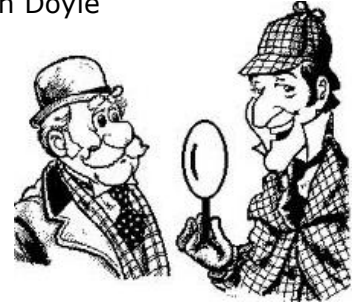


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## Sherlock Holmes

### **The Mystery of the Red-Headed League** by Arthur Conan Doyle

#### **Part 2: Watson and Holmes Investigate**



"Well, Holmes?" I asked after our visitor had left.  
"Rather an expensive practical joke, wouldn't you say?"

"Quite so," said Holmes, "but it's a bit more than that, I'm afraid. Come, Watson. Let's go out awhile. I could use some fresh air."

My friend led me to the subway station where we boarded a train for Coburg Square. We were soon standing in front of Mr. Wilson's pawn shop.

"Shall we have a look, Watson?" Holmes asked as he led the way inside. The shop appeared to be empty, but Holmes absently banged his walking stick on the floor as he wandered about the room.

Before long, we heard the sound of footsteps running up a staircase at the back of the shop. A moment later, Mr. Spaulding appeared.

"Forgive me, gentlemen, I was taking care of something downstairs. May I help you with anything?"

"No, thank you," answered Holmes. "We were just looking."

"Well, did you recognize Spaulding, Holmes?" I asked my friend when we'd left the shop.

"Spaulding is an ordinary enough looking character," replied Holmes, "but I did find his pants and shoes of interest. The knees of his pants were badly worn and dirty. And did you notice, Watson, how scuffed the toes of his shoes were?"

"No, Holmes, I'm afraid I missed those details. Are they important?"

"They might be," said Holmes thoughtfully. "Come, Watson, let us take a short stroll around the block."

We walked around the corner and turned up the next road that ran parallel to the road where the Wilson's shop was located.

Suddenly, Holmes stopped.

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"Aha! Look there, Watson! A bank! And directly in back of the pawn shop! Good work, I'd say! We've solved our mystery! And just in the nick of time!"

"Whatever are you talking about, Holmes?" I asked.

"Listen, Watson," he replied. "I have some business to attend to. I suggest you go home and get some rest now. We'll meet back here at ten o'clock tonight for a little adventure." "Oh," he added. "Bring your pistol with you, Watson. We may need it."

### ***Part 3: The Adventure at the Bank***

When I arrived back at the bank, I found Holmes waiting outside for me. With him were two other men.

"Oh, there you are, Watson", said Holmes. "You know Inspector Jones of Scotland Yard, and this is Mr. Merryweather, director of the bank. Are we ready, gentlemen? Quickly, then! There's not a moment to lose."

Mr. Merryweather produced some keys from his pocket and let us into a side-door of the bank. He then led us down into the vault below the bank.

"I have done as you asked, Mr. Holmes," said Mr. Merryweather, "and removed all the valuables to another place. Although I am still mystified as to why you wanted this done."

"All in good time, Mr. Merryweather," said Holmes, as he dropped to the ground and began examining the cracks between the flagstones with his magnifying glass.

"All is well," he said when he finally stood up. "Now, we must sit quietly for an hour or two. Total silence, please, and no lamps or matches. Oh, and Watson, have your pistol ready."

We sat for an hour or two in the dark and silence. Suddenly, a crack of light appeared in the floor of the vault between the flagstones.

We watched as the crack of light grew larger as one of the flagstones was pushed up and over from below. Then, a hand reached up through the opening in the ground and placed a candle on the floor of the vault. Finally,

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the body of a man appeared and pulled itself up through the opening and into vault.

Holmes shot forward from the darkness and seized the man. Following Holmes' lead, I grabbed hold of a second man, who was now halfway through the opening, and pulled him up into vault. The first man I recognized as Spaulding; his partner turned out to be the man who had hired Wilson.

"The game's over, gentlemen," said Inspector Parker as he rushed over with handcuffs to cuff the two intruders. "You're both under arrest."

Mr. Merryweather looked on in amazement. "I can't thank you men enough," he said. "We keep a fortune in gold bullion stored in this vault. Were it not for you, it would all be gone."

#### ***Part 4: Holmes Explains***

On the way back to Baker Street, I asked my friend how he knew that the criminals were digging a tunnel to Mr. Merryweather's bank.

"It was obvious from the start," Holmes began, "that the Red-Headed League had only one purpose—to get Wilson out of his shop. Spaulding's photography hobby was nothing more than an excuse for him to be down in the cellar."

"I suspected that Spaulding might be digging a tunnel, so while we were in the shop I tapped my stick on the floor to test for hollow ground. I also checked Spaulding's shoes and knees for tell-tale signs of digging."

"Then, when we took our walk around the block and found a bank located directly behind Wilson's shop, it all made sense. The cost of the newspaper ad, Wilson's pay, and the rent on the office were nothing compared with what Spaulding and his partner hoped to steal."

"After you went home to rest, Watson, I contacted the police and the bank's directors who arranged to move the gold and let us into the vault to await the robbers."

"But how did you know that the heist would be tonight?" I asked.

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"The fact that the Red-Headed League had been shut down told me that the men had finished the tunnel," said Holmes. "There was no point in paying Wilson four pounds a week to keep him away once that tunnel was dug."

"Of course," said I. "But why tonight? Why not tomorrow night?"

"Elementary," said Holmes. "A Saturday would be the best night by far. That way, the theft would not be discovered until the following Monday when the bank reopened. This would give the thieves all day Sunday to make their getaway."

I shook my friend by the hand. "Sherlock Holmes," I said, "you make it all sound so simple. I must congratulate you on another mystery solved."

THE END