

The Adventure of the



S E C O N D S T E I N

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THE CASE OF THE SECOND STEIN

Introduction

I was rudely awakened by gunfire one morning at my lodgings at 221B Baker Street. I was not frightened, but kept my wits about me enough to seize my trusty revolver. The memories of the Afghan wars had trained me to be on the alert. Opening my door the slightest scant inch, I cautiously peered into the outer room. There sat my roommate, Sherlock Holmes, already breakfasted, with his post-breakfast pipe clenched between his teeth. His long legs were drawn up into the posh chair in which he was seated. In his hand was the firearm that had summoned me from rest. My friend was in the process of completing a pattern on the wall, when I made my presence known.

"Good heavens, Holmes, have you gone off the edge?", I inquired. He looked up wearily and laid down the pistol.

"No, my good fellow, I am quite all right," he said, "but I do wish you would put on some clothes. You look rather silly standing there in your night-shirt." I stood gaping in astonishment.

"You are saying that while blasting away at the wall?" I turned on my heel and returned fifteen minutes later, dressed and shaven. I rang for Mrs. Hudson and my morning repast.

"Really, Holmes, you must not get into low spirits," I urged. "Why not update your files or, better yet, let's go down to Dunhill's and look over the merchandise?"

"A fine idea, Watson, we may indeed pay them a visit," he said, "but not before we allow our visitor to see us!" A thumping sound came from the stairway. The steps were too heavy to be those of Mrs. Hudson's, even with a full break-

fast tray. There was a slight tap on the door, then a louder knock of impatience.

"Please come in," Holmes answered. A man of obvious wealth stood before us. He was the very picture of sartorial splendor, all the way down to the jeweled spats he wore.

"Gentlemen, please excuse my interrupting your morning, but I must speak with Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

"I am he," my friend answered.

"Very good, I am John Rousseau. I come to you with quite a unique puzzle. I have read Dr. Watson's accounts of your adventures, and your talent continues to astound me."

"I thank you, but my methods are quite as easily explained as elementary," said Holmes. "Other than the fact that you are not as wealthy as you would have others believe, and that you can barely afford what you are wearing, plus your name, you have told me very little about the business you wish to speak to me."

"It is true, Mr. Holmes, I do not have much now. But I do stand a good chance of coming into a small inheritance. The clothes I wear were purchased on credit," Rousseau answered. "The puzzle of which I spoke is one of particular importance to me."

Holmes sat in his armchair with the usual detached air about him.

"My uncle passed on recently, and through the will I received nothing more than a large pewter beer stein. Needless to say, I was furious when I discovered that my relatives were bequeathed land and stock, while I was left with only an empty beer stein." The man was now shaking with what I presumed to be a fit of rage, but in reality was laughter.

"Can you imagine the look on their faces when I came up with the most important, most

significant part of the will and estate?"

His eyes still smiled, but Holmes' twinkled.

"On the stein was an inscription, which read, "IN ORDER TO FIND WEALTH DIVINE - ONE MUST SECURE THE SECOND STEIN," Rousseau quoted. "I saw it accidentally as I drank from it one evening," he continued. "It was inside the stein, engraved on the base."

With that, he produced an elegant pewter Stein of seemingly German workmanship.

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Continuation I

It was the next morning when I sat down for my morning repast, that I glanced at Holmes, leaning back in his chair, with legs outstretched, turning the pewter stein over and over in his hands.

"What do you make of it, Holmes?," I inquired.

"The full truth will reveal itself in due course," he replied, "but it has already told us a great deal."

"Well, it looks much like one might purchase at any knickknack shop to me," I offered.

"For openers, my friend, careful observation has shown me that the stein was decorated by an elderly lady from Bavaria, and a rather impecunious one at that. It was manufactured in Cologne, and the engraver was a middle-aged, left-handed engraver from the Tyrol, and a most skilled, high-priced one, if my eyes do not deceive me."

"Come now, Holmes," I scoffed, "it appears your imagination is getting the better of you. Perhaps a brisk walk in the park will clear your faculties."

"Quite to the contrary, my good doctor, it

is as plain as a pikestaff. Come - let me explain."

