outside even if he had someone whom he could trust, without the unbarring of doors and considerable risk of detection. It was better, if he could, to have his helpmate inside the house. But whom could he ask? This girl had been devoted to him. A man always finds it hard to realize that he may have finally lost a woman's love, however badly he may have treated her. He would try by a few attentions to make his peace with the girl Howells, and then would engage her as his accomplice. Together they would come at night to the cellar, and their united force would suffice to raise the stone. So far I could

follow their actions as if I had actually seen them.

"But for two of them, and one a woman, it must have been heavy work the raising of that stone. A burly Sussex policeman and I had found it no light job. What would they do to assist them? Probably what I should have done myself. I rose and examined carefully the different billets of wood which were scattered round the floor. Almost at once I came upon what I expected. One piece, about three feet in length, had a very marked indentation at one end, while several were flattened at the side as if they had been compressed by some considerable weight. Evidently, as they had dragged the stone up they had thrust the chunks of wood into the chink, until at last, when the opening was large enough to crawl through, they would hold it open

by a billet placed lengthwise, which might very well become indented at the lower end, since the whole weight of the stone would press it down on to the edge of this other slab. So far I was still on safe ground.

(To be continued.)

SACKVILLE.

SACKVILLE, Oct. 18.—Dr. N. R. Colter, post-office inspector, is making an official visit here today.

Mrs. Thos Best has gone to Amherst to spend the winter with her daughter, Mrs. Stiles.

T. A. Siddall, has returned from Ontario, where he spent the past three months.

Mrs. Churchill and Miss Churchill, are in town. They will reside on Smythe St. in the house lately vacated by Mrs. Crane.

Mrs. D. Allison and little son, are the guests of Colonel and Mrs. Baird.

Dr. Inch, chief superintendent of education is the guest of his daughter, Mrs. Sydney Huston.

Harry Brown, of St. John is in town. Lebanon Lodge, and a number from Acadia Lodge, Amherst were entertained to an oyster supper, at the Sackville

restaurant, last evening by Messrs F. B. Black, Wm. McLeod, W. L. Goodwin, and D. Cameron, the candidates upon whom the 3rd degree was conferred previous to the supper.

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A Special Sale of Ladies' Walking Skirts. We place on sale today **About Fifty Sample Skirts, That Have Been Priced Just One-third Below the Regular,** that is a \$3.00 skirt is marked \$2.00, and the same proportion of reduction right through the lot up to the \$4.50 skirts. Colors are navy blue, black and tweed effects.

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