

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Pearls of Death

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Use of the Sherlock Holmes characters created by the late Sir Arthur
Conan Doyle by arrangement with Dame Jean Conan Doyle

The squishing and splashing sounds, that were interwoven with the rhythmic rattling of the wheels of Dr. Watson's Hansom cab, were the only remnants of the torrential rain and gale force winds that had deluged London for the past week. The storm had been replaced by a clear bright, moon-filled evening and a chill breeze. The cold wind and clear sky presaged the coming of the winter season. Dr. Watson regretted his lack of foresight as he sat shivering, protected only by his professional attire. The changing climatic conditions and the strenuous efforts required to quell the raging influenza epidemic had conspired to exacerbate both of his war wounds. His shoulder and leg throbbed with pain. Now, bone tired and aching, he was destined for a lonely evening devoid even of the comfort of his wife's company.

As he endured the long ride back to his apartments, nestled above his now prosperous practice, Dr. Watson's mind reflected back to the recent past events. He lay back, resigned to his fate, and shrugged his shoulders with acceptance of his sorry plight. His young, manly, and handsome mustachioed face, ever mobile and expressive of his emotions, responded to the thoughts that flowed at the edge of his consciousness. Sorrow and despair for those whom he had been unable to heal and had died despite his best efforts, were followed by anger and frustration at the limits placed upon him by the lack of therapeutic measures available to thwart this dread disease.

Then, a gentle smile flowed over his features as he remembered the kindly face of his lovely wife Mary and their parting conversation as he left the Lower Camberwell domicile of Mrs. Cecil Forrester. He could still see the drawing room door closing behind Mrs. Forrester as she, in robe and slippers feet, weakly retired for the evening. Then, they were alone together at last. His wife Mary, after rising on her toes and gently kissing him on their special spot just below his right eye, and using her private pet name said: "My dear James. How thoughtful and accommodating of you to allow me to tend to my former employer in her time of need, with both her and her husband dreadfully ill. They have been the only parents I have known since the death of my poor father, and they have always treated me as a beloved member of their family."

To which Dr. Watson smiled and replied: "I would not want it to be otherwise, my sweet angel of mercy. Although I will miss you terribly, I expect to share many a day with you, and that knowledge of our continued companionship will keep me happy until you return home to my side."

Finished with his reverie of recently past events, Dr. Watson permitted his mind to drift back to earlier memories. He recalled with glory and pain his military adventures in the service of the Queen, his subsequent return to England, and his momentous first meeting with his friend and erstwhile colleague Sherlock Holmes. He smiled as he contemplated the many interesting discussions that they have had, usually in the afternoon after tea, concerning the changes in weather patterns associated with the tilt of the earth, various athletic competitions, literature, music, and philosophy. Sitting upright with a new look of resolve upon his face, he leaned out of the window of his cab, and shouted to the driver: "Belay the previous instructions, cabbie. Take me to 221 Baker Street!" A visit to Mr. Sherlock Holmes would be just the ticket. A comfortable fire, a nip or more of the contents of the spirit case and the gasogene, a fine cigar from the coal-scuttle, and an interesting dialogue with his old friend and companion, followed by a good night's sleep in his old bedroom, was just the medicine he required to restore his spirits, and allay his dread of spending yet another lonely night with none but the servants for company. His pleasure was doubled as he spotted the light glowing in the facade of the well-remembered cozy Baker Street quarters. "Good!" he thought, "Holmes is both at home and still awake."

As Dr. Watson labored up the 17 steps, which seemed like miles to his bone-weary and pained body, a high-pitched voice rang out, "Watson, my old companion, I would know that tread anywhere! You are just in time to join me in a celebration as I reach the climax of another difficult and challenging case. There is something I must show you while we await a response to my message. Then we must be off on a long carriage ride."

These were the last words that Dr. Watson expected to hear or wanted to hear. But, how characteristic it was of his old friend Sherlock Holmes. It had been thus from their first meeting at St. Bart's, and had never changed. Gone were the dreams of pleasant, cozy surroundings and relaxing conversation. The meditative, philosophical Holmes that Watson had envisioned was replaced by Holmes the sleuth, the blood hound, the pursuer of evil. "What have I gotten myself into now?" queried Watson to himself. Realizing that it was now too late to turn back, he continued his slow progress to Holmes' abode.