I took a hurried sip from my coffee cup and walked over to the Master. He proceeded to explain that the decorative work on the stein was obviously done by an old, unsteady hand, and that the most inexpensive paints were used. The story depicted was an old Bavarian folk legend. With the aid of his magnifying glass, I, indeed, observed the small letters, KÖLN, thus establishing the place of manufacture. Even the lettering revealed a left-handed slant, under close scrutiny. The workmanship was flawless proving it to be done by an engraver of excellent craftsmanship using the finest vanadium instruments, peculiar to the Province of Tyrol, in the Alps.

"I must say, Holmes," I said, "You certainly have opened my eyes to quite a bit of information."

"Ah!, my friend," Holmes retorted, "but what sinister plot does the stein hold? What make you of the inscription, Watson?"

"Perhaps, 'wealth divine' speaks of heavenly reward," I suggested, "You know, a sort of Holy Grail."

"I think not, Watson. The Sacred Ami had no such handle, much less a glass bottom, such as this lager ladle. Come, come - you can do better than that, Watson!"

I mumbled a few inaudible sounds to cover up my embarrassment.

"I've got it!," I shouted with renewed enthusiasm. "If we could trace the whereabouts of an identical stein, it might contain a treasure map, or perhaps a key to a private vault at the 'Old Lady of Threadneedle Street'."

"I must say, Watson, that theory was a decided improvement over the previous conjecture," said Holmes, with a tinge of sarcasm.

Holmes then lapsed into a thoughtful reverie, quite oblivious of anything around him. For myself, I was relieved he was not continuing to prod me for new theories in regard to the stein, for my imagination was running dry. I finished my coffee and repaired to the water closet. Having completed my ablutions, I settled down to peruse the morning Chronicle, when Holmes sprang to his feet and rushed to the window. He lowered, then raised the shade, then sat at the desk and hastily scribbled a message on a telegraph form. Just as he completed this hurried task, there was a loud noise outside the door of someone bounding up the stairs, and then an urgent knock on the door. Holmes, anticipating our visitor, was ready and quickly opened the door.

"Ah, Roger - as alert as ever, I see," Holmes greeted the breathless, ragged urchin standing in the doorway.

"At your service, Mr. 'Olmes," replied the saluting Irregular.

"Here," handing the telegram to the boy, "to the Telegraph Office - on the double!"

He flipped a shiny Queen's Shilling in the air. The lad deftly caught the coin with practiced dexterity, pocketed his reward, and was on his errand.

Holmes shut the door and explained the last harried moments.

"I think my new signal system is working to perfection, don't you agree, Watson? Irregulars on 24-hour call - not bad eh?"

I agreed affirmatively to both interrogatives.

"To whom did you send the telegram?", I curiously inquired.

"To Professor Lynmar Kinsperk, Esquire, curator of the London Zoo," he replied.

"What, in heaven's name, has he to do

with the mystery of the stein?"

"Time will tell, good doctor, time will tell," he mused, "It just occurred to me that we should check out the second stein listed in the dictionary - STEINBOK, a small antelope of the Raphicerus genre, found in Southeast Africa. I'm sure you are aware that this portion of the Dark Continent is a part of the Imperial German Empire. Perhaps the good professor will provide us with further information in regard to this "second stein". Remember, Watson, our maxim - 'When all other possibilities have been eliminated, whatever remains, no matter how improbable - must be the truth'".

I had no reply, but was rather nonplussed at this new line of inquiry.

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Continuation II

Professor Kinsperk's reply to Holmes' telegram suggested an interview at the Zoo, and so it happened that the following afternoon two middle-aged gentlemen, one wearing a deerstalker cap and the other a top hat showing the bulge of a stethoscope, were shown into the curator's office. In due time we were treated to an exposition of the natural history of the steinbok, and later made the acquaintance of two of the splendid animals. However, in the cab on our way back to Baker Street, Holmes was forced to admit that the day's exertions, however enjoyable they may have been, had not advanced our investigation in any discernible manner.

