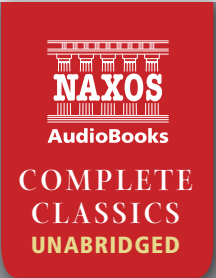


Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES I

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE AND OTHER STORIES

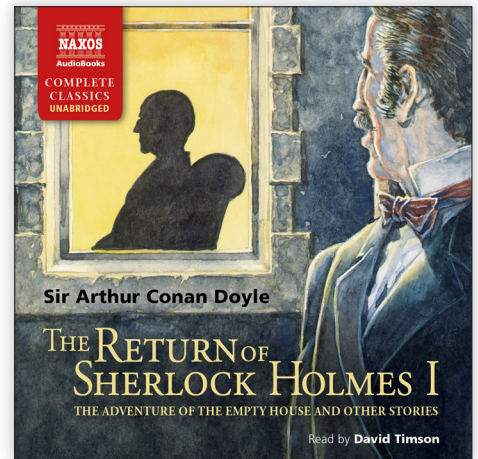
Read by **David Timson**



David Timson's award-winning series of the Sherlock Holmes canon continues with the first in the new series, starting, inevitably, with the shock reappearance of the master detective in *The Empty House*. Though he has been away, it seems that Holmes has lost none of his remarkable qualities.



David Timson has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he has written *The History of Theatre*, an award-winning production read by Derek Jacobi, and directed four Shakespeare plays including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh). He has also read the entire *Sherlock Holmes* canon and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.



Total running time: 3:31:57 • 3 CDs • View our catalogue online at n-ab.com/cat

↓ = Downloads (M4B chapters or MP3 files) ● = CDs (disc-track)



1	1-1	The Adventure of the Empty House	3:09
2	1-2	All day as I drove upon my round...	3:43
3	1-3	A minute examination of the circumstances ...	3:42
4	1-4	I had not been in my study five minutes...	3:10
5	1-5	He sat opposite to me...	3:01
6	1-6	It came about in this way...	3:13
7	1-7	A confederate...	4:49
8	1-8	It was indeed like old times...	3:45
9	1-9	I crept forward and looked across...	4:10
10	1-10	At last, as midnight approached...	3:03
11	1-11	He passed close beside us...	4:56
12	1-12	I have not introduced you yet...	3:56
13	1-13	Our old chambers had been left unchanged...	3:08
14	1-14	He turned over the pages...	3:28
15	1-15	When we were in Switzerland...	4:24
16	1-16	The Adventure of the Norwood Builder	3:07
17	1-17	Mr Sherlock Holmes was leaning back...	3:54
18	1-18	I looked with interest upon this man...	3:57
19	1-19	Sherlock Holmes listened with closed eyes...	2:49
20	2-1	I must explain first...	3:12
21	2-2	I was shown by this woman...	5:02
22	2-3	It strikes me, my good Lestrade...	3:59
23	2-4	It was late when my friend returned...	3:12
24	2-5	Well I tried one or two leads...	3:03
25	2-6	Finally, having drawn every other cover...	4:04
26	2-7	I do not know how far...	2:48
27	2-8	He led us through the passage...	3:16
28	2-9	Lestrade looked at Holmes...	3:40
29	2-10	Five minutes later...	3:12
30	2-11	'What's this then?'...	3:09



31	2-12	The thumb mark, Lestrade...	3:22
32	2-13	It was a masterpiece of villainy...	2:56
33	2-14	The Adventure of the Six Napoleons	3:41
34	2-15	The second case, however, was more serious...	3:03
35	2-16	There are no limits to the possibilities...	2:24
36	2-17	In half an hour...	3:11
37	2-18	I was sitting in my den...	3:56
38	2-19	The spot where the fragments...	4:45
39	2-20	Sherlock Holmes and I...	2:41
40	2-21	In rapid succession we passed through the fringe...	3:58
41	3-1	The afternoon was far advanced...	3:06
42	3-2	Sure enough, when we reached Baker Street...	5:08
43	3-3	A four-wheeler was at the door...	3:27
44	3-4	He had just completed his examination...	2:16
45	3-5	When we met again...	3:35
46	3-6	When our visitor had disappeared...	2:52
47	3-7	Now you clearly see...	5:15
48	3-8	The Adventure of the Three Students	3:10
49	3-9	I must explain to you...	3:06
50	3-10	Bannister was very much upset...	3:40
51	3-11	The sitting-room of our client...	3:40
52	3-12	Mr Soames was somewhat overwhelmed...	3:27
53	3-13	Surely there is another alternative...	3:08
54	3-14	'I understand' said Holmes...	3:23
55	3-15	No names please...	5:29
56	3-16	Holmes made no further allusion...	2:59
57	3-17	Bannister entered...	3:06
58	3-18	For a moment Gilchrist, with upraised hand...	4:51
59	3-19	Have I told the truth...	3:52

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES I

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE AND OTHER STORIES

In 1893, Arthur Conan Doyle made a terse entry into his diary: 'Killed Holmes'.

