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A Translation of One of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Most Popular Stories,

“A Scandal in Bohemia”

Introduction

The English writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) is of course best known for his stories about Sherlock Holmes, the famous detective based partly on Doyle's former teacher and friend at Edinburgh University, Joseph Bell, "a master at observation, logic, deduction and diagnosis" (Biography 2). In a rather rare interview filmed in 1930 Doyle explained, among other things, how he came to writing the Sherlock Holmes stories. He said: "It oft annoyed me how in the old-fashioned detective story the detective always seemed to get at his results either by some sort of lucky chance, or a fluke, or else it was quite unexplained how he got there" (Doyle). He proceeded to tell the interviewer about Bell, saying: "He would look at the patient. He would hardly allow the patient to open his mouth, but he would make his diagnosis of the disease, but also very often of the patient's nationality and occupation and other points, entirely by his power of observation" (Doyle). Anyone who has read a story about Sherlock Holmes, or has seen one of the many adaptations to film or TV series will immediately recognise the intriguing detective in this description. On the popularity of the detective, Doyle commented as follows: "I've written a good deal more about him than I ever intended to do, but my hand has been rather forced by trying friends who continually wanted to know more. And so it is that this monstrous growth has come out of what was really a comparatively small seed" (Doyle).

Monstrous growth is exactly what it has turned out to be and this was definitely not limited to Doyle's own lifetime, as on 1 January 2014 the long-awaited third season of BBC's *Sherlock* aired, breaking all viewing records with every new episode. This modern adaptation of Doyle's stories about the brilliant detective has been immensely popular worldwide and has caused a great increase in the public's returning interest in the original stories. People in English-speaking countries started digging up their old and dusty volumes and it is almost as if the world

is back in the nineteenth century, greedily devouring the many mysteries. In other countries, such as the Netherlands, where the TV series was also received with great enthusiasm, this need for the public to read the original stories can be more difficult to fulfil. Naturally, there are translated editions of the separate books as well as complete works versions. However, these translations are severely outdated. Whereas the archaic language only adds to the atmosphere in the original English versions and this poses no problems for the English-speaking audiences, readers from other countries will have to interpret the differences in culture as well as the time spanning more than a century in between, making a modern translation desirable.

This thesis offers a translation of one of Doyle's most famous and most popular stories, "A Scandal in Bohemia," the mock commission for which is that a Dutch literary publisher has decided to publish new Dutch versions of the Sherlock Holmes stories, finding that the current translations are in dire need of replacement. My brief is to translate the story in contemporary, impeccable Dutch, retaining the stylistic qualities of the original.

Relevant Aspects of Translation

Summary

"A Scandal in Bohemia"

Dr. Watson walks through Baker Street on his way home when he is reminded of the time he lived there and decides to see how his old friend, Sherlock Holmes, is doing. The two take a short time to get reacquainted after which Holmes presents Watson with a note he received earlier that day, concerning a client. As they analyse the note, the visitor announced in the note arrives at 221B Baker Street in disguise. Holmes talks to the visitor, asking him for the reasons of his visit and deducing that he is actually the King of Bohemia, assuring the man that his secret

is safe with Watson and himself. He decides to take on the case and asks Watson to help him. The first part of the story ends when Watson leaves the rooms with an appointment to see Holmes again the next day.

Genre and Perspective: Implications for the Translation

The detective genre is a relatively new concept theorists generally agree on to have originated in the nineteenth century. Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, and Dashiell Hammett are only a few of the best known names that have contributed to the canon. According to Peter Hühn, the genre “seems to be unique among narrative genres, in that it thematizes narrativity itself as a problem, a procedure, and an achievement” (Hühn). As he explains in his article “The Detective as Reader: Narrativity and Reading Concepts in Detective Fiction,” the detective narrative really consists of two stories; that of the crime and that of the investigation, and the two are connected. This does mean, however, that there is a difference in the narration of both stories that together make a detective narrative. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle demonstrates this by showing the detective story from a first person perspective, namely Watson. Technically, Watson is the ‘reader’ of a detective story himself as he does not witness the (possible) crime, nor does he solve it; he is a spectator. It is, however, him who writes it down for the public to read, which gives the genre an extra dimension that perhaps has added to its popularity. The genre and perspective in Doyle’s story are more or less linked together in this way. Even though Sherlock Holmes is technically the main character of these stories, he is only perceived through the eyes of Watson. The only thing that gives the reader any insight into Holmes himself is his speech, as quoted by Watson, and perhaps his actions as described by Watson, but the reader can never be completely certain that Watson is being absolutely objective.

The reader also does not understand what Holmes might be doing or why he does certain things; it keeps the reader close to Watson and therefore even more intrigued and astonished by Holmes abilities and solutions. This means there is always a chance of a certain ambiguity or uncertainty present throughout the story; there can always be doubt about Watson's perspective and this adds to the general mystery of the stories in itself. Does the reader really get to know everything that Watson sees? Is he telling the story chronologically without leaving anything out, or is he withholding as much from the reader as Holmes is withholding from him until the end of the story? Watson is, after all, a writer himself, writing a story within his story.

The perspective of the narrative does not only add to the genre of Doyle's story, it also greatly influences the style and register used throughout. This is largely because it is a first-person point of view, which means the narrative style is part of the character relating the story to the reader. In this case the narrator is Watson, a doctor with a military past, telling the public about his interactions with his friend, the detective Sherlock Holmes. He writes down the events in chronological order, but as mentioned before, the reader can never know for sure whether he is withholding anything. Watson never makes any statements about his thoughts or feelings, other than what he actually says in conversation to Holmes, which greatly reduces the insight to his mind, but does serve to make the narrative seem more objective. The fact that he is both a doctor and a military man is reflected in his writing style, as he obviously has a very structured mind and his writing is of a rather formal nature. This causes his writing to be very carefully organised, no details left out, although most details are rather superficial in nature. This can be seen in the sentence "[o]ne night – it was on the twentieth of March, 1888 – I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker Street." (Scandal 145) He is very deliberate and clear, it was not just one random night; it

was the twentieth of March, 1888. He explains exactly when something happened, what he was doing and thinking at that precise moment and in the sentences that follow he takes us through his thought process and the actions his thoughts caused him to undertake. His clarity, transparency, and eye for detail allow the translator to be equally clear and detailed, leaving little room for ambiguity and thus providing the reader with the same knowledge that the good doctor has at the particular time in the story he is narrating. Watson's profession also has influence on his choice of words; he is an educated and disciplined man and will not resort to foul language or contractions that are often seen in people of less education or those belonging to lower social classes. This is not actually present in this particular story; however in "The Sign of the Four" a Mrs Smith, speaks as follows: "Lor' bless you, sir, he is that, and forward. He gets a'most too much for me to manage, 'specially when my man is away days at a time." (Sign 108) It is clear from the punctuation that this woman speaks with an accent quite different from that of Watson and Holmes. Doyle is evidently aware of the differences and will demonstrate this awareness in his stories where necessary. Holmes is also a well-educated individual and it is thus logical that both men speak with a certain register. They choose their words carefully and sometimes use elaborate sentences, which will be further analysed under "Text-Specific Translating Problems," below.

