

SHERLOCK HOLMES

"THE ADVENTURE OF THE BAR'S CLUE BUNGLE"

Another exciting Round-Robin Holmesian
Pastiche by Members of

The Pleasant Places of Florida



Limited
Edition

No. 5



The ADVENTURE of the BAR'S CLUE BUNGLE

Introduction

by Ben Wood
of HOLMES Beach

Holmes and I were enjoying our second cup of Brazilian coffee following a sumptuous breakfast prepared by our dutiful Martha Hudson. I was casually perusing the morning Times while my companion enjoyed his first pipe of shag, dreamily gazing out the window.

"What think you, Watson," he finally spoke, "of the East London dock robbery last night?"

I quickly rustled through the paper until I spotted the write-up hidden away on page nine.

"This sort of thing seems common enough in that area," I replied, having hastily read the two-paragraph account, fearing to commit myself

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to any further analysis of the incident.

"Commonplace, perhaps, Watson," he quickly retorted, "but if I'm not misled by appearances, there shall presently be a knock at our very door by a haggard, desperate barrister who will seek our advice and assistance concerning last evening's London Dock purloiner, who he represents."

"Now really, Holmes," I scoffed, "however could you deduce . . ."

I was abruptly interrupted by a sharp rap upon our door.



Continuation I
by Mike Bryan
of Bradenton

Let's not keep our barrister waiting, Doctor," Holmes said, returning his gaze out the window.

Although I had often seen my friend's remarkable skills demonstrated, I was nonetheless taken aback when I opened the door. Mrs. Hudson presented our visitor, but I confess I paid little heed to her words. All my attention was drawn to the person who stood behind her. Judging by his dress he was obviously a man of some means, and yet so pale and worn was his face that I should have thought he was ill.

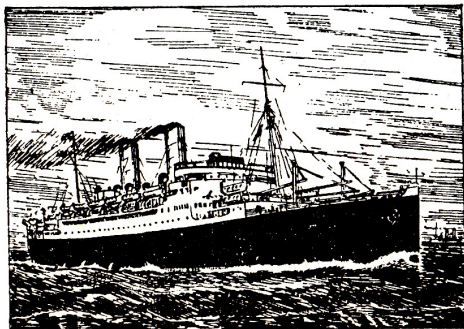
"Do come in, Mr. ... I beg your pardon." 3.

"Weston Quinn, sir, as this kind lady has stated. Thank you, I will come in." He shuffled through the door appearing as if he would collapse at any moment. "I must say - I do not know where I should go if you turn me away."

Introductions were quickly disposed of and our visitor seated in the chair opposite Holmes and myself. I handed him a cup of hot coffee as Holmes resumed the conversation.

"Indeed, Mr. Quinn, if your case is of such extremity, perhaps I may be of assistance. Watson has more than once heard my little practice described as the court of last resort. I pray you, be so good as to state the facts of the matter as plainly as possible."

"Gladly, Mr. Holmes, though I beg your patience. These last twelve hours have shaken my rather nervous constitution almost beyond endurance." He sipped the coffee, his hand trembling. "No doubt you have read the reports in the morning papers concerning the robbery in the East End docks last night. The thieves were carefully organized and circumvented every precaution taken to protect the cargo of the Majestic, which contained chiefly fabrics & woods of great value and rarity. The loss, of course, is misfortune enough. But the tragedy is compounded, Mr. Holmes. I have reason to suspect



that the villain and coordinator behind this robbery is my own legal partner, Tobias Gates!"



Continuation II

by Helen Swift
of HOLMES Beach

Holmes concealed his surprise and asked calmly, "Do you know the whereabouts of this Mr. Gates?"

Obviously struggling to concentrate on the case at hand, Mr. Quinn replied, "I am afraid that he is the victim of the gang which he seems to have organized. I have come across a communication which leads me to believe that there have been earlier attempts at similar robberies. I have tried to piece together what evidence I have come upon, but with no result."

"But do you know the present whereabouts of Mr. Gates?", Mr. Holmes persisted.