That evening after dinner, as we sat by the fire, Holmes laid his doubts and frustrations before me. "Frankly, Watson," he said, "I must confess that I do not see a clear line of reasoning at this moment. At first, I thought the reference to a 'second stein' presented an abtruse clue. Stein is, after all, German for stone, and perhaps it indicated some sort of famous or valuable jewel, such as the Mazarin Stone. Then I thought it might

refer to the second work of the American writer, Gertrude Stein, but this could hardly be possible since at the moment Miss Stein is a student at Radcliffe College, in Massachusetts, and has not written anything worthy of note. I should not like to be as gauche as that young man, Meyer, who has done such a wretched job of plagiarizing your published reports, Watson, by having me discuss, in Vienna in 1891, the operas of Strauss and Hofmannsthal, which were not written until some fifteen or twenty years later. No, I believe that our afternoon was not wasted, and furthermore, I am convinced that the steinbok is part of the clue; but I must admit, old chap, that I am at a loss to know why. I find myself tending, reluctantly, to the conclusion that the 'second stein' is simply that - nothing more than another pewter mug like the first."

"Well, Holmes, I will tell you my opinion," I responded. "I think that Rousseau's whole story is either a fabrication or a fantasy. I sincerely doubt that there was any estate, or any inheritance. Indeed, if Rousseau is the nephew of a recently-deceased Croesus, then I am the King of Bohemia!"

"By Jove, Watson," Holmes interjected, "that's it!"

"Why, Holmes," I sputtered, "what do you mean?"

"That is our clue! Of course! How could I have been so stupid as not to see it! The Crown Prince of Bohemia, Wilhelm Gottreich Victor Freidrich von Ormstein, the only son of the King of Bohemia, who sought our assistance some six years ago. He is the second "Stein", and the clue to this seemingly simple conundrum. Unless I am much mistaken, the coat of arms of the Ormsteins included a steinbok rampant in dexter chief. Kindly look them up in my index, Doctor."

I did so, and found a biography of the King (including an account of his marriage to Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen), a brief history of the ruling family, and a copy of the coat of arms, just as Holmes had described it, sandwiched between an account of English potato-farming (filed under Ormskirk), and one of Pope Benedict XIII (filed under Orsini).

"This will require a journey to the Continent, Watson. Are you willing? Good, I thought as much (this after my nod of assent). Tomorrow's boat train, if possible. But before we leave England, there are one or two things we must do. First of all, we must arrange to see Mycroft, for at least a few minutes. If there are any diplomatic problems to be considered, Mycroft will be our best adviser. Perhaps we had best try to see him this evening. He is always at the Diogenes Club until a twenty before eight. Let us be off immediately."

At the Diogenes Club we were shown into the Stranger's Room, where Mycroft appeared in a few minutes, and Holmes told him of our problem and plans. Holmes' brother might have been asleep during this exordium, but I had learnt to respect his intellectual capabilities. So I was not surprised that when Holmes ceased, the watery-grey eyes opened, and a smile indicated complete agreement with what their owner had heard.

"You have discerned the problem and its solution very well, Sherlock," Mycroft said, "Admirably, if I may say so. I shall make the necessary arrangements with the Foreign Office so that you will not encounter undue difficulties on your travels. Furthermore, I shall arrange an appointment for you with His Majesty, personally. However, it seems to me that you have overlooked one aspect of your search. The pewter mug you refer to is a particular style known as a "Bock Stein." In Bohemia, it is frequently used only in the Spring months for

the consumption of a special type of beer. That may prove of some significance to you in your task . . . "

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Continuance III

Here Holmes reminded Mycroft that the stein was made in Cologne, and revealed that he had sent a cable requesting information as to the order for the unusual engraving, adding that he hoped for a reply prior to our departure.

The reply awaited our return. The company remembered the special request, and had found the Uncle's order dated two years previous.

"We must stop in Cologne, en route, and examine the instructions that commissioned the stein," Holmes decided, "A sample of the Uncle's signature might be of value".

However, Holmes' decision to examine the records at Cologne was, within the hour, proven incorrect by another cable from the makers of the stein. The company advised that their search had revealed a second order from the Uncle, dated some five months previous, which forwarded payment for another stein with a glass bottom. A key, sent with the order, was molded into the glass bottom and the completed stein placed in their vaults in accord with the instructions which stated that the second would be claimed by a person who could prove ownership.

"Congratulations, Holmes," I said. "It's quite simple - just as I thought."