Categories of Translating Problems

Pragmatic Problems

The story takes place in nineteenth-century London (1888, to be precise) and this may cause some issues with the translation for the modern Dutch audience. This is where Christiane Nord's four categories of translation problems come into play. These are described in her text

“Tekstanalyse en de moeilijkheidsgraad van een vertaling” (Nord 147). The first category consists of pragmatic problems, which are problems that arise from differences in communicative situations of the source text and target texts respectively. In this case that means the differences between the situation of the ST as it was published in the nineteenth century and the situation of the TT in the Netherlands of the 21st century. In the translation process the translator needs to decide what aspects of the source text will be transferred into the target text and which should not be. A reason not to translate certain aspects from the source text could be that the phenomenon or item described is severely outdated and no longer in use, which means a modern audience would not understand it or its significance. This is possibly the most common reason. A prominent feature of this particular story is the use of horses and carriages as the main form of transport throughout the city, rather than the 21st century cars that the modern audience will be acquainted with. This also goes for aspects such as the telephone and Holmes saying he will ‘drop a line’ to inform the king of their progress, which means he will inform him by means of a telegram. Since the current translation is not a modern rewriting of the story such as the Sherlock TV series adaptations, pragmatic elements such as these will remain intact. They are treated as Culture-Specific Elements (CSEs), which will be discussed below.

Culture-Specific Translating Problems

The second category that Nord describes contains the problems that arise when translating between two specific cultures, in this case the English (or British) and Dutch cultures. This is evident, for instance, in the means of addressing people, measuring units (feet vs. cm), etc. In English there is no difference between the ‘you’ used for formal ways of addressing people and the informal ‘you’, which is something that exists in Dutch. The difference can be found in the

context, through awareness of social conventions, or through more formal grammatical constructions. When translating from English to Dutch it is therefore important to realise how the characters relate to one another in order to choose the right pronoun. In this story there is also the issue of the time it is set in: during the nineteenth century people seemed to be a lot more formal and the use of last names to address each other, rather than using their given, or Christian names, adds to the formal feeling of the text. As such, in “A Scandal in Bohemia” the translator has to deal with two main instances of characters addressing each other. The first is the interaction between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. They are accustomed to using each other’s family names to refer to one another, which gives the text a rather formal feel; however they are fairly good friends, despite the fact that they have not seen each other for a while. With their relationship in mind and the fact that the target text targets a modern audience, it is a logical step to use the Dutch informal version of ‘you’, being either of the pronouns ‘je’ or ‘jij,’ and the corresponding possessive forms where required when these two speak to each other. The second instance is the interaction between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson on one end and the king of Bohemia on the other. As conventions dictate, a king should always be addressed in a formal manner and it is therefore not difficult to deduce that the most logical solution is to use the Dutch ‘u’ and its corresponding forms in the target text, whenever the king is addressed.

When it comes to measuring units, in the source text a large man is introduced, described as gigantic and no less than six feet six inches tall. Considering people in the nineteenth century were shorter than they are in the 21st century, this man must have certainly come across as a giant. Even in today’s society the mentioned height is a sight to behold, which means that it does not require any exaggeration to conform to different standards and it is therefore not very difficult to transfer this passage into the target language. The only aspect that needs to be

addressed in this situation is the use of Imperial measurements that are not used in the target language. Which means a conversion is in order. Fortunately this is very easy, as six feet and six inches is very close to two metres and this is considered rather tall in both cultures. There is no need to convert exact numbers, because it is not important whether the man is 198.1cm or a full 2m tall, it is the impression that he makes that is of importance. And the impression is that he is a huge man, tall and broad-shouldered, one or two inches more or less added to his height will certainly not make a difference.

Language-Specific Translating Problems

The third category Nord describes is for the problems that arise when translating between two specific languages, in this case English and Dutch. The difference in sentence constructions is a rather important one here, since Doyle is not averse to using long sentences with many clauses, divided by the use of commas and semicolons. A solution to this problem may be cutting up long sentences into shorter ones in the target language; although this could influence the rather typical writing style of the good doctor as well as affect the pacing of the readers. These sentences, however, do cause quite the difficulty when translating them into a language that uses a completely different syntax. For instance:

My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention; while Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from

week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature. (Scandal 145)

This is a very long sentence, with many sub-clauses, divided by one semicolon and multiple commas that would cause even native speakers of English to double back at least once for full comprehension, but as this does give an excellent indication of how Doyle's and thus Watson's writing style is effected, a decent proposal for a translation is the following:

Mijn eigen volmaakte geluk, en alle zaken die komen kijken bij het beginnen van een eigen praktijk, eisten mijn volledige aandacht op; terwijl Holmes, die met zijn gehele onconventionele wezen een hekel had aan alle vormen van gezelschap, in Baker Street achterbleef, begraven tusen zijn oude boeken, en wekelijks wisselde tussen cocaïne en ambitie, tussen de roes van de drugs en de vurige energie van zijn eigen intense aard.

In Dutch this sentence is still very elaborate, but with slight changes in order not to affect the overall writing style too much. For instance, the constituent of “the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment” is given a different structure, the phrase “the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment” as the object in this sentence is removed as the target phrase is made active rather than passive. The Dutch focuses on the action that is being described rather than the person, while it conveys the same message. This translation has used a number of techniques that Chesterman describes, such as transposition, whereby the type of word is changed (object/subject, etc.) in combination with structural changes in constituent and clause. At the same time this can also be seen as one of

the semantic changes Chesterman describes, namely ‘indikking’ or condensing, using fewer lexical unities in the translation.

Text-Specific Translating Problems

The fourth and last category describes problems that are specific for the text at hand. Nord uses puns and play on words as examples. Idiomatic expressions can sometimes also be placed in this category. Doyle demonstrates, through Watson, a large vocabulary, in the sense that he uses a large amount of adjectives and adverbs to describe things and people as well as set the atmosphere. This is very typical for his style throughout all the stories as he rarely uses a single adjective or adverb for his descriptions, which the following examples will demonstrate: “his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind,”(Scandal 145) has three adjectives and an adverb, describing one noun. As Irene Adler is described, “of dubious and questionable memory,” two adjectives are used, raising also the issue of Doyle’s tendency to use many synonyms. These examples are both found in the first paragraph of the text, foreshadowing the continued use of this stylistic approach. The translator should avoid repeated use of words and employ a large vocabulary of the TL, using many adjectives and adverbs as well. Finding sufficient synonyms may prove difficult in translating as many of the synonyms Doyle exploits may be translated by the same word in the TL. The translator will therefore have to decide upon the importance of stylistic details versus excessive word count, which is already a risk when translating and only increased by the use of many synonyms.

Some authors like to construct new words themselves and Doyle is one of them. When Holmes is talking about the note that is written by a German he uses the word ‘uncourteous’, which cannot be found in the dictionary, but a simple deconstruction using the meaning of

‘courteous’ combined with the negating prefix ‘un’ allows the reader to easily deduce the proper meaning. Lastly, sometimes characters use very iconic expressions. These may be words or phrases that the specific character uses very frequently. Rather than the words “elementary, my dear Watson,” which are never actually uttered in any of the stories, yet always manage to surface in a discussion about Doyle or Sherlock Holmes, this story shows a very frequent use of the phrase ‘Quite so,’ by Holmes. It is difficult to find a decent translation for this expression. It could mean something in the sense of ‘exactly like that’, or ‘precisely so’ which would be easier to translate, but the word ‘quite’ gives it a different dimension that is hard to put a finger on, while there is no specific Dutch word that can invariably be used to translate ‘quite’. On top of that, it is an expression that Holmes uses rather frequently, so it really is an iconic phrase belonging to the character. This creates the importance for the translator to find a proper phrase in the target language that is not only a correct translation, but that also corresponds with the context on every occasion in the text.

