

The Adventure of the Second Stain

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

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PART FOUR.

So for three mornings the mystery remained, so far as I could follow it in the papers. If Holmes knew more, he kept his own counsel, but, as he told me that Inspector Lestrade had taken him into his confidence in the case, I knew that he was in close touch with every development. Upon the fourth day there appeared a long telegram from Paris which seemed to solve the whole question.

A discovery has just been made by the Parisian police," said the Daily Telegraph, "which raises the veil which hung round the tragic fate of Mr. Eduardo Lucas, who met his death by violence last Monday night at Godolphin street, Westminster. Our readers will remember that the deceased gentleman was found stabbed in his room, and that some suspicion attached to his valet, but that the case broke down on an alibi. Yesterday a lady, who has been known as Mme. Henri Fournay, occupying a small villa in the Rue Austerlitz, was reported to the authorities by her servants as being insane. An examination showed she had indeed developed mania of a dangerous and permanent form. On inquiry, the police have discovered that Mme. Henri Fournay only returned from a journey to London on Tuesday last, and there is evidence to connect her with the crime at Westminster. A comparison of photographs has proved conclusively that M. Henri Fournay and Eduardo Lucas were really one and the same person, and that the deceased had for some reason lived a double life in London and Paris. Mme. Fournay, who is of Creole origin, is of an extremely excitable nature, and has suffered in the past from attacks of jealousy which have caused such a sensation in London. Her movements upon the Monday night have not yet been traced, but it is undoubtedly that a woman answering to her description attracted much attention at Charing Cross station on Tuesday morning by the wildness of her appearance and the violence of her gestures. It is probable, therefore, that the crime was either committed when insane, or that its immediate effect was to drive the unhappy woman out of her mind. At present she is unable to give any coherent account of the past, and the doctors hold out no hopes of the re-establishment of her reason. There is evidence that a woman, who might have been Mme. Fournay, was seen for some hour upon Monday night watching the house in Godolphin street."

"What do you think of that, Holmes?" I had read the account aloud to him, while he finished his breakfast.

"My dear Watson," said he, as he rose from the table and paced up and down the room, "you are most long-suffering, but if I have told you nothing in the last three days, it is because there is nothing to tell. Even now this report from Paris does not help us much."

"Surely it is final as regards the man's death."

"The man's death is a mere incident—a trivial episode—in comparison of our real task, which is to trace this document and save a European catastrophe. Only one important thing has happened in the last three days, and that is that nothing has happened. I get reports almost hourly from the government, and it is certain that nowhere in Europe is there any sign of trouble. Now if this letter were loose—no, it can't be loose—but if it isn't

lost, where can it be? Who has it? Why is it held back? That's the question that beats in my brain like a hammer. Was it, indeed, a coincidence that Lucas should meet his death on the night when the letter disappeared? Did the letter ever reach him? If so, why is it not among his papers? Did this mad wife of his carry it off with her? If so, is it in her house in Paris? How could I search for it without the French police having their suspicions aroused? It is a case, my dear Watson, where the law is as dangerous to us as the criminals are. Every man's hand is against us, and yet the interests at stake are colossal. Should I bring it to successful conclusion, it will certainly represent the crowning glory of my career. Ah, here is my latest from the front!" He glanced hurriedly at the note which had been handed in. "Hallo! Lestrade seems to have observed something of interest. Put on your hat, Watson, and we will stroll down together to Westminster."

It was my first visit to the scene of the crime—a high, dingy, narrow, chested house, prim, formal and solid, like the century which gave it birth. Lestrade's bulldog features gazed out at us from the front window and he greeted us warmly when a big constable had opened the door and let us in. The room into which the crime had been committed, but no trace of it now remained, save an ugly, irregular stain upon the carpet. This carpet was a small square druggist in the center of the room, surrounded by a broad expanse of beautiful, old-fashioned wood flooring in square blocks highly polished. Over the fireplace was a magnificent trophy of weapons, one of which had been used on that tragic night. In the window was a sumptuous writing desk, and every detail of the apartment, the pictures, the rugs, and the hangings, all pointed to a taste which was luxurious to the verge of effeminacy.

