



A Victorian Christmas Classic

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It is December 27. The excitement of Christmas has now faded into the languorous days that fill the interim preceding the New Year. The tree is resplendent in the living room in the far corner diagonally opposite the crackling fire place. The train set is now unattended except for the miniature figures that populate the surrounding village. All of the discarded wrapping paper has been cleared away and the contents neatly stowed in the proper toy chests. A gentle snow outside the window can be barely perceived through the lacy handiwork left by Jack Frost during the night, and sleigh bells are faintly heard over the sound coming from the family room. There, several figures can be seen cuddled on the floor leaning against the over stuffed sofa. The largest figure is that of Grandpa, his neatly cut white hair and beard set off on top by the deerstalker cap perched gently on his head, and the new red and green turtle neck sweater, bearing leather patches on the elbows. Under his left and right arms rest, respectively, the twin nine year old grandchildren Tommy and Tammy. On Grandpa's lap, quietly sleeping, is the baby, and at his feet in placid and comfortable repose is the family spaniel, Topper. All eyes are focused on the giant television screen in front of them as they watch together, in the annual renewal of their family custom, the marvelous Christmas classic unfolds before their eyes.

Let us now shift the scene to Grandma's warm, enormous kitchen, filled with the delicious, fragrant odors of turkey hash simmering for dinner. Sitting around the large oval table that has been passed down through several generations are the two teenaged grandchildren - Bobby and Bonnie, who have joined Grandma, Mom, and Dad at a late breakfast. The conversation has drifted to a discussion of the same well-remembered tale and the impact that it has had on their lives over the years. How an attempt to reunite Mr. Baker with his abandoned goose and hat led, via a goose's crop, to the discovery of the criminal who stole the remarkable and singular blue gem.

Yes, if you are a fan of the exploits of Mr. Sherlock Holmes and his companions, you very quickly perceived the subject of this essay. All of the characters in this sketch were doing what Sherlockians have done since 1934, that date of the founding of "The Baker Street Irregulars." They were all renewing their acquaintanceship with *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*. As originally suggested by Christopher Morley himself, the founding father of the BSI, this is a perfect way to observe the spirit of the Christmas season. We tell and retell the kind acts of the commissioner Peterson who first rescued Henry Baker from the Tottenham Court Road loungers and then his desire, via the assistance of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, to locate the rightful owner of the goose and hat which were abandoned during the skirmish. This parable is then climaxed by the spirit of forgiveness displayed by Mr. Holmes when he allowed the novice thief John Ryder to "go forth and sin no more."

Can there be any better way to mark holidays and special occasions than by passing on the lore of the Canon to our heirs and offspring? This is a Sherlockian imperative paralleling the words of an even more ancient canonical tradition "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." This, and other narratives are readily available in bookstores everywhere, generally at a nominal cost. I invite you to join us in our efforts to keep green the memory of the individual whom the good Dr. Watson proclaimed to be, "the best and wisest man whom I have ever known," Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

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