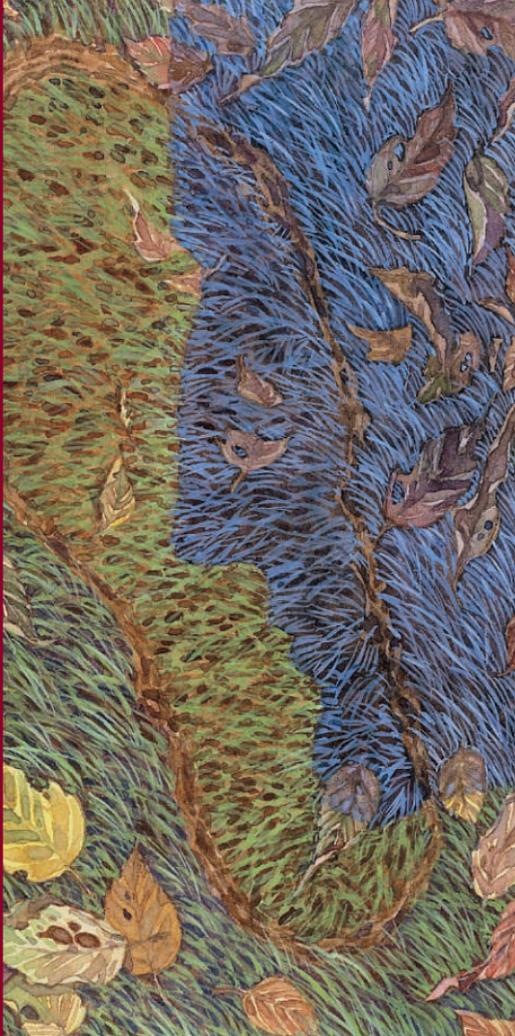


NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION



Sir Arthur
Conan Doyle

The
Adventures
of
Sherlock
Holmes
V

Read by
David Timson

NA326612D

1	The Reigate Squire	5:15
2	'It was destined, however'	2:52
3	""Inspector Forrester, sir""	5:21
4	'An hour and a half had elapsed'	3:56
5	'We passed the pretty cottage'	7:13
6	'A stone-flagged passage'	6:18
7	'Sherlock Holmes was as good as his word'	7:51
8	'And now I have to consider the motive'	6:10
9	The Boscombe Valley Mystery	3:32
10	""Boscombe Valley is a country district""	9:43
11	'He picked out from his bundle'	7:09
12	'It was nearly four o'clock'	6:32
13	'I walked down to the station with them'	6:29
14	'There was no rain'	4:51
15	'The Boscombe Pool'	6:16
16	'Having left Lestrade at his rooms'	5:30
17	'The man who entered was a strange and impressive figure'	3:49
18	""It was in the early '60's at the diggings""	8:02

19	The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet	6:00
20	“It is, of course, well known to you”	6:22
21	“And now a word as to my household”	7:51
22	“I come to a part of my story now”	5:40
23	Sherlock Holmes sat silent for some few minutes	5:00
24	Fairbank was a good-sized house of white stone	6:25
25	The banker’s dressing-room	4:10
26	It was obvious to me that my companion’s mind	2:42
27	‘I waited until midnight’	7:07
28	“I will tell you, then, what occurred”	7:04
29	“It is an old maxim of mine”	5:00

30	The Yellow Face	7:14
31	'An instant later our door opened'	4:30
32	""I'll tell you what I know about Effie's history""	4:06
33	""Well, last Monday evening I was taking a stroll""	6:46
34	""I should have gone to the City that day""	6:09
35	""It was all still and quiet upon the ground floor""	2:47
36	Holmes and I had listened with the utmost interest	6:53
37	'He was waiting on the platform when we stepped out'	4:59
38	""That is John Hebron of Atlanta""	5:28

Total time: 3:39:35

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes V

**The Reigate Squire • The Boscombe Valley Mystery
The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet • The Yellow Face**

THE REIGATE SQUIRE

'I am utterly unable to account for your result. I have not seen the vestige of a clue.'

So states Colonel Hayter at the end of this tale of murder and blackmail in a suburban setting. Despite the Colonel's perplexity at the outcome, however, the case does not seem to offer an enormous challenge to Holmes, although he is not at his full powers after the strain of a particularly taxing case on the continent. He remarks that he follows 'docilely wherever fact may lead me'.