"Of course, Watson, it's quite simple when you realize that someone had to make the second stein and dispose of it to order. Will you be a good fellow, and ask Mr. Rousseau if he can use our reservations as far as cologne? That key may fit a vault that will allow our client to afford the clothes he wears."

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Continuance IV

"Ah, thank you, Holmes. This, of course, means that we will not be crossing the Channel?" In spite of the fact that our splendid ships ply all seas, and that I have made the long trip to and from Afghanistan, does not mean that I, along with most Englishmen, long for death during Channel crossing.

"No, Watson, I simply said that you were to ask Mr. Rousseau if he can use our reservations as far as Cologne. He is to think that we are to remain here." He hesitated, "No, Watson, I'll send him a written message to go to Cologne and pick up the second stein with the key in the glass. The look on your face will tell him exactly what I do not want him to know; that is, we are going to Cologne!"

I shall pass over the joys of the Margate-Ostend crossing, except to say that it made my long voyage on the Orontes in '80, seem like a pleasure trip.

My father's 1820 Pocket Guide to Brussels and Waterloo states that Brussels "yields to none in the salubrity of its air, the number and variety of its waters, the mildness of its climate, and the beauties of its situation." That, of course, does not hold true today. It is a miserable city, its citizens are avaricious, and our noisy hotel was no more than a house of prostitution.

Breakfast was an expected catastrophe, the bread dark and hard. The orange marmalade was concocted from some slimy, unnatural oil, and the tea must have been extracted from tobacco.

"Why, Holmes, did we have to come by way of this horrible city? Why couldn't we have been in Holland eating a Dutch breakfast this morning? Ah, they can prepare a breakfast that is almost as good as our wonderful English breakfasts!"

Holmes' eyes twinkled. "That would have meant several hours more on the Channel, Watson. You wouldn't have liked that."

I could only agree with him on that sad point.

"But seriously, my dear Holmes. Why have we come by this route when we have permitted Mr. Rousseau to come to Brussels by way of Dover and Calais?"

"Think, Watson! There was no chance that we would cross paths with him. You don't think I selected this miserable hotel at random, do you? A man with his pretense to style and affluence would never stay here."

"Yet I don't understand why we are avoiding him."

"Ah, it is not he that we are avoiding; rather, I am sure that they are watching him closely as they would watch us, if they knew that our journey to Cologne parallels his."

"They?" I asked in astonishment, for such an idea had not entered my mind.

"When we get to Cologne, we shall learn more about who 'they' are, but I can tell you now that there may be serious physical danger involved. Be sure that your service revolver is in working order!"

"What?" I cried out with some bitterness. "I don't have it with me. You at least could have told me that we might have to face dangerous enemies!"

Neither he nor I said anything for nearly five minutes. Finally, Holmes turned to me, placed his arm on my shoulder and said, "My dear friend, I'm sure we won't need the revolver. With your good sense and military training we'll meet any situation."

The train from Brussels to Cologne was excellent. Almost immediately after boarding

at noon we were served luncheon, although after my recent experience I expected the worst. To my surprise the menu was German and, although I had never eaten German food, I found it almost as good as the food at my club.

There were well-cooked potatoes and well-boiled small cabbages, a sturdy sausage and plenty of bread and butter and an immense stein of beer. The sight of the latter brought my mind abruptly back to our adventure, but Holmes seemed to read my mind for he almost imperceptibly shook his head.

Although German beer is inferior to English beer, both of us returned to our compartment in an expansive mood. We no longer had the compartment to ourselves; a black-gowned priest had joined us. He didn't raise his eyes nor did he answer when Holmes spoke to him in what seemed to be French and German, and I in English, but continued reading his Bible or prayerbook.

Undaunted, Holmes turned to me and happily chatted about the route we were following and the valley of the Rhine. For several hours he opened the door on a young Holmes I had rarely seen. It seems that he had once walked along the Rhine from Strasbourg to Düsseldorf and his remarkable mind had stored away geographical details. He surprised me, as he often does, by giving me a lengthy dissertation on the Roman settlement at Colonge.

In this pleasant manner the journey passed quickly. As the train slowed, we took down our luggage.