Then he saw Sherlock Holmes. The tall, lank figure of the man was bending almost in half to accommodate the height of the table that supported the device through which he was now looking. His lean, hawk nosed, angular facial features were somewhat softened by the beaming smile that lightened his usually dour, clean shaved countenance. "Come see my new high powered microscope!" shouted Holmes, looking at the strange black instrument as a child would gaze at a new toy at Christmas. "It is the same as that utilized by the famous German physician, Herr Professor Dr. Robert Koch, to study the life cycle of the tubercle bacillus. Certainly you

have heard of his great discoveries!” blurted Holmes. “It can magnify images several hundredfold larger than they really are! There are, as yet, very few in England, although they have become popular in Germany. Look through this top lens and very, very slowly focus by turning this large cylinder. But, whatever you do, do not touch the slide with your fingers! It may be a deadly error. Tell me, what do you see?”

As Watson slowly, and timidly followed Holmes’ instructions, a very strange sight resolved itself out of the mist. Before his eyes was revealed the image of tangled, sinuous threads. Glistening in the center of the threads were evenly spaced opalescent, shining, ovals. The appearance was that of a treasure box filled with strings of identical, lovely pearls. “Holmes, what is this? This is a beautiful, priceless sight that nature has prepared for us, is it not?”

“I am afraid, my poetic friend, that this object that you so admire is the mechanism for a diabolic, murderous scheme by a highly intelligent criminal. However, we must travel far to the other side of London, should we wish to learn the identity of this brilliant villain,” said Holmes, very concernedly, “Or additional subsequent murders may result. Before we leave, however, you must also look at the same slide in a standard high power objective, one that you are more conversant with.”

Watson’s practiced eye gazed at the more familiar microscopic field and he quickly announced, “Holmes, that is the bacillus of anthrax. There can be no mistaking it. But what has this to do with your current case? Certainly there is no mystery to be attached to this affliction that is somewhat prominent in butchers, wool sorters, and others who handle potentially infected animal products. It is very easy to diagnose from a patient history and clinical grounds.”

“Watson, let us continue our observations further with more scientific evidence. Look in the low powered microscope, it is also very illustrative.”

Quickly focusing this device to which he was most accustomed, as a result of his medical training, Dr. Watson saw a mass of some brownish vegetative fibers in which were embedded a few strands of hair. “Is that tobacco?” he asked, “and animal hairs? What a very strange combination of items.”

Retorted Holmes: “I see that your mind has been opened to unlikely possibilities as a result of our shared adventures. Yes, you are correct. Not only are the hair and tobacco part of the threads that tie together the available evidence in this case, but the material on the slide that you have previously viewed as well. In association with your suspicions voiced in a recent conversation that we had, these findings form a link to the discovery of the murderer of Lord Herbert McFallow, and possibly others. Now, I see that you are weary. Since we have time before a response takes us to our early morning vigil, I suggest that you rest yourself in front of the fire, and enjoy one of the cigars that I had imported from Tampa, Florida, in the United States. Here is a glass of whisky and soda to accompany your relaxation while we chat about this matter.”

After drawing deeply on the cigar, and taking a long drink of the warming beverage, Watson finally continued their conversation: “Holmes, how is that possible? What did I say that led you to this line of reasoning?”

“My dear fellow, it was you who suspected that the death of Lord Herbert may not have been the result of the ongoing influenza epidemic. You stated that, although the respiratory symptoms that preceded his death appeared to be similar to those encountered with influenza, there were signs of toxic manifestations not found in that disease. Also, in your judgement, and from your personal experience with the current epidemic, there were subtle nuances that led you to call me into the case. You yourself stated that the signs of shock and the rapid onset of lethality ruled out influenza in your mind. You suspected foul play, poisoning.”

“Yes, Holmes, it was due to my recent experiences and my hearkening to the teachings of my professor of surgery at Edinburgh, Dr. Joseph Bell, whom you appear to emulate in many respects.”

To which Holmes replied: “Of all living men, his teachings provide the best examples of logical deduction. But, we digress. Do you recall my examination of your patient?”

“Yes, Holmes, you crawled all around the body on your hands and knees looking at everything carefully with your hand lens. Then, you looked all around his mouth with a small mirror after taking a whiff of his breath to detect the presence of poison, and then you looked into his nose.”

“Yes,” replied Holmes, who then asked, while exhaling fumes from his recently lighted pipe, “Did I do anything that you have never seen me do before?”

