

The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter

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By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

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PART TWO

"Have you heard from Lord Mount-James?"

"No."

"What motive could your friend have in going to Lord Mount-James?"

"Well, something was worrying him the night before, and it was to do with money. It is possible that he would make for his nearest relative who had so much of it, though from all I have heard he would not have much chance of getting it. Godfrey was not fond of the old man. He would not go if he could help it."

"Well, we can soon determine that. If your friend was going to his relative Lord Mount-James, you have then to explain the visit of this rough-looking fellow at so late an hour, and the agitation that was caused by his coming."

"Cyril Overton pressed his hands to his head. 'I can make nothing of it,' said he."

"Well, well, I have a clear day, and I shall be happy to look into the matter," said Holmes. "I should strongly recommend you to make your preparations for your match without reference to this young gentleman. It was, as you say, have been an overpowering necessity which tore him away in such a fashion and the same necessity is likely to hold him away. Let us step round together to the hotel and see if the porter can throw any fresh light upon the matter."

Sherlock Holmes was a past-master in the art of putting a humble witness at his ease, and very soon, in the privacy of Godfrey Staunton's abandoned room, he had extracted all that the porter had to tell. The visitor the night before was not a gentleman, neither was he a workman. He was simply what the porter described as a "medium-looking chap," a man of fifty, beard grizzled, pale face, quietly dressed. He seemed himself to be agitated. The porter observed his hand trembling when he had held out the note. Godfrey Staunton had crumpled the note into his pocket. Staunton had not shaken hands with the man in the hall. They had exchanged

a few sentences, of which the porter had distinguished the one word "time." Then he had hurried off in the manner described. It was just half-past ten by the hall clock.

"Let me see," said Holmes, seating himself on Staunton's bed. "You are the day porter, are you not?"

"Yes, sir, I go off duty at eleven."

"The night porter saw nothing, I suppose?"

"No, sir; one theatre party came in late. No one else."

"Were you on duty all day yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you take any messages to Mr. Staunton?"

"Yes, sir, one telegram."

"Ah! That is interesting. What o'clock was this?"

"About six."

"Where was Mr. Staunton when he received it?"

"Here in his room."

"Were you present when he opened it?"

"Yes, sir, I wanted to see if there was an answer."

"Well, was there?"

"Yes, sir, he wrote an answer."

"Did you take it?"

"No, he took it himself."

"But he wrote it in your presence?"

"Yes, sir, I was standing by the door, and he had his back turned at that table. When he had written it, he said: 'All right, porter, I will take this myself.'"

"What did he write it with?"

"A pen, sir."

"Was the telegraphic form one of those on the table?"

"Yes, sir, it was the top one."

Holmes rose. Taking the forms he carried them over to the window and carefully examined that which was uppermost.

"It is a pity he did not write in pencil," said he, throwing them down again with a shrug of disappointment.

"As you have no doubt frequently observed, Watson, the impression usually goes through—a fact which has

dissolved many a happy marriage. However, I can find no trace here. I rejoice, however, to perceive that he wrote with a broad quill pen, and I hardly doubt that we will find some impression upon this blotting pad. Ah, yes, surely this is the very thing."

He tore off a strip of the blotting paper and turned toward us with a hieroglyphic.

Cyril Overton was much excited. "Hold it to the glass!" he cried.

"That is not necessary," said Holmes. "This paper is thin, and the reverse will give the message. Here it is." He turned it over and we read: "Stand by us for God's sake."

"So that is the tail end of the telegram which Godfrey Staunton dispatched within a few hours of his disappearance. There are at least six words of the message which have escaped us, but what remains—'Stand by us for God's sake'—proves that this young man saw a formidable danger which approached him, and from which someone else could protect him. 'Us,' mark you! Another person was involved. Who should it be but the pale-faced, bearded man, who seemed himself in so nervous a state? What then, is the connection between Godfrey Staunton and the bearded man? And what is the third source from which each of them sought for help against pressing danger? Our answer has already narrowed down to that."

"We have only to find to whom the telegram is addressed," I suggested.

"Exactly, my dear Watson. Your reflection, though profound, had already crossed my mind. But I dare say it may have come to your notice that, if you walk into a post-office and demand to see the counterfoil of another man's message, there may be some disinclination on the part of the officials to oblige you. There is much red tape in these matters. However,

TROUBLED FOR TEN YEARS

If you suffer pains and aches during the day and sleep-disturbing bladder weakness by night, feel tired, nervous and run down, the kidneys and bladder need to be restored to healthy and regular action. J. T. Osborn, R. F. D. No. 1, Lucasville, O., writes: "I had kidney trouble for ten years. I tried many remedies but they did me no good. I took Policy Kidney Pills and they helped me so much that now I am well. I don't delay. A. C. Luken and Co., 624-628 Main St.—Advertisement."