Holmes turned again to our traveling companion and said, "nam et catelli edunt de micis quae cadunt de mensa dominorum suorum." The priest continued to stare at his book.

Scarcely had we alighted in Cologne when a young German approached us. Herr Schultze spoke excellent English, let us know that he

was an admirer of all things English and that he especially admired Mr. Mycroft Holmes, the great maker of British foreign policy. In no time he had led us to the Europa am Dom hotel next to the cathedral and left us, promising to be of service in any way.

"Watson," said Holmes as soon as we had washed, "It's too early for dinner which is served late here, and there is still some light, and, although the doors of the Cathedral will be closed, would you like to take a walk around it?"

"Won't we be seen by those whom we are trying to avoid?"

"It's not important now. The priest on the train was one of them. I'm sure you noted that he was not a priest. We can assume that he was there to watch us. Come along."

"Right, Holmes. Yes, he did act suspiciously."

I have not spent much time in cathedrals and know little about them. I am a soldier and a doctor who has seen much of terror, but my first sight of the Cologne cathedral in the long shadows of the dying day made my blood run cold. When I mentioned this to Holmes, he responded by quoting a French art historian named Gonse, who said that the Cologne cathedral is a gigantic-terrifying work. I have recently read that our great English art critic, John Ruskin, said that it was a "miserable humbug." Certainly, the cathedrals on the continent cannot compare with our great English cathedrals.

I awoke early after a dream-tossed sleep brought about, no doubt, by my walk in the shadows of the cathedral or by the extraordinary, large nudels, as they are called here, which I had for dinner. Nearly three and one-half inches in diameter, they reminded me of the artillery shot which we used in Afghanistan.

Holmes and I had agreed to meet in the dining room rather than eat in our rooms. We scarcely were seated when we heard, almost before we saw, John Rousseau bearing down on us, hardly the neatly-dressed man we had met at 221B. His hair and his clothes were in total disarray. His face was pale and he was obviously distraught.

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Conclusion

"Oh, my God," he almost screamed, "How happy I am to find you here. I have been followed, pushed about by ruffians, my pocket has been picked, my room has been thoroughly searched and my luggage has been stolen, and I have been questioned by the police as if I were a common criminal. I have had no one to whom I could talk. Even the English consul seems to be off somewhere shooting deer. I had just about given up when I saw you here. Heavens, I didn't even know that you were coming to Cologne." Gradually, he seemed to be calmer.

It were as if he were turning himself and his situation over to Holmes. One could almost feel his relief and, at the same time, feel the atmosphere as Holmes accepted the responsibility. I have noted this many times before when Holmes has felt it necessary to take control of events.

"Sit down, Mr. Rousseau, and talk if you wish." He did, repeating nearly everything he had previously said but in a less breathless manner. "What is happening to me?" he pleaded.

"Well, we know much more than when we first met you," said Holmes, "But I know have some questions to pose to you; for example, did I gather correctly that you are an orphan, what was the profession and name of your uncle who died, who are your relatives who received the substantive portion of the inheritance, who were your parents, and is your French name

one long in England? Perhaps you could answer these questions for me. Perhaps, but not necessarily, there may be more questions."

Quite calm now, Mr. Rousseau seemed eager to answer Holmes' questions as if such a schoolboy-like task would be soothing.

"Yes," he said, "I am an orphan. I never knew my father. He and my mother were never married. He was an Englishman, and his name was not Rousseau. More than that I know nothing of him. Rousseau was my mother's name. She was born in France and was a concert singer, a soprano, who sang all over Europe and England but under still another name which you would recognize even after all these years. She died when I was thirteen."

He continued, "My uncle raised me. Really, he was not my uncle. He was an architect who traveled around the world designing and building some of the most famous edifices of this century. I think he had met my mother somewhere in some concert hall he had built. He evidently had promised her in an expansive moment that he would see me safely launched into manhood, This he did. I never wanted for material advantages. As he was always away I saw little of him, perhaps not more than four or five times from the time I was thirteen until I was twenty-one, and I have not seen him since. Actually I have nothing to complain about concerning his guardianship."

"The rest of the legatees I had never seen before the reading of the will. I think that they were nieces and nephews."