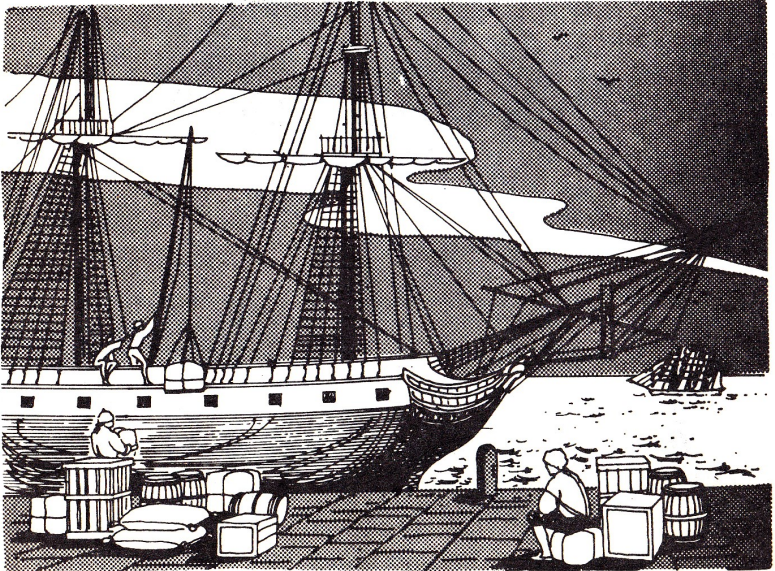
"He was last seen at a pub called The Dropped Anchor, down by the docks, in the company of a ship's mate and a man who had illegally taken

delivery of the ship's cargo. There was a forged copy of the manifest which, it appears, Mr. Gates had prepared, as well as the authentic one. When the rightful consignee had not received the cargo, and could not reach my partner, he proceeded to the docks and was told one of the ship's mates could be found at The Dropped Anchor. Upon questioning the two men, he was shown the forged manifest with the name of another consignee."

"Mr. Lewis," he continued, "for that was his name, came to my chambers in considerable agitation. I listened to his bizarre account and had to admit I had not seen Mr. Gates that day. Mr. Lewis conjectured that the ship's mate was involved in the robbery and perhaps was not only participating in the money received, but was also planning a bit of blackmail as well."

Holmes nodded, and said, "Yes - and then?"

"Now, Mr. Holmes," he continued, "I realize the London Constabulary will investigate the



View from the Loo of The Dropped Anchor

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robbery, as indeed they should, but before I turn over the evidence I have found, I would request your opinion as to the possibility that Mr. Gates had been coerced into this scheme. Presumably, the police are at this very moment seeking to question me and to pursue their search for my partner."

Exhausted by this explanation, Mr. Quinn nearly collapsed as Sherlock Holmes rose to refill his meerschaum.



Continuation III
by John Kalajian
of Venice

I assisted Mr. Quinn to a chair and was about to summons Mrs. Hudson, when we heard a clamor on the staircase. I crossed the room and opened the door, as the obviously agitated Mrs. Hudson proclaimed, "I asked the gentleman to wait but he. . . ."

"I have urgent news of Mr. Gates and he swore to come without ..." Holmes interrupted the extremely dishevelled stoker and excused our faithful and now shaken landlady. Mrs. Hudson departed with a scornful glance toward our intruder.

Mr. Quinn had risen and was supporting himself against the chair.

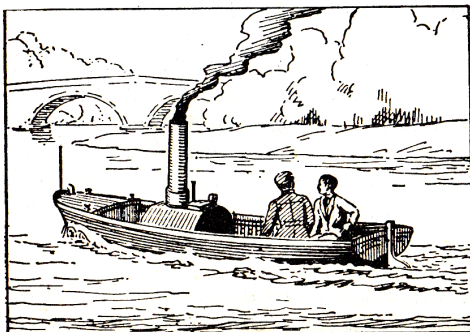
"Mr. Gates always provided a four of gin for my eyes and ears, for all at the yard know the faithfulness of Jake Coal, but which of you is Mr. Holmes?"

"You have come at a timely and urgent moment to relate your observations to me," Holmes replied.