"Seen the Paris news?" asked Lestrade.

Holmes nodded.

"Our French friends seem to have touched the spot this time. No doubt it's just as they say. She knocked at the door—surprise visit, I guess, for he kept his life in water-tight compartments—he let her in, couldn't keep her in the street. She told him how she had traced him, reproached him, one thing led to another, and then with that dagger so handy, the end soon came. It wasn't all done in an instant, though, for these chairs were all swept over yonder, and he had one in his hand as if he had tried to hold her off with it. We've got it all clear as if we had seen it."

Holmes raised his eyebrows.

"And yet you have sent for me?"

"Ah, yes, that's another matter—a mere trifle, but the sort of thing you take an interest in—queer, you know, and what you might call freakish. It has nothing to do with the main fact—can't have, on the face of it."

"What is it then?"

"Well, you know, after a crime of this sort we are very careful to keep things in their position. Nothing has been moved. Officer in charge here day and night. This morning, as the man was buried and the investigation over—so far as this room is concerned—we thought we could tidy up a bit. This carpet, you see, it is not fastened down, only just laid there. We had occasion to raise it. We found—"

"Yes? You found—"

Holmes' face grew tense with anxiety.

"Well, I'm sure you would never guess in a hundred years what we did find. You see that stain on the carpet? Well, a great deal must have soaked through, must it not?"

"Undoubtedly it must."

"Well, you will be surprised to hear that there is no stain on the white woodwork to correspond."

"No stain! But there must—"

"Yes, so you would say. But the fact remains that there isn't."

He took the corner of the carpet in his hand and, turning it over, he showed that it was indeed as he said.

"But the underside is a stained as the upper. It must have left a mark. Lestrade chuckled with delight at having puzzled the famous expert."

"Now, I'll show you the explanation. There is a second stain, but it does not correspond with the other. See for yourself." As he spoke he turned over another portion of the carpet, and there, sure enough, was a great crimson spill upon the square white facing of the old-fashioned floor.

"What do you make of that, Mr. Holmes?"

"Why, it is simple enough. The two stains did correspond, but the carpet has been turned round. As it was square and unfastened it was easily done."

"The official police don't need you, Mr. Holmes, to tell them that the carpet must have been turned round. That's clear enough, for the stains lie above each other—if you lay it over this way. But what I want to know is, who shifted the carpet, and why?"

I could see from Holmes' rigid face that he was vibrating with inward excitement.

"Look here, Lestrade," said he, "has that constable in the passage been in charge of the place all the time?"

"Yes, he has."

"Well, take my advice. Examine him carefully. Don't do it before us. We'll wait here. You take him into the back room. You'll be more likely to get a confession out of him alone. Ask him how he dared to admit people and leave them alone in this room. Don't ask him if he has done it. Take it for granted. Tell him you know someone has been here. Press him. Tell him that a full confession is his

only chance of forgiveness. Do exactly what I tell you!"

"By George, if he knows I'll have it out of him!" cried Lestrade. He darted into the hall, and a few moments later his bullying voice sounded from the back room.

Tomorrow—The Adventure of the Second Stain, continued.

West Manchester, O.

WEST MANCHESTER, O.—The following from this community were present at a surprise dinner given Sunday for Gorman McGriff at his home near Gratis: Mr. and Mrs. Howard Siler and family, Mr. and Mrs. Joe McCrate and daughter Ada, Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Poyner, Mr. and Mrs. T. C. Braddock, Mr. and Mrs. I. A. Buhrman, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Trump and family, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Newman and family, Mr. Clayton McGriff and daughter Roma, Orla Shaffner and son, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Parks and family, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Juday, Mrs. Joe Folkerth and Sunday school class of Twin chapel; Willard and Henry Brown, Claude Davidson, Eva and Treva Studebaker, Iris and Ellene Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Davis, Herman Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Davis and family of Eaton, Miss Minnie Poyner and brother and Mr. and Mrs. Bert Eaton, of near Ithaca, and

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Dr. Dewitt McGriff and daughter Audrey and son William, of Lima, O., and Mr. and Mrs. Gorman McGriff and family. Altogether about fifty with the host and family were present to enjoy the day.