He looked straight into Holmes' eyes. "But who, sir, is it that seems to be trying to do me harm? Does someone know something that I don't about this?"

"Yes," said Holmes solemnly, "There are those who wish to know what you know although you yourself do not know what you know. What

you have told me today confirms much of what I had suspected. Much of it concerns who you are. The material gain they seek is one, unhappily, you may never have, but, if this case ends as I think it will, neither will those who persecute you."

Holmes continued, "There have been a number of false clues in this case which in the larger sense have led us astray, but in the narrow sense are leading us right to the solution. You begin to see what is going to happen now, don't you, Watson?"

"No, no, Holmes, I do not."

"Yes, you do, Watson. You have everything at your fingertips. Think about it."

"And now, my friends," said Holmes as he stood up, "let us go down to ----- Company to claim the second stein. By the way, Mr. Rousseau, do you have any identification left after your ordeal at the hands of the villains?"

"Yes, thank heavens, my travel papers are securely locked in the hotel desk."

It was only a short walk to the offices of ----- Company, and, in a moment, the second stein was in Mr. Rousseau's hands. He turned it over and immediately a key appeared molded in the glass.

"What do I do now?" said Mr. Rousseau with a puzzled look on his face.

"The key to this case is in your hands," shrugged Holmes.

With no more hesitation, Mr. Rousseau took out of his pocket a knife and began to tap the glass. After a few blows it shattered and the key was cupped in his hand, all eyes upon it.

After looking at it carefully I said, "It's a key, and yet it's not a key."

"Splendid, Watson. You haven't lost any of

your fine touch. Anything else?" he quizzed.

I noted that it seemed to be made of silver and, if of pure metal and of that size, might be a poor key for opening a lock. Also, I pointed out to Holmes that the key was perfectly smooth except for a small dot. Holmes took out his magnifying glass and stared intently at the key and nodded his head.

"If there are no more comments," he said, "then we must go see Herr Schultze, who is the one person who can help us now."

Herr Schultze, after a brief conversation with Holmes, accompanied us to the cathedral.

We walked some twenty paces into the cathedral. Then Holmes stopped, placed the key on the floor, stood aside and waited.

After a few moments we gathered around the key. Suddenly the truth dawned on us! The key was formed in the shape of the floor plan of the cathedral. There was the plan of the choir, the nave and the apse.

We stood bewildered. Then Holmes handed us his glass. Under its magnification we discovered that the small dot, which I had thought to be an imperfection, was, in reality, a carving of what appeared to be a goat.

Holmes picked up the key and, glancing at it from time to time, walked forward about fifty paces, turned right and walked a few feet. We rushed after him. Following his example we looked down at the floor where, on a worn marble memorial, plainly could be seen the carved figure of a steinbok.

So much happened during the next three days that it is difficult to recall it all.

The magic name of Sherlock Holmes' brother, Mycroft, opened wide all bureaucratic doors.

The pavement memorial was raised and

under it was found the priceless bejeweled crown which legend says belonged to Charlemagne's lieutenant, Roland. It had been missing from the sanctuary at Metz for nearly twenty-seven years.

Records of the Cologne cathedral showed that Mr. Rousseau's uncle had been one of the prominent architects called between 1842 and 1880 after King William Frederick IV had made the decision to complete the construction of the cathedral which has ceased in 1560.

Further investigation showed that Mr. Rousseau's uncle had also worked on the Metz Cathedral. Evidently, the completion of the work at Cologne in 1880 had made it impossible for him to recover his hidden treasure.

It is evident that most of this information was in Holmes' hands before we had left London.

A study of municipal records showed that Mr. Rousseau's mother had performed for a week in Cologne at the same time as his uncle was working there. This came as no great surprise to Mr. Rousseau who had always suspected that his uncle was really his father.

The crown was, in due course, returned to Metz and, although a sizable reward was offered, Mr. Rousseau felt no need for the money as he is on the way to becoming one of England's great architects.

It is not known for certain who, through independent investigation, had begun to suspect where the crown might be and who might have the key to its recovery. Holmes, however, feels that there is only one other mind who could draw such conclusions. Holmes' reward is that he again had defeated his arch-enemy.

The End