In his article “Vertaalstrategieën: Een classificatie” mentioned earlier, Andrew Chesterman classifies a number of strategies for translating certain problems and aspects of a text. Among these are ‘leenvertalingen’ or loan translations. These can be described as phrases or words from one language used by another language as a conventional term. Doyle also makes use of loan translations in his story; however, he uses a few which may directly be used in the Dutch language without finding a different translation for it, because they exist in both languages. This makes it easier on the translator, because he/she will not have to find a similar loan translation or term to fit in the target text. One example is, for instance, when the strange visitor is revealed to be the king of Bohemia and he says “I have come *incognito* from Prague...” (Scandal, 149) The word ‘incognito’ is a word that is used as a loan translation in both English

and Dutch languages, therefore it does not require a translation and can easily be adopted into the new translation without any semantic problems arising in this case. Another example is when Sherlock Holmes brings up the topic of payment and the king tells him that he has ‘carte blanche’. (Scandal, 150) This expression is also a loan translation found in both languages and can therefore also be adopted without a problem.

Doyle does not use many typical idiomatic expressions that cause any difficulty when translating them, although a few can be found. The way a translator deals with these usually depends on the individual expressions and the context, for which another of Chesterman’s strategies can be very helpful. When encountering a figure of speech, the change of tropes, such as metaphors, can be done in four different ways. In the case of the idiomatic expression “was hot upon the scent of some new problem” (Scandal 145) the metaphor can be easily retained by using the Dutch equivalent “zat op een vers spoor van een of ander nieuw probleem.” Another idiomatic expression used by Doyle, which is not so easily transferred, is the phrase “to go into harness” (Scandal 146). This is a phrase that does not have a direct equivalent in the target language and therefore the translation requires a different strategy. A possible solution is to find a different metaphor with a similar meaning, however, it is easier to utilise the possibility of leaving the metaphor out in the target language, which would result in a translation like “om aan het werk te gaan.” This captures the meaning of the idiomatic phrase, yet loses the figure of speech. This is also the strategy best used for the phrase “drop you a line,” later on in the story, which is translated by “u een bericht sturen.” A last strategy also employed is the opposite of the last one, namely inserting a stylistic figure in the target text where there is not one in the source text. The sentence “save with a gibe and a sneer,” (Scandal 145) is not really a stylistic figure in itself, but in the Dutch translation the idiomatic expression “behalve wanneer hij er de spot mee

dreef,” serves the purpose rather well, without damaging the writing style or general tone of the text.

Conclusion

In her article, Nord mentions that pragmatic-functional models for text analysis preferably employ a top-down method over a bottom-up method and she then refers to Mary Snell-Hornby's *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*. Snell-Hornby states that “there has been an increasing awareness of the text [...] as a complex, multi-dimensional structure consisting of more than the mere sum of its parts.” (Snell-Hornby 69) She also says that “an analysis of its parts cannot provide an understanding of the whole,” which leads her to conclude that a top-down method should be utilised. Nord says that certain problems found further down are not relevant when circumstances or conventions demand or exclude particular formulations on a higher level. This is also true for this particular text. Certain elements that might be placed under text-specific translating problems if using a bottom up analysis can pose a problem in the overall understanding of the text. Sherlock Holmes spirit case and gasogene being a good example of that. The translator could find a perfectly suitable translation for these things, yet in the whole of the text that translation would be rendered worthless, considering the 21st century audience of the TT would still be clueless to its meaning. By acknowledging the differences in time as a pragmatic aspect in the beginning of the analysis using a top-down method, the translator avoids having to go through the trouble of finding a perfect translation for that particular constituent and instead uses a more general option that will be understood by the target audience. This technique can be used for many more aspects and is certainly not limited to text-specific versus pragmatic

translation problems, but occurs on all levels. Where certain aspects or decisions made on higher (macro) levels others are avoided or rendered unnecessary on the lower (micro) levels.

Arthur Conan Doyle is, and has been for a long time, one of the most popular writers of detective fiction, and rightly so. His unique writing style has enchanted many a reader in such a way that even he himself could not believe the extent of its popularity. When he decided to kill off Sherlock Holmes in 1893 he did not realise yet that the hero he had created had already become immortal in the public's eyes. He was pressured into resurrecting the enigmatic detective and the world welcomed him back as if he had only gone away on holiday, rather than falling to his death off the Reichenbach Falls. The poise and brilliance of Sherlock Holmes aptly described in this story, especially in his dealings with the respectable king of Bohemia, makes it abundantly clear why the detective is such a valued and renowned character in the world of fiction and it is not difficult to see why this story is not only one of the public's favourites, but also one of Doyle's himself. There is no doubt about the fact that the world's most famous, and completely unique, consulting detective will be a source of entertainment for many more generations to come, whether it be in the original stories, modern film or TV adaptations or video games, meaning that there will always be a demand for new translations to be made.

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Vertaald door: Elly de Groot

Een schandaal in Bohemen¹

Voor Sherlock Holmes is ze altijd *de* vrouw. Ik heb hem haar zelden bij een andere naam horen noemen. In zijn ogen overschaduwde en overheerste ze haar gehele geslacht. Het was niet alsof hij iets als liefde voelde voor Irene Adler. Alle gevoelens, en zeker dat ene, waren weerzinwekkend voor zijn koude, precieze, maar bewonderenswaardig evenwichtige geest. Hij was, zoals ik het zie, de meest perfect redenerende en observerende machine die de wereld ooit heeft voortgebracht; maar, als minnaar, zou hij zichzelf slecht vertegenwoordigen. Hij sprak nooit over gevoelens, behalve wanneer hij er de spot mee dreef.² Het waren bewonderenswaardige dingen voor de waarnemer – uitermate geschikt om beweegredenen en handelingen van mensen te ontsluiten. Maar voor iemand die zo geoefend redeneert³ om zulke afleidingen toe te laten in zijn verfijnde en voortreffelijk aangepaste aard was hetzelfde als een verwarrend element toevoegen waardoor al zijn geestelijke verdiensten in twijfel getrokken zouden kunnen worden. Zand in een gevoelig instrument, of een barst in een van zijn vergrootglazen zouden net zo

¹ In modern Europe there is not actually such a thing as Bohemia anymore, but ‘Bohemen’ is the Dutch name for the area that is now known as the Czech Republic and part of its neighbouring countries.

² The source text uses two adjectives, ‘gibe’ and ‘sneer’, and if the sentence were translated more literally it would be perfectly understandable. However, in Dutch there is the perfectly acceptable figure of speech ‘ergens de spot mee drijven,’ which basically covers the entire meaning. It is not necessarily hostile, but a rather sarcastic and demeaning way of speaking about something, which is exactly how Sherlock Holmes feels about emotions and feelings.

³ The source text uses the word ‘reasoner’, which is not a very common word, that nonetheless makes perfect sense in the SL. A literal translation in the form of ‘redeneerder’, however, does not do it justice, nor is it an aesthetically pleasing option in the TL, inviting the translator to avoid the word itself by adding a description rather than a literal translation.

storend zijn als een sterke emotie in een aard als de zijne. En toch was er maar één vrouw voor hem, en die vrouw was de wijlen Irene Adler, in merkwaardiger en twijfelachtiger nagedachte.

Ik had weinig van Holmes gezien sinds de unieke reeks gebeurtenissen die ik reeds⁴ uitvoerig heb beschreven onder de titel ‘Het teken van de vier.’ Mijn huwelijk had ons, zoals hij had voorspeld, uit elkaar gedreven. Mijn eigen volmaakte geluk, en alle zaken die komen kijken bij het beginnen van een eigen praktijk⁵, eisten mijn volledige aandacht op; terwijl Holmes, die met zijn gehele onconventionele⁶ wezen een hekel had aan alle vormen van gezelschap, in Baker Street achterbleef, begraven tussen zijn oude boeken, en wekelijks wisselde tussen cocaïne en ambitie, tussen de roes van de drugs en de vurige energie van zijn eigen intense aard. Hij was nog altijd zeer aangetrokken tot het bestuderen van misdaad en hield zijn immense verstand en uitzonderlijke observatievermogen bezig door die aanwijzingen op te volgen en die mysteries op te lossen, die de politie als hopeloos had opgegeven. Van tijd tot tijd hoorde ik een vaag verslag

⁴ The source text uses the word ‘already’ which could be translated to the Dutch word ‘al’. The fact that Watson is a highly educated and structural man, however, makes it much more logical to use the rather more archaic form ‘reeds’. This also fits within the timeframe of the story taking place in the nineteenth century, whereas ‘al’ would have been too modern.