The attendance Sunday at the Christian Sunday school numbered 117; collection \$4.94. Superintendent E. B. Creager is putting life into the school by having the different classes take charge on the different Sundays and it is creating a great deal of interest and enthusiasm in the sessions among the pupils. A children's day program is being arranged for the last Sunday in May.

Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Frank and family and Mr. and Mrs. John Loven called on Mr. and Mrs. Corrie White at Whitewater, Mr. and Mrs. Len Green at Hollansburg and Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Harrison at Glen Karn, Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Utz entertained relatives from Maryland, and William Ward of Eldorado, at their home Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fowble of Savona, spent Monday with Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Studebaker. Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Powell visited Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Powell at Greenville. Mr. and Mrs. Don Smith, Mrs. Joe Bruner and daughter Alta Mae, Miss Viola Hasbrook and Mr. and Mrs. Ira Lichtenfels and family were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Siles at Dayton. George Miller and family, who recently returned from Florida, and Mr. and Mrs. John Protzman of Verona, spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Morris.

Writes His Thanks from Washington
Only men and women who have suffered from kidney trouble can realize how grateful one feels for relief from suffering. Nathan Harned, 621 N. St., N. W., Washington, D. C., writes: "I was troubled with my kidneys for years, but got no relief until I took Foley Kidney Pills. Now I think I am well and I thank you very much." They act quickly; tonic in effect. A. G. Luken and Co., 626-628 Main St. —Advertisement.

Mr. and Mrs. William Smith entertained Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Barnes and Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Cupp of Lewisburg at dinner Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Newman and Clemens Newman and family of Arcanum, spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Beck.

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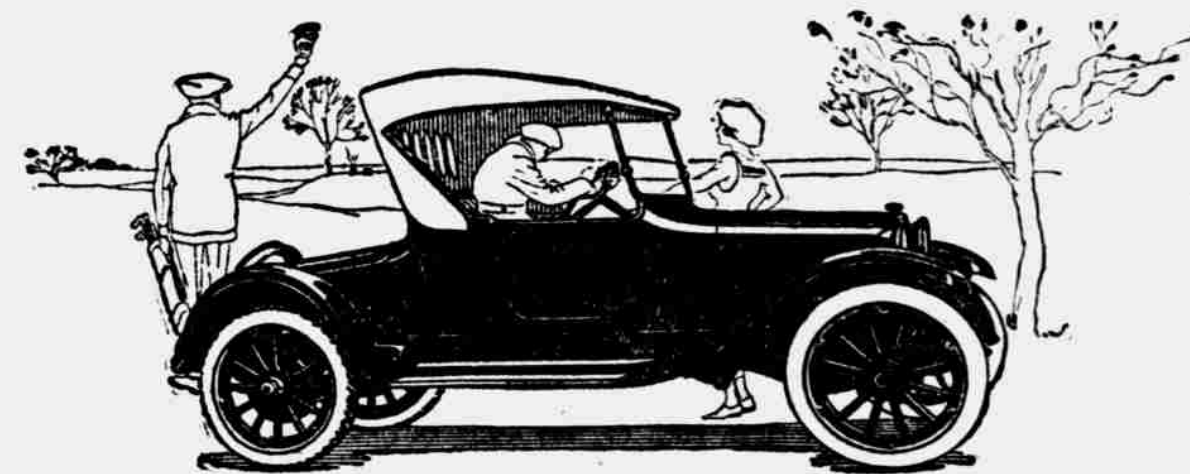
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