

A STUDY IN SCARLET

PART I

CHAPTER I Mr. Sherlock Holmes

In the year 1878 I took my degree of Doctor of Medicine of the University of London, and proceeded to Netley to take the course for surgeons in the army. I completed my studies there, and became **Assistant Surgeon**¹. I came to the **Berkshires**², with whom I served at the fatal battle. There **I was struck on the shoulder**³ by a bullet, which shattered the bone. I was so weak that they sent me back to England.

I had neither friends nor relatives in England. I came to London. There I stayed for some time at a private hotel. One day I was at a bar, when someone tapped me on the shoulder. I turned round and recognized Stamford. The sight of a friendly face in London is a pleasant thing to a lonely man. I asked him to lunch with me, and we went together in a hansom.

“Whatever are you doing, Watson?” he asked, as we rattled through the London streets. “You are as thin as a lath.”

“Looking for lodgings.” I answered. “I want to get comfortable rooms at a reasonable price.”

¹ **Assistant Surgeon** — ассистент хирурга

² **the Berkshires** — Беркширский полк

³ **I was struck on the shoulder** — я был ранен в плечо

“That’s strange,” remarked my companion; “you are the second man today who says so.”

“And who is the first?” I asked.

“A fellow who is working at the chemical laboratory. He cannot get someone for the nice rooms which he found, and which were too much for his purse.”

“Oh!” I cried, “if he really wants someone to share the rooms and the expense, I can be his partner.”

Stamford looked at me.

“You don’t know Sherlock Holmes yet,” he said.

“What is there against him?”

“Oh, I didn’t say there was anything against him. But he is an enthusiast in some branches of science. Anyway, he is a decent fellow enough.”

“I want to meet him,” I said. “How can I meet this friend of yours?”

“He is at the laboratory, I think” said my companion. “If you like, we can meet him after luncheon.”

“Certainly,” I answered.

We turned down a narrow lane and passed through a small side-door. Then we ascended the bleak stone staircase. Near the further end a passage led to the chemical laboratory.

This was a lofty chamber with countless bottles. Broad, low tables were scattered about. There was only one man in the room, who was bending over a table. He was absorbed in his work. Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a cry of pleasure.

“Great!” he shouted to my companion. “Look! It is a re-agent **which is precipitated by hemoglobin**¹, and by nothing else.”

“Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” said Stamford.

“How are you?” he said cordially. “You visited Afghanistan, I see.”

“How did you know that?” I asked in astonishment.

“Never mind,” said he, chuckling to himself. “The question now is about hemoglobin. Do you see the significance of this discovery?”

“It is interesting, no doubt,” I answered, “but practically...”

“It is the most practical discovery for years. It gives us an infallible test for blood stains. Come over here now!” He drew me over to the table. “Let us have some fresh blood,” he said. He dug a long bodkin into his finger, and drew off the drop of blood in a chemical pipette. “Now, I add this small quantity of blood to water. You perceive that the mixture has the appearance of pure water. The proportion of blood is one in a million. However, we shall be able to obtain the characteristic reaction.”

He threw into the vessel a few white crystals, and then added some drops of a transparent fluid. In an instant the contents changed its colour.

“Ha! ha!” he cried. He was as delighted as a child with a new toy. “What do you think of that? It acts as well whether the blood is old or new. Hundreds of criminals will pay the penalty of their crimes.”

“Indeed!” I murmured.

¹ **which is precipitated by hemoglobin** — который осаждается гемоглобином

“For example, we see brownish stains upon the criminal’s clothes. Are they blood stains, or mud stains, or rust stains, or fruit stains, or what are they? That is a question which puzzles many experts, and why? Because there was no reliable test. Now we have the Sherlock Holmes’ test!”

His eyes glittered as he spoke, and he put his hand over his heart and bowed.

“Congratulations,” I remarked. I was surprised at his enthusiasm.

“I can name many cases in which this test will be decisive.”

“We came here **on business**¹,” said Stamford. He sat down on a high three-legged stool, and pushed another one in my direction with his foot. “My friend is looking for a room, and you were complaining that you could get no one to share expenses with you. So, I bring you together.”

Sherlock Holmes seemed delighted.

“I know a good suite in Baker Street,” he said. “You don’t mind the smell of strong tobacco, I hope?”

“I smoke myself,” I answered.

“That’s good. I have chemicals, and occasionally do experiments. Will that annoy you?”

“By no means.”

“Moreover, at times I don’t open my mouth for days. You must not think I am sulky when I do that. And what about you? It’s better for two fellows to know one another before they begin to live together.”

I laughed.

¹ **on business** — по делу

“I have a **bull pup**¹,” I said, “I hate noise, and I am extremely lazy. I have other vices, but those are the principal ones.”