⁵ The source text uses the phrase “the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment.” This is an extremely elaborate phrase to use as subject in a sentence, and it causes some difficulty in translating more literally. The point is however, that Watson is very busy with starting up his own practice, which causes him to have worries and issues to take care of. To put all this into an equally elaborate Dutch clause would only make the main clause of that sentence even more difficult to understand, so the choice was made to simplify that part of the subject to ‘het beginnen van een eigen praktijk,’ which indirectly covers all the ‘interests’ that Watson mentions, maintaining the elaborate style of the entire sentence without overcomplicating it.

⁶ The source text uses the word ‘Bohemian,’ which is a word that fits in perfectly with this story, because it creates a link with the title and content of the story in a way that is rather difficult to achieve in the target language. In Dutch it is possible to use the word ‘Boheemse,’ however this only captures the link between the title and the content, yet completely misses the underlying meaning that is perhaps even more important to the story, because it describes a part of Holmes’s personality. This is why the translation ‘onconventionele’ was chosen to focus on the character on Holmes, rather than the stylistic value of the source text.

over zijn bezigheden: over hoe hij werd ontboden naar Odessa in de Trepoff moordzaak, hoe hij de bijzondere tragedie van de gebroeders Atkinson in Trincomalee ophelderde, en uiteindelijk over de missie voor de regerende familie van Holland die hij zo tactvol en succesvol volbracht had.⁷ Afgezien van deze tekens van leven, die ik slechts deelde met de lezers van het dagelijks nieuws, wist ik echter vrij weinig van mijn voormalige vriend en metgezel.

Op een avond – het was twintig maart, 1888 – kwam ik terug van een patiënt (want ik had nu weer een eigen praktijk), toen mijn route me door Baker Street leidde. Toen ik langs de mij welbekende deur liep, die ik in gedachten altijd associeerde met mijn hofmakerij, en met de duistere incidenten van de ‘Studie in rood,’⁸ werd ik gegrepen door een sterk verlangen om Holmes weer eens te zien, en om er achter te komen wat hij met zijn uitzonderlijke gaven aan het doen was. Zijn kamers waren fel verlicht en precies op het moment dat ik naar boven keek zag ik zijn lange, magere figuur twee keer langskomen in een donker silhouet achter de jaloezie. Hij ijsbeerde door de kamer, snel en gretig, met zijn hoofd voorover gebogen en zijn handen achter zijn rug gevouwen. Aangezien ik elke gemoedstoestand en gewoonte van hem kende, vertelden zijn houding en gedrag mij hun eigen verhaal. Hij was weer aan het werk. Hij was herrezen uit zijn drugsroes en zat op een vers spoor van een of ander nieuw probleem. Ik belde aan en werd naar de kamers die voorheen deels de mijne waren geleid.

⁷ This summary of accounts that Watson hears about his friend is rather extensive and the source text cleverly uses the verbs available in the English language, which is more difficult in the target language as Dutch rarely uses continuous forms. This complicated the translation slightly, because the right verbs had to be chosen in the correct tense, while allowing the whole ordeal to remain a summary. The sentence structures were slightly altered to conform to Dutch grammar as well.

⁸ Watson refers back to one of the other stories he wrote concerning Sherlock Holmes. The title used is the title that has previously been used for existing translations of that particular novel.

Zijn manier van doen was niet uitbundig. Dat was het zelden; maar ik denk dat hij toch blij was om me te zien. Vrijwel zonder woorden, maar met een vriendelijke blik, wuifde hij me naar een leunstoel, wierp me zijn sigarenkistje toe en wees me op de drankenkast in de hoek. Vervolgens ging hij bij het haardvuur staan en bekeek me op zijn unieke zelfbeschouwende wijze.

“Het huwelijk doet je⁹ goed,” merkte hij op. “Ik geloof, Watson, dat je zeveneneenhalve pond aangekomen bent sinds ik je voor het laatst zag.”

“Zeven,” antwoordde ik.

“Wat heet, ik denk zelfs iets meer. Een klein tikje meer, geloof ik, Watson. En weer aan het werk, zie ik. Je hebt me niet verteld dat je van plan was om aan het werk te gaan.”

“Hoe weet je het dan?”

“Ik zie het, ik leid het af. Hoe weet ik dat je pas geleden heel nat bent geworden en dat je een zeer onhandig en onvoorzichtig dienstmeisje hebt?”

“Mijn beste Holmes,” zei ik, “dit is te erg. Je zou zeker zijn verbrand als je een paar eeuwen terug had geleefd. Het is waar dat ik donderdag een wandeling op het platteland heb gemaakt en in een vreselijke staat thuiskwam; maar aangezien ik me omgekleed heb, kan ik me niet voorstellen hoe je dat afleidt. Wat Mary Jane betreft, ze is onverbeterlijk en mijn vrouw heeft haar ontslagen; maar weer begrijp ik niet hoe je er bij komt.

Hij grinnikte bij zichzelf en wreef zijn lange, nerveuze handen tegen elkaar.

⁹ English does not have the distinction between formal and informal uses of ‘you’ whereas Dutch language does. The polite form often implied through other techniques, such as the passive form. Even though it was customary in the nineteenth century to address each other by last names and most people would probably use the formal version, Watson and Holmes had been friends for quite some time when this story took place. It is therefore logical to assume that the two are at least moderately less formal towards each other. When they address the King of Bohemia later on in the story, however, the formal ‘u’ is used, because of social conventions concerned with addressing royalty.

“Het is de simpelheid zelve,” zei hij; “Mijn ogen vertellen mij dat aan de binnenkant van je linkerschoen, net waar het licht van de haard reikt, het leer beschadigd is door zes vrijwel evenwijdige krassen. Die zijn duidelijk veroorzaakt door iemand die zeer onvoorzichtig aangekoekte modder van de randen van de zool geschraapt heeft. Vandaar, zoals je ziet, mijn tweezijdige afleiding dat je in afschuwelijk weer buiten bent geweest, en dat je een uitzonderlijk kwaadaardig schoenvernielend exemplaar van een Londens dienstmeisje hebt. Wat betreft je werk, als een man mijn kamers binnenloopt, riekend naar jodoform, met een zwarte veeg van zilvernitraat op zijn rechter wijsvinger, en een bult aan de rechterkant van zijn hoed die laat zien waar hij zijn stethoscoop verstopt heeft, dan moet ik toch wel heel dom zijn als ik hem niet een actief lid van de medische professie verklaar.

Ik kon het niet helpen te lachen om het gemak waarmee hij zijn afleidingsproces uitlegde. “Als ik je je redenen hoor geven,” merkte ik op, “lijkt het altijd zo belachelijk simpel dat ik het gemakkelijk zelf zou kunnen doen, maar met elk nieuw voorbeeld van je redenering sta ik versteld tot je je proces uitlegt. En toch geloof ik dat mijn ogen net zo goed zijn als de jouwe.”

“Juist,” antwoordde hij, terwijl hij een sigaret opstak en zich in een leunstoel liet vallen. “Je ziet wel¹⁰, maar je neemt niet waar. Het verschil is duidelijk. Je hebt, bijvoorbeeld, regelmatig de trap¹¹ van de hal naar deze kamer gezien.”