“Why Holmes, now that I think of it, you took a scraping from his nose. I never saw you do that before.”

“That is quite true, Watson. You must take your clues where you find them. I am always puzzled why you do not ask why, when I do something different. A curious scientist would have wanted to look and see just what was in Lord Herbert’s nose that aroused my inquisitiveness.”

“But Holmes, there were no cutaneous lesions to point to anthrax, and the history of the illness would tend to rule out men of the character of Lord Herbert, who has never been accused of doing any physical labor in his life. What is the relationship between your demonstrations and the death of that noble gentleman?”

“That is the deviousness of the whole incident,” replied Holmes. “Someone with your forthright and gentlemanly character would have a difficult time connecting these events. But, I both suffer from and am assisted by an advanced case of cynicism where every action is suspect, no matter how unconnected and innocent they may seem. Also, to my advantage, I trust no one, except of course you and my brother Mycroft.”

“Are you proposing that the tobacco was a means of transporting the bacillus of anthrax to Lord Herbert, and the animal hair was the source of the microbe? What a terrible yet ingenious plot,” continued Watson. “Only a very evil scientist could have devised this scheme.”

“Yes,” responded Sherlock Holmes, while lighting another pipeful of tobacco, “You are probably correct in your hypothesis. We will need some further evidence, however, to confirm our theory.”

Before Dr. Watson could reply, a sound of young feet rapidly padding up the stairs heralded the appearance of a very dirty, very smelly, and very scruffy young street Arab. Holmes said quickly to Watson, “Ah, one of my worthy associates has a message for me. Our wait is over. We must now hurry.” Turning to the lad, he continued: “I trust that a conveyance awaits us to take us to the end of our search.”

A positive nod from the street urchin brought a shilling coin into his hands and he sped off, rapidly followed by Sherlock Holmes with Dr. Watson being pulled along as he attempted to don the large baggy coat tossed to him by his companion.

“Where are we off to?” asked Watson.

“I do not know,” shouted Holmes over the loud clatter of wheels and the hoof beats of the two galloping steeds that rapidly pulled their four-wheeler through the empty, cold streets of London. “Our lad will guide the driver, but I suspect the final destination will be in a slaughterhouse or tanners, possibly on Aldgate Street or Harrow-Alley.”

Now wide awake, all pain and drowsiness removed by the adrenaline coursing through his circulation, Dr. Watson still shivered, but not with the cold, which was allayed by the warm clothing supplied by Sherlock Holmes from his vast supply of costume over garments, but by the thrill of the chase. It was good to be back in the hunt with his friend! It was good to share another exciting adventure with Sherlock Holmes! “Holmes, I really missed our little excursions together. Thank you for enabling me to accompany you on yet another.”

In response to that statement, Sherlock Holmes dug into the right hand pocket of his Ulster, retrieved several newspaper clippings and a telegram, and tossed them to Watson. “Regard these, friend Watson, while I plan our course of action as we note the area in which our journey takes us. I will need to have my wits about me, and devise an extemporaneous plan of attack, depending upon our surroundings.”

“Just like Holmes to thrust information on me, rather than simply answering my straight forward questions.” mused Dr. Watson. Continuing, he thought, “Holmes is always trying to get me to think like him. Doesn’t he realize that he is of a rare breed?”

With great difficulty, due to the violent swaying and bouncing of their carriage, Dr. Watson was

barely able to read the following item from the agony column of *The Times* for that morning:

To the Tobacconist: I require some more of your special snuff. Please deliver three bags full to the usual location. Little Bo Peep.

Preceding that date were several other private notices of the same sort. “What could it mean?” thought Watson, glancing at his inscrutable companion who was placidly peering straight ahead, his pipe firmly clenched between his teeth, his mind completely focused on the problem at hand. Watson knew that any attempts at conversation or questioning would be ignored when his friend presented that visage to the world, and resigned himself to a silent journey. Then Watson turned his attention to the telegram, which, surprisingly enough was from Germany:

Mr. Holmes, description of symptoms, clinical signs, laboratory findings confirm your suspicions. Await further word. Most interested. R. Koch

The last, of course, he understood fully. It had to do with the identity of the microbe, an identity that he himself had confirmed minutes ago in the Baker Street sitting room. As Watson, still somewhat puzzled, mused about the full import of all that had occurred that night and into the early morning, the four-wheeler lurched to a sudden stop. “Quick, Watson, we must follow this lad to see where he leads us!” whispered Holmes, as he drew Watson forcefully from the conveyance to the ground. “We must make haste, we do not know when our prey will arrive. I am certain that he suspects nothing. I suggest that you be careful where you step, though. And do not remove your gloves for any reason. And wear this scarf around your nose and mouth for further protection.”