“Is the violin-playing some noise for you?” he asked, anxiously.

“It depends on the player,” I answered.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he cried, with a merry laugh. “I think we may begin to live together, if the rooms are agreeable to you.”

“When shall we see them?”

“Come to me at noon tomorrow, and we’ll go there together,” he answered.

“All right—noon exactly,” said I.

We left him working among his chemicals, and we walked together towards my hotel.

“By the way,” I asked suddenly, “how did he know that I had come from Afghanistan?”

My companion smiled.

“That’s his little peculiarity,” he said.

“Oh! a mystery?” I cried. “This is very piquant.” Stamford bade me good-bye.

“I think he knows more about you than you about him. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye,” I answered, and strolled on to my hotel.

CHAPTER II

The Science of Deduction

We met next day and inspected the rooms at No. 221B, Baker Street. They consisted of a couple of comfortable bed-rooms and a single large sitting-room, with two broad windows. The apartments were desirable in every way. That evening I moved

¹ **bull pup** — щенок бульдога

my things from the hotel, and on the following morning Sherlock Holmes followed me with several boxes and portmanteaus.

Holmes was certainly not a difficult man to live with. He was quiet, and his habits were regular. He breakfasted and went out early in the morning. Sometimes he spent his day at the chemical laboratory, sometimes in the **dissecting-rooms**¹, and occasionally in long walks. Sometimes he was lying upon the sofa in the sitting-room, and he was not uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night.

As the weeks went by, my interest in him gradually deepened and increased. In height he was rather over six feet, and excessively lean. His eyes were sharp and piercing; and his hawk-like nose was very thin. His chin marked the man of determination.

His ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge. Of contemporary literature, philosophy and politics he knew nothing. And my surprise reached a climax, when I found incidentally that he was ignorant of the Copernican Theory and of the composition of the Solar System.

"You will be astonished," he said, smiling. "Now that I do know it I shall do my best to forget it."

"To forget it!"

"You see," he explained, "a man's brain is like a little empty attic. A fool brings there all the lumber of every sort that he sees. But a wise man is very careful as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him to do his work."

"But the Solar System!" I protested.

"What is it to me?" he interrupted impatiently; "you say that we go round the sun. If we go round

¹ **dissecting-rooms** — анатомический театр

the moon it will not make difference to me or to my work.”

During the first week or so we had no visitors, and I thought that my companion was a friendless man. Presently, however, I found that he had many acquaintances in different classes of society. There was one little sallow **rat-faced**¹, dark-eyed fellow, Mr. Lestrade, who came three or four times in a single week. One morning a young girl arrived, and stayed for half an hour or more. On another occasion an old white-haired gentleman had an interview with my companion; and on another a **railway porter**² in his velveteen uniform. When these individuals came, Sherlock Holmes asked me to go to my bed-room. He always apologized to me for this inconvenience.

“I use this room as a place of business,” he said, “and these people are my clients.”

It was on the 4th of March. I rose earlier than usual. I rang the bell and gave our landlady a signal that I was ready. Then I picked up a magazine from the table. One of the articles had a pencil mark, and I began to read it.

Its ambitious title was “The Book of Life,” and it attempted to show how much an observant man might learn by an accurate and systematic examination of everything. For me, it was a remarkable mixture of shrewdness and of absurdity. The writer claimed by a momentary expression, a twitch of a muscle or a glance of an eye, to fathom a man’s inmost thoughts.

Observation and analysis! That’s all.

¹ **rat-faced** — с крысиной физиономией

² **railway porter** — вокзальный носильщик

“From a drop of water,” said the writer, “a **logician**¹ can infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara. All life is a great chain. Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis requires long and patient study to attain the highest possible perfection in it. By a man’s finger nails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot, by his trouser knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt cuffs—by each of these things a man’s life is plainly revealed.”

“What ineffable twaddle!” I cried and slapped the magazine down on the table, “I never read such rubbish in my life.”

“What is it?” asked Sherlock Holmes.

“This article,” I said. “It irritates me. It is not practical. Let’s bring that author to a carriage on the underground, and ask to give the trades of all the travellers. I will lay a thousand to one against him.”

“And you will lose your money,” Sherlock Holmes remarked calmly. “**As for the article**² I wrote it myself.”

“You!”

“Yes. The theories which are chimerical to you, are really extremely practical—so practical that I depend upon them for my **bread and cheese**³.”

“And how?” I asked involuntarily.

“Well, I’m a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of Government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows don’t know what to do,

¹ **logician** — человек, способный логически мыслить

² **as for the article** — что касается статьи

³ **bread and cheese** — кусок хлеба с маслом

they come to me, and I help them. You saw Mr. Lestrade, he is a well-known detective. But sometimes even he doesn't know what to do."