“Regelmatig.”

¹⁰ The addition of the word ‘wel’ emphasizes the point that Holmes is trying to make. Watson sees, but he does not observe. In Dutch the words ‘zien’ and ‘waarnemen’ feel slightly less distinct, so the addition of ‘wel’ makes the distinction more clear.

¹¹ Literally translated steps would become ‘treden’ in the target text. However, when speaking about a set of steps leading up to a room on a different floor it is much easier to just use the word ‘trap,’ which is far more common in Dutch as the ‘treden’ are part of the stairs. This does require the addition of the word ‘treden’ when Holmes asks how many there are to clarify that he means the number of steps to reach the rooms.

“Hoe vaak?”

“Nou, een paar honderd keer.”

“Hoeveel treden zijn er dan?”

“Hoeveel? Dat weet ik niet.”

“Juist! Je hebt niet waargenomen. En toch heb je het gezien. Dat is precies mijn punt. Nu weet ik dat er zeventien treden zijn, want ik heb zowel gezien als waargenomen. Trouwens, aangezien je geïnteresseerd bent in deze raadseltjes, en aangezien je zo vriendelijk geweest bent om een of twee van mijn onbeduidende belevenissen op te schrijven, ben je wellicht hierin geïnteresseerd.” Hij gaf¹² me een vel dik, roze getint postpapier dat open op tafel had gelegen. “Dit kwam met de laatste post,” zei hij. “Lees het eens¹³ voor.”

Het briefje was ongedateerd, en zonder handtekening of adres.

“Er zal komen voor u vannacht, om kwart voor acht uur,” stond er, “een heer die wenst u te raadplegen over een zaak van het grootste belang. Uw recente diensten aan een van de Europese koningshuizen hebben laten zien dat u iemand bent die onbezorgd vertrouwd kunt worden met zaken waarvan het belang nauwelijks overdreven kan worden. Dit verslag over u hebben we uit alle windstreken ontvangen. Wees in uw kamer dan op dat uur, en vat het niet verkeerd op wanneer uw bezoeker een masker draagt.”

“Dat is inderdaad een mysterie,” merkte ik op. “Wat denk je dat het betekent?”

¹² The source text uses the word ‘threw’, which could be translated by the Dutch verb ‘gooien.’ It is, however, hard to imagine a piece of paper being thrown in the manner the Dutch verb seems to suggest, so the choice was made to use the verb ‘geven,’ which at least covers the fact that Watson is handed the piece of paper.

¹³ The addition of the word ‘eens’ slightly alters the tone of the sentence. In English the sentence ‘Read it aloud,’ is clearly a request, whereas the literal Dutch translation ‘Lees het voor,’ makes it sound more like a command. Because Watson and Holmes are quite friendly, it is safe to assume that Holmes would not use a commanding tone with Watson as such, so the word ‘eens’ is inserted to lighten the tone and make the Dutch sentence more natural.

“Ik heb nog geen data. Het is een ernstige fout om te gaan theoretiseren voordat men data heeft. Onbewust begint men feiten te verdraaien om bij de theorie te passen in plaats van andersom. Maar het briefje zelf. Wat leid jij er aan af?”

Ik onderzocht het schrift en het papier waarop het was geschreven zorgvuldig.

“De man die het schreef was waarschijnlijk welgesteld,” merkte ik op in een poging de processen van mijn kameraad te imiteren. “Zulk papier kan niet gekocht zijn onder een halve kroon per pak. Het is uitzonderlijk sterk en stijf.”

“Uitzonderlijk – dat is precies het woord,” zei Holmes. “Het is helemaal geen Engels papier. Hou het eens tegen het licht.”

Dit deed ik, en ik zag een grote “E” met een kleine “g,” een “P” en een grote “G” met een kleine “t” in de tekstuur van het papier.

“Wat denk je daar van?” vroeg Holmes.

“De naam van de maker, zonder twijfel; of eigenlijk, zijn monogram.”

“Helemaal niet. De ‘G’ met de kleine ‘t’ staat voor ‘Gesellschaft’, wat Duits voor ‘bedrijf’ is. Het is een gebruikelijke afkorting zoals onze ‘bv’. ‘P’ staat natuurlijk voor ‘Papier.’ Nu de ‘Eg’. Laten we eens kijken naar ons continentale geografische woordenboek.” Hij pakte een zwaar bruin boek van zijn planken. “Eglow, Eglonitz – daar zijn we, Egria. Het is een Duits-sprekend land – in Bohemen, niet ver van Karlsbad. ‘Opmerkelijk vanwege de locatie van de dood van Wallenstein en de vele glasfabrieken en papiermolens.’ Ha, ha, mijn jongen, wat denk je daar van?” Zijn ogen fonkelden, en hij blies een grote blauwe triomfantelijke wolk van zijn sigaret.

“Het papier is gemaakt in Bohemen,” zei ik.

“Precies. En de man die het schreef is een Duitser. Zie je de opmerkelijke constructie van de zin – ‘Dit verslag over u hebben we uit alle windstreken ontvangen.’ Een Fransman of Rus kan dat niet geschreven hebben. Het is de Duitser die zo on hoffelijk met zijn werkwoorden omgaat. Daarom blijft er niets anders over, dan te ontdekken wat deze Duitser die op Boheems papier schrijft en liever een masker draagt dan zijn gezicht te laten zien wil. En hier komt hij aan, als ik het niet mis heb, om al onze twijfels weg te nemen.”

Terwijl hij sprak klonk het scherpe geluid van paardenhoeven en krassende wielen tegen de stoeprand, gevolgd door een plotse trek aan de bel. Holmes floot.

“Een tweespan, zo te horen,” zei hij. “Ja,” vervolgde hij, terwijl hij uit het raam keek. “Een mooie kleine coupé en een koppel prachtexemplaren. Honderdvijftig guinjes per stuk. Er zit geld in deze zaak, Watson, als er niets anders in zit.”

“Ik denk dat ik beter kan gaan, Holmes.”

“Helemaal niet, dokter. Blijf waar je bent. Ik ben verloren zonder mijn Boswell. En dit belooft interessant te worden. Het zou zonde zijn om het te missen.”

“Maar je client – “

“Maak je geen zorgen om hem. Ik heb je hulp misschien nodig, en hij wellicht ook. Hier komt hij. Ga in die stoel zitten, dokter, en let goed op”

Een langzame en zware pas, die op de trap en in de gang gehoord kon worden, pauzeerde net buiten de deur. Er klonk een luide en autoritaire klop.

“Kom binnen!” zei Holmes.

Een man die nauwelijks minder dan twee meter lang kon zijn, met de borstkas en ledematen van een Hercules kwam binnen. Zijn kleding was luxueus met een overvloed die in Engeland als slechte smaak zou worden beschouwd. Zware banden van astrakan liepen over de

mouwen en voorkant van zijn dubbelrijs jas, en de diepblauwe mantel die over zijn schouders gegooid was was gevoerd met vuurrood zijde en bij de hals vastgemaakt met een broche die bestond uit een rode edelsteen. Laarzen die tot halverwege de kuiten kwamen, en die waren afgewerkt met kostbaar bruin bont, maakten de impressie van barbaarse weelderigheid die zijn hele verschijning opwekte af. Hij droeg een hoed met brede rand in zijn hand, terwijl hij over het bovenste gedeelte van zijn gezicht, tot beneden de jukbeenderen, een zwart masker droeg, die hij klaarblijkelijk net dat moment had verschoven, aangezien zijn hand nog steeds geheven was toen hij binnenkwam. Van het onderste gedeelte van zijn gezicht leek het een man te zijn van sterk karakter, met een dikke hangende lip, en een lange rechte kin die vastberadenheid tot het punt van koppigheid suggereerde.