With *The Final Problem* Conan Doyle had rid himself of 'an old man of the sea' that had hung around his neck. He said later many times that writing the Holmes stories was killing him, and his decision to kill off his greatest creation by plunging him into the Reichenbach Falls was 'justifiable homicide'. There certainly seems to be evidence that Conan Doyle was on the edge of a nervous breakdown in 1893. The strain of the punishing work schedule he had set himself to produce the Holmes stories was taking its toll. He became moody and short-tempered, and suffered from insomnia; so, despite the worldwide furore that met the news of the death of one of literature's most popular characters, Conan Doyle, having cleared the decks, set about living to the full his life without Holmes. But fate decreed otherwise; shortly after Conan Doyle's decision to free himself from Holmes, his wife Louisa was diagnosed as having tuberculosis. Conan Doyle at once made his wife's health his first priority and embarked on trips abroad in search of a conducive climate.

In 1894, as if to distance himself once and for all from being identified with Sherlock Holmes, he displayed a lack of rational thinking which would have shocked his hero, by joining the Society for Psychical Research, which would change his way of looking at the world forever. But even a new interest in the paranormal would not lay the ghost of Sherlock Holmes. On a lecture tour of America in 1894, where he had prepared lectures on George Meredith, Kipling, Hardy and Stevenson, all the public wanted to hear about was Holmes.

Conan Doyle himself had lapses in his resolve never to write about Holmes again. In 1899 he had collaborated on a play about the detective with the American actor William Gillette, but as this was simply a reworking of material already published as *Scandal in Bohemia* and *The Final Problem* it was not strictly fresh material. Then in 1901, when asked for a story and at a loss for a subject, the *Hound of the Baskervilles* bounded out of the gloom, with Sherlock Holmes in pursuit. Conan Doyle insisted this was an old case carefully filed away by Watson and definitely not heralding the resurrection of his *bete noir*.

But the publication of *The Hound* was the thin end of the wedge. In the spring of 1903, the American magazine *Collier's* made Doyle an offer he could not refuse. If he would bring back his hero from his watery grave, they would pay \$25,000 for 6 stories, or \$30,000 for 8, or \$45,000 for 13. These sums were for the American rights only, and *The Strand* joining forces, offered him a further £100 for every 1,000 words for the English rights. With some cynicism, and a terseness that echoed his diary entry of ten years earlier, Conan Doyle sent a postcard to his agent: 'Very Well. A.C.D.'

THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE

And so in this story, Sherlock Holmes makes his welcome return. But is he the same man? It was 10 years since Doyle had written a short story featuring the detective and there do seem to be differences. Perhaps he is less cold, less steely? Doubtless his range of experiences since he escaped the clutches of Professor Moriarty, and went into hiding, must have had an effect on such a volatile nature. Visiting the Dalai Lama in Tibet; posing as a Norwegian explorer, Sigerson; calling in at Mecca, as well as visiting the Khalifa of Khartoum; and researching the derivatives of coal tar in an obscure laboratory tucked

away in Montpellier in the south of France. So diverse is this list, is it not possible that the shock of an attempt on his life brought on a nervous breakdown, and these are the fantasies of a deluded man? This might have been the real reason for the 'Great Hiatus' as Sherlockian scholars call the three-year gap when Holmes' whereabouts were unknown. Sherlock Holmes may have been recuperating in a sanatorium! Moreover, on closer examination we find inconsistencies and irregularities in his account of those years. It would have been next to impossible for a westerner to penetrate the court of the Dalai Lama, let alone Mecca. Disguise, of which he was a master, might have been a possibility, but the supposed meeting of Holmes with the Khalifa in Khartoum was unlikely, the Khalifa having moved to Omdurman in 1885. Also, the questionable researches into coal tar derivatives must surely be a blind to stop any further enquiries from Dr Watson.

Poor Dr Watson! Grieving for the death of his friend Holmes for three years, when all the time he was so very much alive. How could Holmes be so callously cruel not to give him a hint at least that he had not perished in Switzerland, but this is the Holmes of old, not quite trusting Watson, who might inadvertently let the truth slip out. As if the loss of his friend was not enough, we also learn that Watson has sustained an even closer loss, that of his wife. It is perhaps no wonder that the good Doctor's constitution had been weakened to such an extent by these trials, that he fainted dead away upon the sight of Holmes. It would seem that the whirlwind romance with Mary Morstan, whom he had met in *Sign of Four*, had ended in tragedy. The details are not given, but if Mary had died in 1893, the year before Holmes' return, it is perhaps significant that that was the year Conan Doyle's own wife was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Conan Doyle patiently nursed his invalid wife until her death in 1906, whilst maintaining a platonic relationship with a young woman named Jean Leckie. It was Jean, he wrote later, that had given him the idea for the plot of *The Empty House*.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE NORWOOD BUILDER

If Sherlock Holmes had displayed some of his old nature in his lack of concern for Watson's feelings during his absence, in *The Norwood Builder* he shows care and consideration, not always qualities we associate with the great detective. His sympathetic response in *The Empty House* to Watson's loss of his wife: 'Work is the best antidote to grief, my dear Watson' is matched by practicality. He arranges (secretly) to buy Watson's practice, thus making him financially secure, and free to participate in further adventures. Holmes has come to recognise the significant contribution that Watson has made in their cases, and a closer partnership now ensues, with Watson treated more as an equal. It is also true however that Holmes may have been reflecting that with Watson bound up in his Kensington practice, life would be very lonely at Baker Street; for it was in 1887, in the case of *The Five Orange Pips* that Holmes categorically states, when Watson suggests that a ring at the bell might be a friend of Holmes' calling: 'Except yourself I have none'. Perhaps it took a near-fatal encounter for Holmes to realise the value of his only friend.