"Mr. Gates has been forced upon a launch and taken on the Thames. He was always watched by smugglers, he said, who meant him ill-will, and if he were here he would tell you the same. Last night he was with them that he feared, and told me if anything should happen to him, I should come to Mr. Holmes of Baker Street."

Mr. Quinn was obviously shaken by this timely news and I again assisted him into the chair. Holmes crossed to the window and re-lit his shag.

"Why did you wait until this morning to bring me this urgent news of Mr. Gates' journey?" Holmes probed.



by Wanda Butts
of Largo

"To be sure, sir, if it were up to me I'd a not come at all, but these is his instructions true and sure," the stoker stated, his chin jutting out in defiance at the thought of his mission. "True it was, last night, that Mr. Gates was with them smugglers, but this is the time he told me to come, and I would not be a minutes late nor early. 'Tis loyal that I am to Mr. Gates. I figure he knew the type of men he was dealing with, and knew I'd try to get him away, and being the sort of man Mr. Gates is, he'd rather I come here than risk my life for his."

"How considerate," Holmes mumbled, glancing my way. "And did it not occur to you that Mr. Gates was signing his own death warrant by having you come here so late after his abduction? That perhaps he had miscalculated his smuggler friends and they had come earlier than he expected?"

"Oh no, sir," Coal exclaimed earnestly. "That I know for sure is not the truth. I was in the office cabin by the wharfs with Mr. Gates, when the men came to the door giving some false story about a past-due shipment of merchandise found. He closed the door to them and calmly told me clear as I'm standing here in front of you, what he wanted me to do. That they meant him foul and I was to come here at this hour. That he'd be all right as long as I followed his instructions."

"Hmmm," Holmes murmured, and took a thoughtful drag on his pipe. "Well, we keep no gin here for your troubles, but perhaps our guest, Mr. Quinn, would not mind too much assisting you to the pub two blocks down? As he came here with the same mission as yourself, I am sure he would be happy to aid your eyes and ears."

Mr. Quinn stood shakily, staring from Holmes to the stocky, strained man. "Well I ..." he licked his lips, "Of course, I should be happy to hear

more about Tobias, but ..."

"I assure you, Mr. Quinn, that I have already taken the matter into my own hands and have some current theories which I must check out," Holmes continued. Taking the barrister by the arm, leading him towards the door and Mr. Coal, he said, "Please go, sir. Your mind might be better occupied at the bar, with Mr. Coal here, than worrying about your friend."

Mr. Quinn took a few deep breaths as if he were about to speak, then nodded, resignedly, and exited with the stoker.

"What'd you say the name was?" the stockier man asked as they departed.

"Holmes!" I admonished, "What inhumane treatment ..."

But I was halted by his outstretched hand as he hurriedly moved to the window to observe our recent visitors. "Aha!" he exclaimed, "Just as I suspected! Foul deeds abound, Watson! Quick! Your coat! And your revolver, also! We have a liar to follow!"



Continuation V

by Caroline Everett
of St. Petersburg

Holmes led me, at a rapid pace, down the

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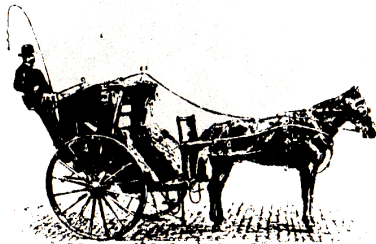
back stairs and out through the kitchen into the area where, peering up through the railings, we glimpsed Quinn and Coal as they entered the premises of Dolomore's Pub.*

We leapt up the steps and followed in time to see Quinn speaking to the barman, who opened the private bar to him and his humble companion. Rounding the building, we came upon a window through which we could see the pair at a table with glasses on it. To my astonishment, Quinn produced some documents from under his coat which he passed over to Coal. A large amount of money changed hands and the negotiators raised their glasses and toasted the exchange.

"Come away, Watson! We are no longer needed here!" said Holmes. No sooner had we returned to our lodgings than I belabored my companion with questions. "Enough!" he cried. "You know my methods! See what facts we have gathered - then draw your own conclusions."

"But first, my dear Holmes, just tell me how you knew Mr. Quinn would come to us this morning?"