“U heeft mijn brief gehad?” vroeg hij met een diepe norse stem en een zwaar Duits accent. “Ik heb u verteld dat ik zou komen.” Hij keek van de een naar de ander van ons, alsof hij niet goed wist wie hij moest aanspreken.

“Neemt u alstublieft plaats,” zei Holmes. “Dit is mijn vriend en collega, dr. Watson, die zo nu en dan vriendelijk genoeg is om mij te helpen met mijn zaken. Wie heb ik het genoeg aan te spreken?”

“U mag me aanspreken als graaf Von Kramm, een Boheemse edelman. Ik begrijp dat deze heer, uw vriend, een man van eer en discretie is, die ik kan vertrouwen met een zaak van het grootste belang. Zo niet, dan zou ik liever met u alleen communiceren.”

Ik stond op om te gaan, maar Holmes pakte me bij mijn pols en duwde me terug in mijn stoel. “Het is beide, of geen van twee,” zei hij. “U mag tegen hem alles zeggen wat u tegen mij kunt zeggen.”

De graaf haalde zijn brede schouders op. “Dan moet ik beginnen,” zei hij, “door jullie beiden tot absolute geheimhouding voor twee jaar te binden, daarna heeft de zaak geen belang meer. Op dit moment is het niet teveel gezegd dat het zo belangrijk is dat het invloed zou kunnen hebben op de Europese geschiedenis.”

“Ik beloof het,” zei Holmes.

“Ik ook.”

“Excuseert u het masker,” ging onze vreemde bezoeker verder. “Verheven als mijn werkgever is wenst hij dat zijn agent u niet bekend is, en ik kan u meteen bekennen dat de titel die ik zojuist heb gegeven niet exact mijn eigen is.”

“Daar was ik me bewust van,” zei Holmes, droogjes.

“De omstandigheden zijn zeer gevoelig en elke maatregel moet genomen worden om in de kop te drukken wat zou kunnen uitgroeien tot een groots schandaal en wat een van de regerende families van Europa serieus in gevaar zou kunnen brengen. Om het duidelijk te maken, de zaak heeft te maken met het grootse Huis van Ormstein, erfelijke koningen van Bohemen.

“Daar was ik me ook bewust van,” mompelde Holmes, terwijl hij in zijn stoel neerstreek en zijn ogen sloot.

Onze gast keek met enige verbazing naar het lusteloze, hangende figuur van de man die zonder twijfel aan hem beschreven werd als de meest scherpzinnig redenerende en meest energieke zaakwaarnemer in Europa. Holmes opende langzaam zijn ogen weer en keek ongeduldig naar zijn gigantische client.

“Als Uwe Majesteit zo vriendelijk wil zijn om uw zaak te vertellen,” merkte hij op, “dan zou ik u beter kunnen adviseren.”

De man sprong op uit zijn stoel en ijsbeerde door de kamer in onbeheerste ergernis. Toen trok hij, met een wanhopige beweging, het masker van zijn gezicht en gooide het op de grond.

“U hebt gelijk,” riep hij uit. “Ik ben de koning. Waarom zou ik proberen het te verbergen?”

“Waarom, inderdaad?” mompelde Holmes. “Uwe Majesteit had nog niet gesproken voordat ik me bewust was dat ik het tegen Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismund von Ormstein, Groothertog van Kassel-Felstein en erfelijke Koning van Bohemen had.”

“Maar u kunt begrijpen,” zei onze vreemde gast, terwijl hij weer ging zitten en zijn hand over zijn hoge witte voorhoofd haalde. “u kunt begrijpen dat ik het niet gewend ben om zulke zaken zelf te doen. De zaak was echter zo gevoelig dat ik het niet aan iemand kon toevertrouwen zonder die persoon een bepaalde macht te geven. Ik ben hier incognito uit Praag gekomen om u te raadplegen.

“Doet u dat dan, alstublieft,” zei Holmes, terwijl hij zijn ogen nogmaals sloot.

“De feiten zijn kortgezegd als volgt: Ongeveer vijf jaar geleden, tijdens een lang bezoek aan Warschau, leerde ik de bekende avonturierster, Irene Adler, kennen. De naam komt u ongetwijfeld bekend voor.”

“Wees zo vriendelijk om haar op te zoeken in mijn index, dokter,” mompelde Holmes zonder zijn ogen te openen. Jaren geleden had hij een systeem aangenomen om alle paragrafen over mens en ding te bewaren, zodat het moeilijk was om een onderwerp of persoon te noemen waar hij niet onmiddellijk informatie over tevoorschijn kon halen. In dit geval vond ik haar biografie tussen dat van een Hebreeuwse rabbijn en die van een opperbevelhebber die een monografie geschreven had over vissen in de diepzee.

“Laat eens zien!” zei Holmes. “Hum. Geboren in New Jersey in het jaar 1858. Contralto – hum! La Scala, hum! Prima donna Koninklijke Opera van Warschau – ja! Gestopt met opera –

ha! Woont in Londen – Juist ja! Uwe Majesteit, als ik het goed begrijp, kwam in aanraking met deze jongedame, schreef haar een aantal compromitterende brieven, en zou die nu graag terughebben.”

“Precies ja. Maar hoe-“

“Was er een geheim huwelijk?”

“Geen.”

“Geen officiële papieren of certificaten?”

“Geen.”

“Dan volg ik uwe Majesteit niet. Als deze jonge persoon haar brieven tevoorschijn haalt voor afpersing of andere doeleinden, hoe kan zij hun authenticiteit bewijzen?”

“Het handschrift.”

“Poeh, poeh! Vervalsing.”

“Mijn privé briefpapier.”

“Gestolen.”

“Mijn eigen zegel.”

“Nagemaakt.”

“Mijn foto.”

“Gekocht.”

“We staan beiden op de foto.”

“Goeie genade! Dat is zeer verkeerd. Uwe Majesteit heeft inderdaad een fout gemaakt.”

“Ik was dwaas – krankzinnig.”

“U heeft uzelf serieus in de problemen gebracht.”

“Ik was toen nog maar kroonprins. Ik was jong. Ik ben nu pas dertig.”

“Hij moet teruggehaald worden.”

“We hebben het geprobeerd en gefaald.”

“Uwe Majesteit moet betalen. Hij moet gekocht worden.”

“Ze wil niet verkopen.”

“Gestolen, dan.”

“Vijf pogingen zijn gedaan. Twee keer hebben inbrekers haar huis overhoop gehaald. Een keer hebben we haar baggage omgeleid toen ze reisde. Twee keer is ze belaagd. Er is geen resultaat.”

“Geen teken ervan?”

“Absoluut geen.”

Holmes lachte. “Het is een aardig probleempje,” zei hij.

“Maar een zeer serieuze voor mij,” antwoordde de Koning verwijtend.

“Zeer, inderdaad. En wat is ze van plan om met de foto te doen?”

“Mij kapot maken.”

“Maar hoe?”

“Ik sta op het punt te gaan trouwen.”

“Daar heb ik over gehoord.”

“Met Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, tweede dochter van de Koning van Scandinavië. U kent misschien de sterke principes van haar familie. Ze is de delicaatheid zelve. De kleinste twijfel over mijn gedrag zou de hele zaak teniet doen.”

“En Irene Adler?”