Once again Holmes uses his thespian skills in this story to help his investigations. As Watson remarks elsewhere 'the stage lost a fine actor' when Holmes chose to devote his formidable talents to the solution of crime. In **The Reigate Squire**, without resorting to disguise, he is able even to deceive Watson's medical instincts when he feigns a sudden collapse from a 'nervous attack': 'His eyes rolled upwards, his features writhed in agony, and with a suppressed

groan he dropped on his face upon the ground.'; a description reminiscent of the great Sir Henry Irving at his finest in 'The Bells'!

In **The Beryl Coronet** (also in this selection) he disguises himself as a 'common loafer' to aid his investigations, but sadly we don't see him in action.

It is his use of science in deduction that separates Holmes from the other fictional detectives of his day, and in this story he displays his considerable knowledge of cryptology (the study of handwriting), though some experts say it is doubtful whether a writer's age can be fixed by his hand, his state of health almost certainly can be. Holmes's belief, however, that handwriting style is hereditary, has raised the eyebrows of several genuine cryptologists.

This story ranks as the twelfth in Conan Doyle's personal list of the twelve best Holmes short stories. Its title was changed for the American edition to 'The Reigate Puzzle', as 'Squire' was thought too archaic for an

American audience, a precedent that is still followed with titles today.

THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY

Once again, Watson abandons his busy practice to accompany Holmes on his foray into the wilds of Herefordshire to unravel the mystery at Boscombe Valley. Doyle, as has been noted in previous stories, does not worry about accuracy of geographical location, as Boscombe is actually in Somerset, and not Herefordshire. This was also the first Holmes adventure to take place outside the confines of London.

It is always remarkable that Watson's wife is so understanding and Anstruther, the locum who watches over his practice, so readily accommodating! It seems that Watson cannot resist the chance of adventure although his marriage is a comparatively recent one. This adventure is dated only about two years after the adventure of **The Sign of Four**, in which he met his future wife Mary Morstan. Maybe he still has a hankering for his bachelor days, when to Holmes he was 'someone...on whom I can thoroughly rely'. Tomes have been written on the possible state of Watson's marriage, but that particular investigation is perhaps best left unexplored!

There are a number of literary allusions in this tale. Watson, in **A Study in Scarlet**, assesses Holmes as a man whose literary knowledge is nil, yet whose knowledge of sensational literature, that is the gory and violent accounts of crime, is 'immense'. Yet Watson's first assessment, based upon a few days' acquaintance, was incorrect, for here we have Holmes indulging himself with the love sonnets of the Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374), and later in the adventure, wishes to talk of George Meredith (1828-1909), a poet and psychological novelist. Some commentators read into his eclectic reading habits, his still burning obsession with Irene Adler, the heroine of **A Scandal in Bohemia** ('to Sherlock Holmes she is always *the woman*'), and who, like Petrarch's Laura, could never be possessed. Similarly, George Meredith loved in vain. Obsession or not, throughout the canon we are shown how wrong Watson's first impressions were of his friend's literary tastes, as references are made to authors as diverse as Horace, Flaubert, Goethe, Thoreau and Carlyle. Holmes at the end of this tale quotes from the not often read 17th-century divine Richard Baxter (1615-1691), showing the extent of his reading, although the quote actually is attributed to John Bradford (1510-1555).

Watson's literary taste more often than not consists of a 'yellow-back novel' (the cheap paperback of its day), as in this adventure, or sea-stories (as in **The Five Orange Pips**).

Doyle himself had always been an avid reader since his schooldays, and in his book about books, **Through the Magic Door**, he points out the value of a wide-ranging collection: 'No matter what mood a man may be in, when once he has passed through the magic door he can summon the world's greatest to sympathise with him in it.'

It should be remembered too that Holmes himself was an author of monograms, one of which is referred to in this story. His 'Upon the Distinction Between the Ashes of Various Tobaccos' assists Holmes in identifying the Indian cigar at the site of the murder.