"Elementary," he replied. "The Times reported the theft of the Majestic's cargo and identified the owners as Weston Quinn, barrister, and his partner, Tobias Gates. As the reporters were only able to interview Quinn, owing to the mysterious disappearance of Gates, I assumed that at



* - For the purposes of this tale, I have appropriated the property of wine Merchant, H. Dolomore of #16 Baker Street.

least one distraught barrister would seek my advise.

"But, to continue . . . what facts have we from which to theorize? Firstly, the cargo of the Majestic has vanished. A false bill of lading was presented and accepted, presumably by the first mate. A second man is seen with the mate and Tobias Gates at the Dropped Anchor. Thereafter, Gates disappears - is presumed kidnapped and hidden aboard a vessel on the Thames.

"Secondly, a seaman known as a police informer, turns up here just as Quinn reveals that his missing partner has had previous lapses from grace. You were properly horrified when I suggested that a gentleman, like Quinn, visit a pub with a common stoker like Coal, but you observed how they did not hesitate to follow my suggestion. Thereafter, we find them exchanging mysterious papers and cash."

"What can this mean, Holmes?" I inquired.

"Just this - that Tobias Gates is an innocent victim of his partner's machinations! He is in grave danger, I fear. Come - we must follow his abductors. On to the river!"



Continuation VI

by Marsha Pollak
of St. Petersburg

Fog was rolling in as we reached the river. An unmarked police steam launch was waiting as per Holmes' hastily made arrangements, and soon we were quickly slicing through the water.

"Holmes," I queried, "how are we going to find Gates?"

"With this fog rolling in, I don't think we will see too many fast-moving small vessels on the Thames tonight," Holmes replied. "Visibility is not too bad, as of yet, but our fog lights and horn will see use before this chase is done."

The silhouette of St. Paul's loomed eerily into view and we sped on past the Tower of London. My mind was jarred back to an earlier time and similar circumstances, when we raced after the launch Aurora, carrying Jonathan Small & Tonga.

We swept past the West India Docks and rounded that sharp bend in the Thames known as the 'Isle of Dogs', when faint sounds first reached my ears. "Holmes, listen!" I whispered.

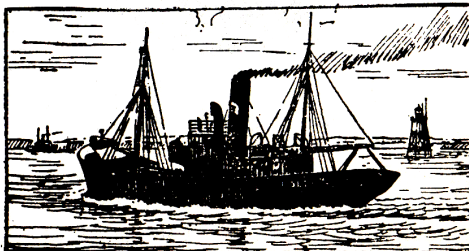
"Quick, Watson, the fog lamp." I handed it to him and he leaned out over the bow with it until I was sure he was going to tumble on into the water.

"There she is!" he cried. The launch hove into view and we could see figures moving on deck.

"They're trying to make for Gravesend, avoid Customs, and rendezvous with a seagoing ship," Holmes explained.

"But why, Holmes?"

"Come, come, Watson. What did you think the cargo of that ship really was? I hope we're not too late to save Tobias Gates."



Conclusion

by Mike Carroll
of St. Petersburg

In a few minutes we were abaft the fugitive launch, and the police Inspector's voice over the megaphone convinced them they could not out-run us. They cut their speed and we came alongside; in a short time a police boarding party took charge of the launch and the fugitives were in irons aboard the police craft, Tobias Gates among them. Our first stop was Scotland Yard, where we deposited our captives and the crew of the launch, and collected our friend Lestrade. Then after a hurried consultation among the police officers and Holmes, we set out for Baker Street, the four of us, Holmes, Lestrade, Gates and myself. On our arrival we found guests awaiting us: Weston Quinn and Jake Coal, under the watchful eye of Athelney Jones and a police sergeant.

"Now gentlemen," said Holmes, when we had settled down with a cup of hot tea, "I believe that we are in a position to straighten out the entanglements of the past few hours. Let me begin by saying that several months ago, Lestrade came to request my aid in trapping a ring of diamond smugglers, who were bringing gems into London from South Africa and then shipping them to the Continent via Rotterdam. You may recall Watson, that during the past few weeks I have occasionally been away from Baker Street for entire days, once even for five days which were spent on the Dutch waterfronts, but without learning a single useful thing. The gang was not only efficient, their security was water-tight. They left no clues, which I suppose we may take as an indication of Moriarty's skillful hand.