“Dreigt om ze de foto te sturen. En dat zal ze ook doen. Ik weet dat ze het zal doen. U kent haar niet, maar ze heeft een stalen ziel. Ze heeft het gezicht van de mooiste vrouw, en de

geest van de meest resolute man. Om te voorkomen dat ik met een andere vrouw trouw, is er niets wat ze niet zou doen – niets.”

“U weet zeker dat ze hem nog niet gestuurd heeft?”

“Ik weet het zeker.”

“En waarom?”

“Omdat ze gezegd heeft dat ze het zou sturen op de dag dat de verloving publiekelijk werd aangekondigd. Dat is komende maandag.”

“Oh, maar dan hebben we nog drie dagen,” zei Holmes gapend. “Dat is zeer gunstig, aangezien ik nog een of twee belangrijke dingen te doen heb op het moment. Uwe Majesteit blijft voorlopig, natuurlijk, in Londen?”

“Zeker. U kunt me bij het Langham vinden onder de naam Graaf Von Kramm.”

“Dan zal ik u een bericht sturen om u onze voortgang te laten weten.”

“Alstublieft. Ik wacht in spanning.”

“Dan, wat geld betreft?”

“U heeft *carte blanche*.”

“Absoluut?”

“Ik zeg u dat ik een van de provincies van mijn koninkrijk zou geven om die foto terug te krijgen.”

“En voor huidige kosten?”

De koning pakte een zware zeemleren zak van onder zijn mantel en plaatste deze op de tafel.

“Hier is driehonderd pond in goud en zeven honderd in briefjes,” zei hij.

Holmes krabbelde een ontvangstbewijs op een vel van zijn notitieblok en gaf het aan hem.

“En Mademoiselle’s adres?” vroeg hij.

“Is Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue. St. John’s Wood.”

Holmes noteerde het. “Nog een vraag,” zei hij. “Was de foto kabinetformaat?”

“Dat was het.”

“Dan, goedenacht, uwe Majesteit, en ik vertrouw erop dat we binnenkort goed nieuws voor u hebben. En goedenacht, Watson,” voegde hij toe, terwijl de wielen van de koninklijke coupé de straat uit rolden. “Als je zo vriendelijk wilt zijn om morgenmiddag om drie uur te komen zou ik deze kwestie graag met je willen bespreken.”

Source Text

A Scandal in Bohemia

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen; but, as a lover, he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer – excellent for drawing the veil from men’s motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.

I had seen little of Holmes since the singular chain of events which I have already narrated in a bold fashion under the heading *The Sign of the Four*. My marriage had, as he foretold, drifted us away from each other. My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention; while Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books,

and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature. He was still, as ever, deeply attracted by the study of crime, and occupied his immense faculties and extraordinary powers of observation in following out those clues, and clearing up those mysteries which had been abandoned as hopeless by the official police. From time to time I heard some vague account of his doings: of his summons to Odessa in the case of the Trepoff murder, of his clearing up of the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers at Trincomalee, and finally of the mission which he had accomplished so delicately and successfully for the reigning family of Holland. Beyond these signs of his activity, however, which I merely shared with all the readers of the daily press, I knew little of my former friend and companion.

One night – it was on the twentieth of March, 1888 – I was returning from a journey to a patient (for I had now returned to civil practice), when my way led me through Baker Street. As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers. His rooms were brilliantly lit, and, even as I looked up, I saw his tall, spare figure pass twice in a dark silhouette against the blind. He was pacing the room swiftly, eagerly, with his head sunk upon his chest and his hands clasped behind him. To me, who knew his every mood and habit, his attitude and manner told their own story. He was at work again. He had risen out of his drug-created dreams and was hot upon the scent of some new problem. I rang the bell and was shown up to the chamber which had formerly been in part my own.

His manner was not effusive. It seldom was; but he was glad, I think, to see me. With hardly a word spoken, but with a kindly eye, he waved me to an armchair, threw across his case

of cigars, and indicated a spirit case and a gasogene in the corner. Then he stood before the fire and looked me over in his singular introspective fashion.

“Wedlock suits you,” he remarked. “I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I last saw you.”

“Seven,” I answered.

“Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson. And in practice again, I observe. You did not tell me that you intended to go into harness.”

“Then, how do you know?”

“I see it, I deduce it. How do I know that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?”

“My dear Holmes,” said I, “this is too much. You would certainly have been burned had you lived a few centuries ago. It is true that I had a country walk on Thursday and came home in a dreadful mess; but as I have changed my clothes I can’t imagine how you deduce it. As to Mary Jane, she is incorrigible, and my wife has given her notice; but there, again, I fail to see how you work it out.”

He chuckled to himself and rubbed his long, nervous hands together.

“It is simplicity itself,” said he; “my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the firelight strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right fore-finger, and a bulge on the right side of his top-hat to show

where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull indeed if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession.”

I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. “When I hear you give your reasons,” I remarked, “the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled, until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours.”

“Quite so,” he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. “You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room.”

“Frequently.”

“How often?”

“Well, some hundreds of times.”

“Then how many are there?”

“How many? I don’t know.”

“Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed. By the way, since you are interested in these little problems, and since you are good enough to chronicle one or two of my trifling experiences, you may be interested in this.” He threw over a sheet of thick, pink-tinted note-paper which had been lying open upon the table. “It came by the last post,” said he. “Read it aloud.”

The note was undated, and without either signature or address.

“There will call upon you to-night, at a quarter to eight o’clock,” it said, “a gentleman who desires to consult you upon a matter of the very deepest moment. Your recent services to one of the royal houses of Europe have shown that you are one who may safely be trusted with matters which are of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated. This account of you we have from all quarters received. Be in your chamber then at that hour, and do not take it amiss if your visitor wear a mask.”

“This is indeed a mystery,” I remarked. “What do you imagine that it means?”

“I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts. But the note itself. What do you deduce from it?”

I carefully examined the writing, and the paper upon which it was written.

“The man who wrote it was presumably well to do,” I remarked, endeavouring to imitate my companion’s processes. “Such paper could not be bought under half-a-crown a packet. It is peculiarly strong and stiff.”

“Peculiar – that’s the very word,” said Holmes. “It is not an English paper at all. Hold it up to the light.”

I did so, and saw a large “E” with a small “g,” a “P,” and a large “G” with a small “t” woven into the texture of the paper.

“What do you make of that?” asked Holmes.

“The name of the maker, no doubt; or his monogram, rather.”

“Not at all. The ‘G’ with the small ‘t’ stands for ‘Gesellschaft,’ which is the German for ‘Company.’ It is a customary contraction like our ‘Co.’ ‘P,’ of course, stands for ‘Papier.’ Now for the ‘Eg.’ Let us glance at our Continental Gazetteer.” He took down a heavy brown volume

from his shelves. “Eglow, Eglonitz – here we are, Egria. It is a German-speaking country – in Bohemia, not far from Carlsbad. ‘Remarkable as being the scene of the death of Wallenstein, and for its numerous glass-factories and paper-mills.’ Ha, ha, my boy, what do you make of that?” His eyes sparkled, and he sent up a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette.

“The paper was made in Bohemia,” I said.

“Precisely. And the man who wrote the note is a German. Do you not the peculiar construction of the sentence – ‘This account of you we have from all quarters received.’ A Frenchman or Russian could not have written that. It is the German who is so uncourteous to his verbs. It only remains, therefore, to discover what is wanted by this German who writes upon Bohemian paper and prefers wearing a mask to showing his face. And here he comes, if I am not mistaken, to resolve all our doubts.”

As he spoke there was the sharp sound of horses’ hoofs and grating wheels against the curb, followed by a sharp pull at the bell. Holmes whistled.

“A pair, by the sound,” said he. “Yes,” he continued, glancing out of the window. “A nice little brougham and a pair of beauties. A hundred and fifty guineas apiece. There’s money in this case, Watson, if there is nothing else.”