As they watched, the boy was joined by an older one, clothed in gloves and scarf, who, as disreputable appearing as his companion, seemed to be in a command position. Rapidly, the street was filled by other similarly clad, silent boys, who seemed to flow endlessly from the shadows into the bright moonlight, that was just giving way to a pale dawn. Slipping out of the alley to their left, another furtive youngster quickly took Holmes’ hand, and the trio proceeded into the darkness, around two corners and into the back door of an establishment smelling of dead animals and their feces.

“Be very quiet, Watson, we do not wish to apprehend our man here. We need to follow him to his delivery point to catch the criminals at the next higher level in this enterprise.”

Joined by a second lad, the four furtively followed the dim lantern glow into the cavernous slaughterhouse. Turning a another corner, the entourage spotted a door framed in bright light on the other side of the immense room. Extinguishing the lantern, Sherlock Holmes led his assembled patrol towards the source of light, like moths to a flame. As they slowly inched their way through the silently opened doorway into the blinding light pouring in from the window, they could perceive nothing of interest. Then, from behind, came the unmistakable dull thud of a rifle being cocked. Apparently startled by the sound, the figure of a man, with a long, sharp object clutched in one hand, rose up before them and was framed against the glare of the sun at

the level of the eastern horizon.

“No! Don’t fire!” shouted Holmes, “Hold your fire or all is lost!”

But his plea was useless. The roar of a powerful rifle reverberated in their ears as the human figure fell to the floor. The heavy treads of human feet heralded the entrance of a plain clothed detective and two burly constables into the room.

“You ruined everything;” shouted Holmes to the police. “Why did you shoot him? He would harm no one with his blade, and he could lead us to his superior.”

“But Mr. Holmes,” said the inspector, “We are not armed. It was not us who killed the man.”

“I am very sorry that I accused you and your men Inspector; please forgive me,” Holmes replied contritely .

“We all make mistakes, don’t we Mr. Holmes, even famous consulting detectives,” concluded the policeman, with a sarcastic tone that one would use to a recalcitrant child, a slight smile on his face.

“Alas, then, we have been outsmarted,” Holmes continued in a voice so quiet that only the near by Watson could understand his words. “Leaving nothing to chance, the master criminal behind this enterprise arranged for his agent to be spied upon and eliminated to avoid capture. That was his insurance policy against betrayal. However, there is nothing we can do to remedy the situation, and I am certain that the killer has left the premises and will never be found. Watson, I note that you have rushed to provide medical assistance to our quarry. How does he fare?”

Watson glumly replied, “He is dead Holmes. We will get no further information from him.”

The glow of the bright sunlight revealed an unusual scene. They were in the midst of a dirty slaughterhouse. On the floor lay a short, stout, unkempt, unshaven blonde haired man of about twenty years of age. Next to where the man was laying was the only living four-legged animal in attendance. It was a sick, scraggly sheep, partly shorn of its wool. Nearby, on the floor, was a pair of shears and a basket that contained the wool that was no longer attached to the body of the animal.

“Why, that man is Melbourne, the son of your tobacconist!” exclaimed Watson. “What the deuce is he doing here? What is he up to?”

Turning to Watson, Holmes very quietly said, “He or someone in his father’s employ was the logical candidate as the assassin or his helper. But this account book that I found in the shop, among this man’s things, now completes the picture. Let us continue this discussion after I have dismissed the official representatives of the law.”

“Gentlemen,” continued Holmes more loudly, addressing the policemen and then favoring Watson with a wink of his eye, “You may remove the body. I think that the case of the phantom wool gatherer is solved. I suggest that you remove the body and file your report. Due to my false accusations regarding his demise, the least that I can do is allow you the privilege of taking full credit.”

After the police had left, and the Irregulars were dismissed with their earnings, Watson turned to Holmes and in a conspiratorial voice remarked, “It will be interesting to see how the police and newspapers will report the crime of phantom wool gathering that has not as yet been brought to their official attention.”