"However, about six weeks ago we uncovered evidence that the legal partnership of Quinn and Gates was the front through which the ring operated. Since then, the police have been able to follow most of their moves as they planned their next caper, which was the shipment on board the Majestic. It was a shipment of rare woods, from

Cape Town, and we were certain it was destined for Rotterdam. The wood was indeed rare, but more valuable were the items it contained, for if our information was correct at least half the pieces had been bored and diamonds inserted in the cavity. It was an ingenious idea, since the stated value of the shipment would not excite suspicion when it was closely watched, as would have been the case for a bit of commonplace cargo. You may remember Mrs. Oakshott's goose, Watson, in the tale you have chronicled as "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." It was valuable not merely for itself but for what was contained in its crop. So it was with these pieces of rare wood.



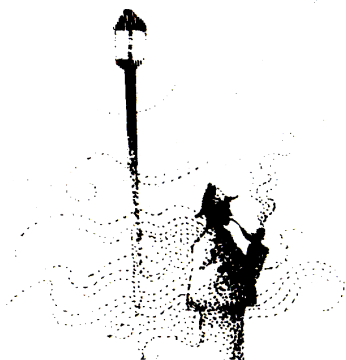
"We were certain the visit of the Majestic would provide the opportunity we were waiting for; we were prepared to switch the real cargo for a dummy, complete with false manifests, but a new problem arose. Just three days ago, with the Majestic expected in port within 24 hours, word came to one of our operatives that Quinn intended to make this his last, and biggest attempt, and not only to abscond with the money, but leave his partner, Gates, either dead or in the hands of the police. Disguised as a sailor, I visited Gates' office the other day in an attempt to warn him, without any success, other than to leave my name as a resource in case of emergency.

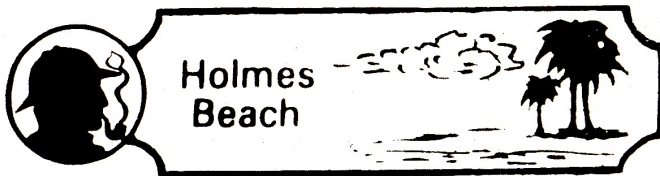
"As you have seen, the message that he was in danger was ironically brought by one of those who were plotting against his life, the stoker, Jake Coal. And they might have been successful, had not Quinn and Coal been so anxious to split their swag that they made the incredible error of concluding their business under our very eyes

in a public bar. That provided the final clue We needed, and that bungle will prove their undoing. The Crown already has enough evidence to convict them, but perhaps Mr. Gates will want to increase that certainty, now that he knows he was targeted for extinction by his colleagues in crime.

"And now, gentlemen, I have prevailed on your patience long enough. If I am not mistaken, I believe there should be a police van waiting at the door, which will relieve us of this unwelcomed company. Messrs. Lestrade and Jones, I should have liked to celebrate with one of Mrs. Oakshott's geese, but, I fear, it is not the season. However, there in the corner stands a cobwebby bottle of Tokay, and if you will touch the bell, Watson, I am sure Mrs. Hudson will shortly provide us with something obtained from rare woods - an excellent pheasant and several brace of grouse!"

-fini-





Other Round-Robin Pastiches by
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- "The Case of the Foreign Cabman" (1975)*
 "The Adventure of the Lost £'s" (1976)*
 "The Adventure of the Second Stein" (1977)
 "The Singular Adventure of
 the Solitary Balloonist" (1977)
 "The Curious Affair of the
 Witch's Brougham" (1978)
 "The Adventure of the Florid Ians" (1979)
 "The Case of the Three Merry Debs" (1980)

- also -

"Exercises in Ratiocination &
 Mental Gymnastics" (1977)
 (A booklet of mind-jogging conundrums for
 the Holmesian cerebrum.)

"A Tribute to Leslie Marshall, B.S.I." - A
 fitting tribute to the founder of the PPofF.
 (* - Contains reprints of first 2 pastiches)

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