"And these other people?"

"They are people who are in trouble about something. I listen to their story, they listen to my comments, and then I earn some money."

"But do you mean to say," I said, "that you here can unravel some knot which other men can't?"

"Quite so. I have intuition. You see I have a lot of special knowledge which I apply to the problem, and which facilitates matters wonderfully. The rules of deduction in that article which aroused your scorn, are invaluable to me in practical work. You were surprised when I told you about Afghanistan."

"Someone told you about it, no doubt."

"Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. What did I think? Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He came from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He underwent hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm is injured. Where did an English army doctor meet all this? Clearly in Afghanistan. I then remarked that you came from Afghanistan, and you were astonished."

"It is simple enough as you explain it," I said. "You remind me of **Edgar Allen Poe's Dupin**¹."

Sherlock Holmes rose and lit his pipe.

"You think that you are complimenting me," he observed. "Now, in my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow. He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was not a phenomenon as

¹ **Edgar Allen Poe's Dupin** — Дюпен из романов Эдгара Алана По

Poe imagined.”

“And what about **Gaboriau’s works**¹?” I asked. “What do you think of Lecoq? Is he a real detective?”

Sherlock Holmes sniffed sardonically.

“Lecoq was a miserable bungler,” he said, in an angry voice; “The question was how to identify an unknown prisoner. I can do it in twenty-four hours. Lecoq took six months or so. These books can teach the detectives what to avoid.”

I walked over to the window, and looked out into the busy street.

“This fellow may be very clever,” I said to myself, “but he is certainly very conceited.”

“There are no crimes and no criminals in these days,” he said, querulously. “No use to have brains in our profession. I can make my name famous.”

I was annoyed at his bumptious style of conversation. I decided to change the topic.

“I wonder what that fellow is looking for?” I asked. A man was walking slowly down the other side of the street. He had a large blue envelope in his hand.

“You mean the **retired sergeant of Marines**²,” said Sherlock Holmes.

“Oh!” thought I to myself. “He knows that I cannot verify his guess.”

Suddenly the man saw the number on our door, and ran rapidly across the roadway. We heard a loud knock, a deep voice below, and heavy steps.

“For Mr. Sherlock Holmes,” he said. He stepped into the room and handed my friend the letter.

¹ **Gaboriau’s works** — романы Габорио (о детективе Леккоке)

² **retired sergeant of Marines** — отставной флотский сержант

Here was an opportunity to check my companion's words.

"May I ask you," I said, "what your trade may be?"

"Commissionaire, sir," he said, gruffly.

"And you were?" I asked, with a malicious glance at my companion.

"A sergeant, sir, **Royal Marine Light Infantry**¹, sir."

CHAPTER III

The Lauriston Garden Mystery

This was the fresh proof of the practical nature of my companion's theories. My respect for his powers of analysis increased wondrously. When I looked at him he was reading the note.

"How did you deduce that?" I asked.

"Deduce what?" said he, petulantly.

"That he was a retired sergeant of Marines."

"I have no time for trifles," he answered, brusquely; then with a smile, "Excuse my rudeness. So you actually were not able to see that that man was a sergeant of Marines?"

"No, indeed."

"Even across the street I saw a great blue anchor tattooed on the back of his hand. He had a **military carriage**², and side whiskers. He was a man of self-importance and a certain air of command. You observed the way in which he held his

¹ **Royal Marine Light Infantry** — королевская морская пехота

² **military carriage** — военная выправка

head and swung his cane. A steady, respectable, middle-aged man—a sergeant.”

“Wonderful!” I ejaculated.

“That’s nothing,” said Holmes. “I said just now that there were no criminals. I am wrong—look at this!”

He gave me the note.

“Oh,” I cried, “this is terrible!”

This is the letter:

*“My Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes,
“During the night at 3, Lauriston Gardens,
off the Brixton Road, a policeman saw a light
about two in the morning. The house was empty.
He found the door open, and in the front room,
which is bare of furniture, discovered the body of
a gentleman. The gentleman was well dressed, and
had cards in his pocket with the name of ‘Enoch
J. Drebber, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.’ The policeman
saw no robbery. There are marks of blood in the
room, but there is no wound upon his person. How
did he come into the empty house; indeed, the whole
affair is a puzzler. If you come round to the house
any time before twelve, you will find me there. If
you are unable to come I shall give you all the
details. Please favour me with your opinion.*

Yours faithfully,

Tobias Gregson.”

“Gregson is the smartest of the policemen of the Scotland Yard,” my friend remarked; “he and Lestrade are both quick and energetic, but conventional.”

“Surely there is not a moment to lose,” I cried, “shall I go and order you a cab?”

“I’m not sure about whether I shall go. I am incurably lazy.”

“Isn’t this your chance?”