“Yes, my friend, let us now turn to matters at hand,” said Holmes, his eyes still twinkling with silent amusement from the joke that he had just perpetrated on the Official Police. “It appears that this young gentleman, once a medical student, but now fallen to a lower level, has collaborated in a series of murders. I am certain that the names in his book will not reveal to us the clients who used his services to carry out assignments behind the veil of the influenza epidemic. They are no doubt obfuscated by a secret code. But thank you for initiating this most interesting case. Your perceptive medical skills were essential in beginning the process of deducing the rest of the puzzle from the pieces that revealed themselves to my inquiry. That set into motion a series of events which eventually led to his unfortunate death. Let us now return to my lodgings where we can rest and resolve any outstanding issues.”

Once again in the familiar surroundings of 221B Baker Street, Dr. Watson finally realized that all of the pain and fatigue that led him to seek quiet solace in these chambers had been eradicated by the exciting events that had ended less than an hour ago. He knew that he had earned a good night’s sleep from his endeavors, but that his reward would not come until his mind was made easy by the discourse from Sherlock Holmes that was certain to follow the maddeningly prolonged routine now underway: the cleaning of the pipe, the filling of the pipe with tobacco, the lighting of the pipe, letting the fire go out, tamping it just so, and finally, carefully making certain that the entire surface was evenly lighted. Only then did Mr. Sherlock Holmes commence the discourse long awaited by his friend and former associate: “Well, my good friend and patient companion, I perceive that you have, for the most part, penetrated the solution to our little problem from the evidence that I have so far revealed to you and from what you have seen tonight. Are there any questions that you wish to ask me to assist you in its elucidation?”

“Yes, Holmes, what is it that you saw in Lord Herbert’s nose that initiated your studies in this matter?” replied Dr. Watson. “What could it have been that led you from Lord Herbert’s nose to a filthy slaughterhouse in the worst part of London? And what do the newspaper clippings and telegram have to do with it?”

“Well, would it help if I told you that there was a pustule in his nose?”

Dr. Watson looked up and nodded his head in affirmation. All was now clear. "Of course," he replied, "The hair-laden tobacco was the means of delivery of the bacillus. The animal hair that was mixed with the tobacco must have been from an infected sheep such as the one we encountered in tonight's excursion. The tobacco and hair were scraped from Lord Herbert's nose, and I assume that the same material was found in his snuff box."

"You are quite correct in your assessment. Now let me tie all of the facts together, with the information that you only had a chance to glance at, into a uniform narrative, and you tell me if you agree, or if I have overlooked any points that require further elucidation," Holmes said.

He then began a recitation in the style of a professor. "Let us start anew. That Lord Herbert died from a respiratory infection other than influenza, or possibly even poisoning, was an hypothesis derived from your clinical observations. For that, you have my gratitude for providing me with a case to drive away the ennui of the last few days, that were filled with constant rain and no crimes worthy of my attention. Even the activities of members the criminal class were curtailed by the horrendous weather. To continue my discourse - an observation of the body revealed an unusual lesion in the nose. When I later looked at the nasal scrapings in my low powered microscope, I saw the presence of inflammatory cells - see, I did learn something from you - and some tobacco and animal hair. My microscopic analyses of these items was simplified by the fact that I am preparing monographs on both topics. It was clearly a mixture of sheep's wool and a type and cut of tobacco only used in snuff. Not only that, but I could see, in my examination, that it was identical to that purveyed by my personal tobacconist, and few others. Is it clear so far, Watson?"

"Yes, absolutely, please continue, while I help myself to another excellent cigar," said the good Doctor, lighting the cigar and then puffing easily as he sat comfortably in the overstuffed chair, patiently awaiting the continuation of the scholarly exposition.

Sherlock Holmes went on: "The next thing that I did was sample Lord Herbert's snuff supply, and find the identical suspected product. A sampling of the products at the few stores revealed no contaminated snuff on their premises. The contaminated snuff was solely localized to Lord Herbert's abode. This meant that the material had to be placed at the victim's home by someone after the snuff had been especially prepared elsewhere for delivery. And, that it was done deliberately for the purpose of murder, not as a result of inadvertent contamination at the manufacturer's."

After going through the pipe ritual again, the recitation continued thus: "What would tie together the snuff, sheep's wool, a pustulant lesion, and a respiratory infection? A perusal of the medical references at the British Museum seemed to point to woolsorter's disease as the most logical solution. Certainly, if woolsorters can be infected by inhaling the wool of diseased sheep as they process it, couldn't the same material, carefully and continuously placed in an individual's nose achieve the same end? And wouldn't the symptoms emulate those of influenza to all but the well trained and experienced observer? What a diabolical plot!"