The identification of the thumbprints, and Lestrade's knowledge that no two are alike, is a little premature for this case set in 1894. Fingerprinting was not introduced at Scotland Yard until 1901, though Holmes' dry comment to Lestrade's observation: 'I have heard something of the kind', leads one to believe he knew about Sir William Herschel's successful experiments in India in the early 1890s.

In *The Empty House* Holmes demonstrates how far ahead in the field of scientific detection he is when he claims that Col. Moran will be convicted by matching the bullets he has fired with his weapon: 'The bullets alone are enough to put his head in a noose', says Holmes, but the science of ballistics was unknown to the Force until 1909. It's a shame too that the burgeoning forensic science of the late Victorian police force could not in *The Norwood Builder* differentiate between the charred remains of humans and rabbits!

Norwood was a very fashionable district in late Victorian London, and a significant place for Conan Doyle, who bought a sixteen-room house there in 1891, out of the proceeds from the first series of Sherlock Holmes short stories.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SIX NAPOLEONS

It is in this case that we first notice a marked change in the official police's attitude to their 'amateur' colleague. In *The Norwood Builder* Inspector Lestrade shows his usual resentment and hostility towards Holmes, but we are told here that 'it was no very unusual thing for Mr Lestrade of Scotland Yard to look in upon us of an evening', and by Lestrade's almost deferential manner to Holmes – 'it is such an absurd business that I hesitated to bother you about it' – it would seem that the Yard has come to drop its mistrust of Holmes' methods, and value Holmes' contribution to its investigations. This case shows Holmes and Lestrade working in harmony, sharing information (Lestrade, most irregularly, lets Holmes keep the photograph of Beppo for instance), with none of the petty jealousies previously exhibited by Lestrade, and winds up with a positive eulogy from the official policeman: 'I've seen you handle a good many cases, Mr Holmes, but I don't know that I ever knew a more workmanlike one than that.'

Holmes helped the police with their enquiries in nine other recorded cases, for which of course, despite being a professional consulting detective, he received no remuneration. It was no doubt worth the effort for the experience, and for the providing of a ready-made audience for his denouement. In *The Six Napoleons* Holmes, never one to miss a theatrical opportunity, contrives a particularly dramatic denouement, when he smashes the sixth and final bust of Napoleon to smithereens. This may not be just for effect however, as by recovering the 'famous black pearl of the Borgias', he is sure to receive a significant payment from the insurance company which would have more than compensated for all nine of the cases he had worked on with the police for nothing.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE STUDENTS

This case, which takes place in 'one of our great university towns' raises, for Sherlockian scholars, the question as to which university Holmes himself attended.

There were of course in 1895, the year of this case, only two possibilities in England, Oxford or Cambridge. Some lean towards Cambridge because Watson refers to a 'town' when Oxford was a city; but then Cambridge's university library was not so well endowed with early English charters, into which Holmes was carrying out 'laborious researches', as was the Bodleian in Oxford. The eminent crime-writer Dorothy L Sayers made a case for Cambridge as it was better for scientific research, Holmes' speciality, but Holmes and Watson refer to the 'quadrangle', an Oxford term; in Cambridge it would be called a 'court'. Holmes refers to his own college days in *The Musgrave Ritual* but does not give the name of his university. One might assume that the aristocratic Reginald Musgrave would have attended the older university of Oxford. The case is weighted in favour of Oxford, but the arguments continue.

There are no doubts which university Conan Doyle attended: Edinburgh. It was renowned for its medical learning and was obviously the best place for a potential doctor to study. Conan Doyle, however, had none of the privileges of a Reginald Musgrave to ease his passage through college life. His father Charles was confined in an asylum and his mother was hard-pressed for money. Having won a bursary of £40 to assist his family's shaky finances, Conan Doyle was devastated to discover a mistake had been made, and the bursary only applicable to students studying the arts. This bitter blow maybe coloured his views of his time at university: 'Edinburgh University may call herself, with grim jocoseness, the 'alma mater' of her students, but if she be a mother at all, she is one of a very stoic and Spartan cast, who conceals her maternal affection with remarkable success.' However, it was whilst at university that he met a man who was to have a significant influence on his future life – Dr Joseph Bell. His unusually acute powers of deduction, and hawklike nose were to be immortalised in the personality and appearance of Conan Doyle's greatest creation: Sherlock Holmes.

Notes by David Timson

The music on this recording is taken from the MARCO POLO catalogue

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Music programmed by Sarah Butcher

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