

TLC Showcase

San Cassimally



Introduction	2
A Short Story from <i>The Case Book of Irene Adler</i>	3
About the Writer	12

Introduction

I came across The Literary Consultancy in The Guardian, and thought that it might just be the catalyst needed to bring to fruition my attempt at getting published. As a retired teacher, I found the expenses involved quite daunting, but then to what length one would not go for one's art? In any case, I do not drink, smoke or gamble...

I sent in 'Magnetite', a massive if over-ambitious epic about immigrations, found the comments encouraging and useful, and based my subsequent revisions on them and sent it again ... and again. I am still working on it, and am hoping that my fifth attempt will meet with the necessarily rigid criteria demanded for it to progress to the next step, the much dreamed of referral to an agent. I sometimes wonder whether agents are not more difficult to find than publishers!

In the meantime, the creative sap has been encouraged to rise, and in parallel, I have finished drafts of two more novels, one with Irene Adler as its principal character and the other, 'Edinburgh Blues', the story of someone who denies being a paedophile. Both have gone through the hands of TLC experts, and I hope to keep trimming and polishing.

I was also fortunate enough to go on the now famous Literary Adventure in magical Fereinola, Andalucia; this is something I would strongly urge aspiring writers to take advantage of.

A short Story from *The Case Book of Irene Adler*

By San Cassimally

“Irene Adler and Sherlock”

This is what Graham Greene would have called an “Entertainment”. It is the story of Irene Adler, from the moment she “goes to the bad” to her passing for Mrs Hudson and Her Last Bow, when she rescues Sherlock Holmes from the clutches of Moriarty.

PROLOGUE.

Whilst cleaning Mr Holmes’ study, I stumbled on the piece below, reproduced in full, and got the idea to write my own casebook. Mr Reynolds had often suggested that I did, and the money was more than welcome, as I have responsibilities. The fact that Dr Watson, in his misguided loyalty to Sherlock Holmes chose to withhold certain facts from his reading public was an added incentive; sadly he also sometimes ever so slightly filtered away anything that he thought likely to diminish his hero. Unless I have been remiss in my reading of the Holmes canon, the words below have never appeared in the chronicler’s accounts. In my admiration for that great detective, I am third to none - I do bow to the doctor though. This was written on one single sheet of quarto in his characteristic scrawl:

I have often worried about his pallid complexion, and after a lot of preaching, I managed to persuade Holmes to take some exercise; for a while we got into the habit of catching a cab to Westminster once a week, and there we would walk briskly for just over an hour. One day as we were engaged in this fruitful occupation in the Victoria Embankment Gardens, only recently completed by my friend Mr Bazalgette, we saw a handsome well-dressed lady accompanied by a boy who might have been nine or ten walking towards us. The boy had the most unusual limp, he put his left foot forward normally, but when it came to his right foot, he raised it slightly, moved it in an arc of a circle before putting it down again, dipping to his right as if this foot had gone down a cavity, before dragging it up again. Following what my friend and mentor had taught me over the years, I watched the movement more closely until I discovered that the sole of the boy’s foot did not point forward but sideways to the right, which was what made him move in this peculiar manner. I gave Holmes a nudge and asked him in a whisper if he had perceived this.

‘Yes, Watson, I have. And although I have never seen the boy, I can tell you that he celebrated his birthday last week, on the eleventh to be more precise.’

‘My dear fellow, how can anybody deduce that from a limp.’

‘I daresay I can tell you even more. He is called David, his father is a draper and the lady with him, his mother, was born in Pennsylvania, and they were married in Yorkminster Cathedral.’

I stared at my companion, unsure as to whether if he was not playing a joke on me.

‘And to put you out of your misery, my dear fellow, I will tell you how I know, then we can check with the little chap himself: As you know, I have made an extensive study of physical defects, as they help in my detective work. For this purpose, I attended a lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons only last year, where the eminent orthopedic surgeon Mr Archibald McLeod was expounding on a unique case which he treated a few years ago. The boy David was born with his right foot pointing the opposite way, which would have made it impossible for the little blighter to walk at all. McLeod was forced to carry out a landmark operation on the young patient, and succeeded in readjusting the foot, but fixing it an right angles to its normal position was the best that he could achieve, which at least permitted the boy to walk, albeit with the bad limp that we have witnessed; he however, decided that the risk involved was too high and resolved that he would not carry out another such operation until some techniques were improved. At that lecture I was able to meet and talk to the parents of David who happily recounted to me their story.’

As usual his explanations made everything seem pretty hackneyed, but as we were drawing level with mother and child, we stopped and bowed, indicating that we wished to speak if the lady was agreeable; she must have recognised Holmes.