Holmes comments in this case that circumstantial evidence is a tricky thing. This reminds us that his creator Doyle twice risked his reputation in the causes of George Edalji and Oscar Slater, both wrongfully imprisoned on flimsy evidence which Doyle uncovered. A case of fact imitating fiction.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BERYL CORONET

In this story, Holmes finds himself called upon to save the honour of a banker, and

more importantly avoid a scandal that would have had repercussions at the highest level of society, possibly not excluding the royal family! Holmes's reputation by this time, the mid-1880s, was obviously soaring. It had even spread to Europe for, as Watson proudly recorded, he had handled a delicate matter for the 'reigning family of Holland', assisted the King of Scandinavia, and been rewarded by a grateful King of Bohemia with a £1000 fee, and 'a snuff-box of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid'. So it is apparent that Holmes was doing well financially, for in this story he uses his own money, £3000, to assure the happy outcome of the plot. He is rewarded with a reimbursement and an additional £1000 for his fee.

The identity of the illustrious client who leaves the Beryl Coronet as security on a loan is never disclosed. Watson is far too discreet a recorder of events for that, he merely says he is 'one of the highest, noblest, most exalted names in England'. It leads one to wonder whether it was not a member of the royal family itself. Could it even be the Prince of Wales, Albert Edward, perhaps? He was well-known as a gambler, and his essential need for fifty thousand pounds 'at once', perhaps to repay a debt, could have led him to enter

into this clandestine business arrangement with a banker where secrecy would prevail. It is certainly doubtful, whoever the client was, that he would be legally allowed to put up a national possession, a Duke's Coronet, as security for a loan. His trust in the banker, Mr Holder, seems sadly misplaced, for the manager completely goes to pieces, and locks this priceless possession in his bureau at home which 'any old key will fit'! It does not inspire confidence in the security at his bank!

THE YELLOW FACE

This curious story is remarkable as being one of only a half-dozen or so stories where Holmes gets it wrong. He completely misjudges the facts of the case, thinking it to be one of blackmail. 'Watson,' he says at the tale's resolution, '...if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little overconfident in my powers...kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear...' It is a rare uncharacteristic glimpse of Holmes's humanity, and the whole story has an air of the unusual about it; some commentators even call it 'unsavoury'. For though this story is set in Norbury, now absorbed into the borough of Croydon, its origins are firmly rooted in America and its recent history. Yet the fact that Doyle, as in **A Study in Scarlet**, makes several errors about that country, for instance there was

never a yellow fever outbreak in Atlanta, and only a great fire there during the Civil War, indicates that he is writing a story more akin to a 'romance' or a piece of wishful thinking. Mixed marriages were virtually impossible in 19th-century America. Even if in the chaos that followed the Civil War, when the slaves were freed, the laws about interracial marriages in the South were more relaxed, by the time this story is set, the early 1880s, segregation of the whites and blacks was again being rigorously enforced. Such racism would have disgusted the liberal, cause-espousing Conan Doyle (note, for example, how he attacks the Ku Klux Klan in **The Five Orange Pips**), so, in this story he seems to send out a message to a future multicultural world. The happy solution to a disturbing story, in the words of Watson, is 'one of which I love to think'. Doyle too, I'm sure, would hope we would agree.

Notes by David Timson

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Cover illustration: 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery' by Hemesh Alles

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes V

**The Reigate Squire • The Boscombe Valley Mystery
The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet • The Yellow Face**

Read by **David Timson**

Dr Watson comments: 'The stage lost a fine actor' when Holmes chose to devote his formidable talents to the solution of crime. In two of these stories, *The Reigate Squire* and *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet*, Sherlock Holmes demonstrates his thespian powers as he unravels the mysteries. In the first he explains a rural murder while in the second, Holmes' timely intervention prevents something of a national – even royal – scandal.

The Boscombe Valley Mystery takes Holmes and Watson once again to the English countryside, but the famous detective uncovers old Australian animosities to get to the root of the problem. *The Yellow Face*, which concludes this selection, is one of the most fascinating in the whole canon, raising some key social issues of the time.



David Timson has performed in modern and classic plays across the country and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode* and *The Seagull*. He has been seen on TV in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*, and in the film *The Russia House*. A familiar and versatile audio and radio voice, he reads *The Middle Way* and performs in *Hamlet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Naxos AudioBooks. This is his fifth volume of Sherlock Holmes stories for Naxos AudioBooks.

Mr Timson, who also contributes perceptive and knowledgeable notes on the stories, is a superb reader."

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER, THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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