I have no doubt that with a little delicacy and finesse the end may be attained. Meanwhile, I should like in your presence, Mr. Overton, to go through these papers which have been left on the table."

There were a number of letters, bills and note books, which Holmes turned over and examined with quick, nervous fingers, and darting, penetrating eyes. "Nothing here," he said at last.

"By the way, I suppose your friend was a healthy young fellow—nothing amiss with him?"

"Sound as a bell."

"Have you ever known him ill?"

Not a day. He has been laid up with a hack, and once he slipped his knee cap, but that was nothing."

"Perhaps he was not so strong as you suppose. I should think he may have had some secret trouble. With your assent, I will put one or two of these papers in my pocket, in case they should bear upon our future inquiry."

"One moment—one moment!" cried a querulous voice, and we looked up to find a queer little old man, jerking and twitching in the doorway. He was dressed in rusty black, with a very broad-brimmed top hat and a very broad white necktie—the whole effect being that of a very rustic parson or of an undertaker's mute. Yet, in spite of his shabby and even absurd ap-

pearance, his voice had a sharp cackle, and his manner a quick intensity which commanded attention.

Tomorrow—The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter, continued.

American Legion

CULVER, Ind., June 7.—Arrangements have been completed here for the state conference of the American Legion, to be held at Culver Military Academy, June 11 and 12. Preparations are being made to entertain about 600 legionnaires and Col. L. R. Gignilliat, the department commander of the legion, states that every post commander and adjutant in the state is expected to attend. In cases where they will be unable to be present they have been instructed to send representatives.

A first class program, including plenty of entertainment, has been provided. The delegates will be guests of the academy while attending the conference, and they will be under no expense whatever except the cost of transportation. Efforts are being made to obtain a reduced fare.

Stimulating attendance at post meetings, co-operating with patriotic societies, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs,

and other community service work; women's auxiliaries, finances, Americanization, maintaining interest during the summer months and other subjects are on the program for discussion. Boating and sailing on Lake Maxinkuckee, a swimming meet in the lake, horseback riding on the famous Culver Black Horse cavalry steeds, target shooting on the Culver rifle range, and various kinds of outdoor sports on the Culver campus are on the entertainment program.

Everything will be done to make the conference a summer outing and the program has stimulated a great deal of interest. The outlook is for an attendance that will outstrip that of any state department conference of this kind.

A smoker will be given for the men on the night of June 11 by the local post. Exhibition of motion pictures which may be shown before various posts over the state later on will be one of the features of the smoker program.

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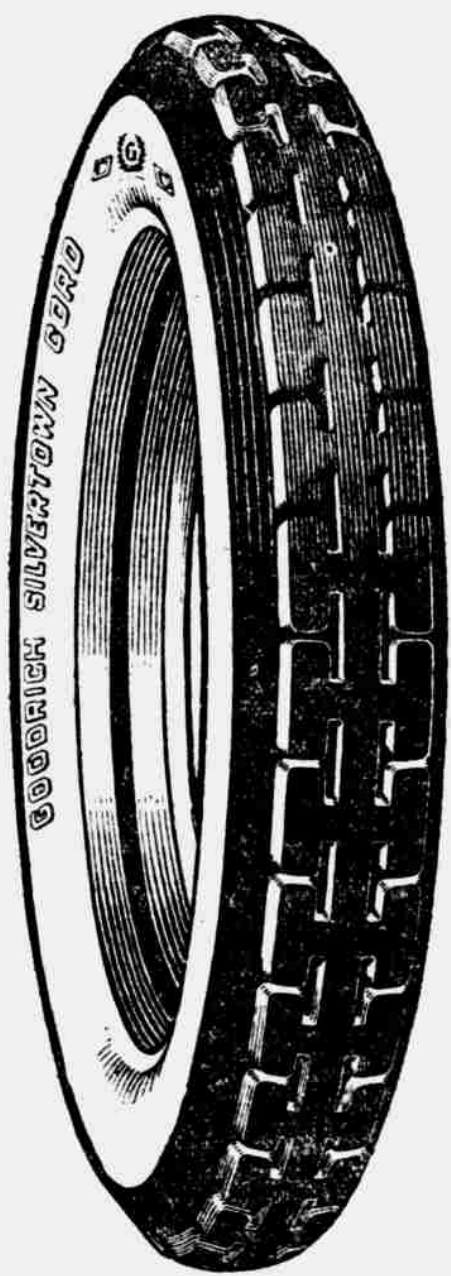
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