With that, Dr. Watson's face lit with appreciation of his friend's detective skills. He expostulated: "Holmes, your ability to tie these diverse aspects together is marvelous. Once you gave me the available information, I was able to see that Lord Herbert died of anthrax. But to know what to look for to discern that the woolsorter's disease was conveyed to the site of infection by the continuous application of snuff laced with the wool of infected sheep is excellent! A marvelous deduction! My hat is off to you. I fully understand the microscopic pearl necklace and the German telegram. But, the Baker Street Irregulars and the mysterious newspaper clippings, what part did they play?"

"Watson, you know my methods. To confirm the identity of the infecting microbe, I contacted Herr Professor Dr. Robert Koch for information on cultivating and identifying the causative bacillus. The high power microscope, purchased at his suggestion, revealed identical images from gelatin cultivations of the microbe from the nasal scraping, the snuff sample, hair from infected sheep, and finally, a specimen obtained from Dr. Koch himself. These are the deadly images of pearl necklaces that you so admired. One drop of a suspension containing them would kill a man in 24 hours. Also, the spores will remain infective in the snuff supply for many years due to the resistance of the spores to environmental conditions. Dr. Koch's telegram merely confirmed the validity of pursuing my observations, as did your microscopic analysis. But how do I find the individual personally responsible for this heinous crime, and how do I trap him into revealing his nefarious activities? I suspected, immediately, that the answer may lie within the establishment of only a very few tobacconists who purvey this particular blend of snuff, but I needed to perform one of my little experiments to test this tentative hypothesis. There was no other plan that I could pursue, since no suspect product was found at any of the locations. By the way, I seem to have purchased a large amount of snuff, would you like to have some for yourself? Anyway, hoping that standard means of communication were used to order the lethal snuff, I scoured every newspaper for the last several weeks leading to the death of Lord Herbert, and found in *The London Times* a series of notices from the 'Little Bo Peep' to the 'tobacconist.' I theorized that 'Little Bo Peep' was actually the person who arranged the murders, and that he was looking for lost sheep, in the form of 'special snuff.' In order to locate these individuals, I placed the advertisement that drew 'the tobacconist' out. I had members of my unofficial police force follow all of the members of these tobacconists' staffs and family everywhere. However, it did not take long to identify the individual tobacconist. My informants kept me posted throughout the day. My proprietor's son was followed to the closest newsstand where he avidly waited for the arrival of *The Times* every day. On the day in question, he quickly turned to the agony column, and rushed off as soon as he had read my advertisement. He hurried back to the shop, and made preparations to acquire more infected wool for his special snuff. The rest you know. Once his final destination was identified, we were summoned for the final resolution of the problem."

Watson looked up at his friend in admiration and asked, "When will we ascertain the identity of 'Little Bo Peep,' the one who is probably the actual murderer?"

"I am afraid that we have a long way to go on that score. The only available witness has been

executed. All of the addresses in the special ledger were blinds - a warehouse here, a pub there. Short of exhuming and examining the nasal cavities of all of the thousands of victims of the recent epidemic of influenza, no further steps are available to us. This bears the mark of the unknown master criminal who always stays beyond my reach. I acknowledge his intelligence and skills. Someday, he will come within my grasp, but until then, I will have to be satisfied with countering each and every one of his clever thrusts until he finally makes the one fatal error that will undo him.”

“Holmes, I cannot wait to write this case up for our annals. It is remarkably singular and demonstrates your skills of deduction to the utmost.”

“No, my dear friend and associate, we may never reveal this adventure to the public. Think how such a discovery, if it fell into the hands of a wicked foreign power, would provide a weapon for which we have no available defense. Let us keep this concept of a biological weapon to ourselves and leave it to others to conceive of it on their own. Also, it is essential that, just as the identity of the unseen hand behind these murders remains unknown to me, so must my intervention in his affairs remain hidden from his view. It is likely, however, that he will never use that *modus operandi* again.”

Turning his head towards Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes saw that his comrade had finally drifted off into a long awaited and well deserved slumber. The events of the very long day had finally taken their course. Gently, Holmes lay a blanket across his now sleeping friend, and retired to his bedroom to undergo the depression that overcomes him after the completion of an interesting little problem such as the one that has just been concluded.