‘Tell me, my young fellow, I just told my friend here that you celebrated your birthday last week, that you are called David and that your mother here, was born in Pennsylvania; can you confirm this for my friend here?’ The little boy looked at him, then at me, on whom he finally settled his gaze.

‘That’s absolutely correct, Dr Watson,’ at which, my esteemed friend gave him a baffled look.

‘It’s quite elementary, Mr Holmes.’

Holmes had written below, in his firm writing: Doctor, I assure you that I have no objection whatsoever to your using this piece; I do not feel in the least threatened because the youngster put me in the shade.

CHAPTER I

Mrs HUDSON MOVES IN

(1889)

Dr Watson may be a lovely man, but in his accounts of Mr Holmes' exploits, he has not not always been scrupulous about details. I must first dispel that notion that I was their landlady; I was nothing of the sort. I came in as housekeeper, replacing Mrs Turner when she left for a position outside London. I had my reasons for wanting to work for Mr Holmes and nobody else, and set about preparing to make myself acceptable to him. I knew that he would not want a woman of my age, so I decided that I would disguise myself so to say, in order to appear older, subdued and therefore more dependable. By dint of some rags wrapped round my girth, and putting on a dress I borrowed from my sister Catherine who is twice my size, I managed to make myself appear buxom and dowdy; I also added a few wrinkles artificially to my face, and practised walking with a waddle and speaking like a middle-aged semi literate woman. I experimented with two pebbles in my mouth to puff my cheeks up a tad, but gave up on the idea suspecting that to an observant eye such as his this was too risky; besides when I spoke they clattered.

I was, however quite sanguine about my chances of passing muster, and confidently directed my steps towards Baker Street to solicit for the position in

person. I had no intention of keeping up my stout appearance, but I knew that once I was ensconced in my post in Baker Street, Mr Holmes, who by all accounts, is so full of self-belief not to say dogmatic, would never question himself about my appearance, enabling me to gradually 'lose' some weight and wrinkles without him being any the wiser. I had been told that he usually avoided looking at the fair sex except when exercising his craft. I was in no hurry to alter my frumpish dressing style. I had the testimonials all ready, so when I rang the bell at Number 221 B, all things considered, I did so with confidence.

To my surprise, Mr Sherlock Holmes himself opened the door and ushered me in. I was struck by his gaunt face, I remembered it otherwise.

'Yes ma'am, you've come to the right place, and I am at your service to solve your difficulties, whatsoever they may be.' But always the cynic, I heard, "*Yes ma'am, the great, the unique Sherlock Holmes at your service, ready once more to dazzle you by my genius.*" He offered me a seat, sat down opposite me behind his desk, and before I could open my mouth he was already talking.

'You will be amused to hear that I have already discovered a few things about you. But that should not surprise you; since you have taken the trouble to come seek my help, it must obviously be because you have heard of my powers of deduction. I own to not yet having worked out the purpose of your visit, but am confident of doing so shortly.' I admit to being dazzled by his approach, but did my best not to appear abashed.

'You have only recently arrived from across the Atlantic...' I was on the point of disabusing him, but he shook his head imperiously, indicating that I should not interrupt his flow.

'You have clearly been under a lot of stress lately, which has caused you sleeplessness and loss of appetite. Ah yes, I see, you've only recently been widowed ... and he left you with a poor orphan ... a boy, I daresay.' He can't have missed my look of awe and incredulity.

'But Mr 'Olmes, how do you know about ...' He said nothing but the stern look on his face spoke volumes, and it clearly said *'Don't interrupt! Genius thinking!'*

'You see Mrs... I don't think you mentioned your name ...' *Of course not, when did you give me the opportunity.*

'Mrs Hudson, Martha Hudson.'

'As I was saying, Mrs Hudson, if you keep your eyes and ears open,' he said wagging a finger, 'and make use of your sense of smell ... capital that ... the mysteries of the world will open up for you like a rose bud whose time has come.' He smiled, or rather twitched his lips in a quick movement, and stretching his hands forwards, he brought the fingers of his hands together but not quite allowing them to touch for a while. I was speechless, and he looked at me with his steely blue eyes, in a not unfriendly manner, and almost whispered, Am I not right?

'Yes and no,' I whispered.

'And I'll tell you, dear Mrs Hudson, I don't indulge in magic. How did I know that you only recently came from America? Elementary, dear lady. The fur collar on your

coat is of the pine squirrel - and I happen to have written a monograph on furs of different types of American squirrels ... The pine squirrel, though widespread in America, has not yet crossed over to our shores.'