“I think that I had better go, Holmes.”

“Not a bit, Doctor. Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell. And this promises to be interesting. It would be a pity to miss it.”

“But your client – ”

“Never mind him. I may want your help, and so may he. Here he comes. Sit down in that armchair, Doctor, and give us your best attention.”

A slow and heavy step, which had been heard upon the stairs and in the passage, paused immediately outside the door. Then there was a loud and authoritative tap.

“Come in!” said Holmes.

A man entered who could hardly have been less than six feet six inches in height, with the chest and limbs of a Hercules. His dress was rich with a richness which would, in England, be looked upon as akin to bad taste. Heavy bands of astrakhan were slashed across the sleeves and fronts of his double-breasted coat, while the deep blue cloak which was thrown over his shoulders was lined with flame-coloured silk and secured at the neck with a brooch which consisted of a single flaming beryl. Boots which extended half-way up his calves, and which were trimmed at the tops with rich brown fur, completed the impression of barbaric opulence which was suggested by his whole appearance. He carried a broad-brimmed hat in his hand, while he wore across the upper part of his face, extending down past the cheekbones, a black vizard mask, which he had apparently adjusted that very moment, for his hand was still raised to it as he entered. From the lower part of the face he appeared to be a man of strong character, with a thick, hanging lip, and a long straight chin suggestive of resolution pushed to the length of obstinacy.

“You had my note?” he asked with a deep harsh voice and a strongly marked German accent. “I told you that I would call.” He looked from one to the other of us, as if uncertain which to address.

“Pray take a seat,” said Holmes. “This is my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, who is occasionally good enough to help me in my cases. Whom have I the honour to address?”

“You may address me as the Count Von Kramm, a Bohemian nobleman. I understand that this gentleman, your friend, is a man of honour and discretion, whom I may trust with a

matter of the most extreme importance. If not, I should much prefer to communicate with you alone.”

I rose to go, but Holmes caught me by the wrist and pushed me back into my chair. “It is both, or none,” said he. “You may say before this gentleman anything which you may say to me.”

The Count shrugged his broad shoulders. “Then I must begin,” said he, “ by binding you both to absolute secrecy for two years, at the end of that time the matter will be of no importance. At present it is not too much to say that it is of such weight as it may have an influence upon European history.”

“I promise,” said Holmes.

“And I.”

“You will excuse this mask,” continued our strange visitor. “The august person who employs me wishes his agent to be unknown to you, and I may confess at once that the title by which I have just called myself is not exactly my own.”

“I was aware of it,” said Holmes, dryly.

“The circumstances are of great delicacy, and every precaution has to be taken to quench what might grow to be an immense scandal and seriously compromise one of the reigning families of Europe. To speak plainly, the matter implicates the great House of Ormstein, hereditary kings of Bohemia.”

“I was also aware of that,” murmured Holmes, settling himself down in his armchair and closing his eyes.

Our visitor glanced with some apparent surprise at the languid, lounging figure of the man who had been no doubt depicted to him as the most incisive reasoner and most energetic agent in Europe. Holmes slowly reopened his eyes and looked impatiently at his gigantic client.

“If your Majesty would condescend to state your case,” he remarked, “I should be better able to advise you.”

The man sprang from his chair and paced up and down the room in uncontrollable agitation. Then, with a gesture of desperation, he tore the mask from his face and hurled it upon the ground. “You are right,” he cried, “I am the King. Why should I attempt to conceal it?”

“Why, indeed?” murmured Holmes. “Your Majesty had not spoken before I was aware that I was addressing Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia.”

“But you can understand,” said our strange visitor, sitting down once more and passing his hand over his high white forehead, “you can understand that I am not accustomed to doing such business in my own person. Yet the matter was so delicate that I could not confide it to an agent without putting myself in his power. I have come *incognito* from Prague for the purpose of consulting you.”

“Then, pray consult,” said Holmes, shutting his eyes once more.

“The facts are briefly these: Some five years ago, during a lengthy visit to Warsaw, I made the acquaintance of the well-known adventuress, Irene Adler. The name is no doubt familiar to you.”

“Kindly look her up in my index, Doctor,” murmured Holmes without opening his eyes. For many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish

information. In this case I found her biography sandwiched in between that of a Hebrew rabbi and that of a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon the deep-sea fishes.

“Let me see!” said Holmes. “Hum! Born in New Jersey in the year 1858. Contralto – hum! La Scala, hum! Prima donna Imperial Opera of Warsaw – yes! Retired from operatic stage – ha! Living in London – quite so! Your Majesty, as I understand, became entangled with this young person, wrote her some compromising letters, and is now desirous of getting those letters back.”

“Precisely so. But how – ”

“Was there a secret marriage?”

“None.”

“No legal papers or certificates?”

“None.”

“Then I fail to follow your Majesty. If this young person should produce her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove their authenticity?”

“There is the writing.”

“Pooh, pooh! Forgery.”

“My private note-paper.”

“Stolen.”

“My own seal.”

“Imitated.”

“My photograph.”

“Bought.”

“We were both in the photograph.”

“Oh dear! That is very bad! Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion.”

“I was mad – insane.”

“You have compromised yourself seriously.”

“I was only Crown Prince then. I was young. I am but thirty now.”

“It must be recovered.”

“We have tried and failed.”

“Your Majesty must pay. It must be bought.”

“She will not sell.”

“Stolen, then.”

“Five attempts have been made. Twice burglars in my pay ransacked her house. Once we diverted her luggage when she travelled. Twice she has been waylaid. There has been no result.”

“No sign of it?”

“Absolutely none.”

Holmes laughed. “It is quite a pretty little problem,” said he.

“But a very serious one to me,” returned the King reproachfully.

“Very, indeed. And what does she propose to do with the photograph?”

“To ruin me.”

“But how?”

“I am about to be married.”

“So I have heard.”

“To Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, second daughter of the King of Scandinavia.

You may know the strict principles of her family. She is herself the very soul of delicacy. A shadow of a doubt as to my conduct would bring the matter to an end.”

“And Irene Adler?”

“Threatens to send them the photograph. And she will do it. I know that she will do it. You do not know her, but she has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men. Rather than I should marry another woman, there are no lengths to which she would not go – none.”

“You are sure that she has not sent it yet?”

“I am sure.”

“And why?”

“Because she has said that she would send it on the day when the betrothal was publicly proclaimed. That will be next Monday.”

“Oh, then we have three days yet,” said Holmes with a yawn. “That is very fortunate, as I have one or two matters of importance to look into just at present. Your Majesty will, of course, stay in London for the present?”

“Certainly. You will find me at the Langham under the name of the Count Von Kramm.”

“Then I shall drop you a line to let you know how we progress.”

“Pray do so. I shall be all anxiety.”

“Then, as to money?”

“You have *carte blanche*.”

“Absolutely?”

“I tell you that I would give one of the provinces of my kingdom to have that photograph.”

“And for present expenses?”

The King took a heavy chamois leather bag from under his cloak and laid it on the table.

“There are three hundred pounds in gold and seven hundred in notes,” he said.

Holmes scribbled a receipt upon a sheet of his note-book and handed it to him.

“And Mademoiselle’s address?” he asked.

“Is Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue, St. John’s Wood.”

Holmes took a note of it. “One other question,” said he. “Was the photograph a cabinet?”

“It was.”

“Then, good-night, your Majesty, and I trust that we shall soon have some good news for you. And good night, Watson,” he added, as the wheels of the royal brougham rolled down the street. “If you will be good enough to call to-morrow afternoon at three o’clock I should like to chat this little matter over with you.”