'But-' Mr Holmes raised a finger ordering silence once more. I made up my mind to just listen and enjoy the moment.

'Your recent widowhood is writ large in the contrast between your expensive coat and your very modest shoes. Only a well-to-do husband could afford to buy his wife an expensive coat like yours, but when I notice your footwear, it must be apparent even to a nincompoop,' (*which he obviously was not, he didn't need to say*) 'that the well-to-do husband is no longer able to provide. So you must be a widow.' *The husband could have gone bankrupt, or run away with another woman.*

'How do I know that you have had a loss of appetite? I'll tell you forthwith. To an observant eye,' (*and none are more so than mine*), 'the very handsome dress you are wearing, is ... if you pardon my lack of gallantry ... floating around your frame in a manner suggesting that it is at least one size, possibly two, too large ... which I hasten to add, does not detract in the least from your elegance. Your loss of weight is a clear indication of stress brought about by lack of appetite and sleeplessness, which condition, I might swiftly add, is confirmed by those rings under your eyes. Right?' I was glad he had not spotted my carbon markings. I thought I should have my say now, but before I was able to open my mouth, he had

again instructed me in no uncertain manner that he expected no answer from me, just acquiescence. So I ... eh ... acquiesced.

‘And now, I will reveal ...’ And I could literally hear the roll of drum. ‘How I discovered that you are the mother of a little boy.’

‘Ow?’ I managed to blurt out.

‘It has not escaped me that the right collar of your upper garment is ever so slightly crumpled, indicating a small child has been pulling at it.’

‘But Mr ‘Olmes, you must allow that girls also tug at their mother’s clothing.’

‘Indeed I do, Mrs Hudson, indeed I do, but boys always pull the right collar and girls the left.’ *Are you impressed, or are you impressed!*

‘Now, Mrs Hudson, I don’t want you to tell me that I am ninety percent right, or even ninety nine, but one hundred percent!’ I said nothing, in an attempt to find a tactful way of contradicting him.

‘No sir, you are not ninety percent right.’

‘Ha! As I knew.’ *Bye bye post.*

‘Mr ‘Olmes sir, you are one hundred percent ... wrong.’ On hearing this he fairly bobbed up like a Jack-in-the Box.

‘But that’s impossible, Mrs Hudson, it must indeed be as I told you.’ He had become as pale as a ghost, his eyes suddenly appeared sunken and cruel, and I noticed that he was shaking like a poplar.

'It is as you say, Mr 'Olmes,' I blurted out. *Had the horse already bolted?* He stared at me, frowning darkly, in all probability formulating a salvo at me for not making up my mind.

'It is?' He said, vindicated. Had I managed to square that circle?

'Everything you said is true, Mr 'Olmes, but true of my sister Catherine, whose dress I had to borrow. Teddy's mum. She only recently came back from California, as you rightly said, when her husband passed away.'

'And she is much stouter than you, Mrs Hudson, is that right?' His smile showed that he bore me no resentment. *Is my job saved though?*

'Yes, and I borrowed her clothes to come for the interview.' The look of anguish had completely disappeared by now, and his face was glowing like Rosé wine.

'And to what do I owe this unexpected pleasure of your visit? Did I hear you say the word interview. Am I to deduce that you have come applying for the position made vacant by Mrs Turner's completely unreasonable decision to move to the country? The good opinion people have of country air is much exaggerated, Mrs Hudson, take it from me.'

'One hundred percent right ... as usual,' I said, and he looked at me with gratitude and I discovered that he had no ear for irony.

Dr Watson chose that very moment to come in, and Holmes greeted him with great good humour and bonhomie.

'Mrs Hudson, do tell Dr Watson how the moment you walked in, I...'

not however let me, but himself went on with the account of how I had no sooner walked in that he told me the full history of my sister. Watson looked at him with what later thought of as his, *'what else does the world expect of the great Sherlock Holmes'* look.

About the Writer

San Cassimally comes from the island of Mauritius. He studied Maths at Manchester and Cambridge. He started writing at an early age for his local Scouts Magazine.

He won a Mobil Prize for his play *Acquisitive Case* which was put on at the Royal Court and the Southwark Playhouse in London. Other plays have been performed on BBC Radio. He has written eight novels, yet to be published, two of which are *“Magnetite”* an epic dealing with immigration, encompassing slavery, movement of indentured labourers from India, Poles and Italians after WW2, transportation and the Highland Clearance, and again *“Edinburgh Blues”*, the story of a failed actor living alone in Edinburgh who refuses to accept that he is a paedophile. There have been a number of short stories, including a collection, *The Case Book of Irene Adler*. He is married and lives in Edinburgh.

