



## Another Queer Adventure of Herlock Sholmes the World's Worst Detective, recorded by his Faithful Friend, Dr Jotson.

**A** RING at the front-door bell of our residence in Shaker Street caused Sholmes, and I to look at one another hopefully.

Clients had been few and far between of late, and a nice remunerative criminal case was just what we needed to restore our shattered finances.

Footsteps sounded on the stairs and Mrs. Spudson opened the door to announce a visitor.

"A Mrs. Pudsnick to see you, sir," said our landlady.

"Show her in!" said Sholmes.

Mrs. Spudson stood aside, and a fat, fair female of forty or fifty, flaunting frills and flounces, fluttered into the room.

"Oh, Mr. Sholmes!" she cried. "You remember me, of course? I am little Lena. Surely you remember little Lena, who went to the Tooting Common Board School when you were a boy?"

"H'm, yes!" said Sholmes. "Lena! Lena! But you are a little fatter now, madam. And you are in trouble. No worry concerning your husband, I suppose?"

"None, Mr. Sholmes," answered the lady. "He passed to his long rest eight months ago. It is about my unfortunate brother-in-law, Puddersby Pudsnick, that I have come to see you."

"Please state the case, Mrs. Pudsnick," said Sholmes. "You may speak quite freely before Dr. Jotson here. He is as close as an oyster, even if not so good-looking."

The lady laid a haddock, wrapped in a piece of newspaper on her lap, and, taking a magazine from the parlour table, fanned herself gently.

"It is too dreadful, Mr. Sholmes!" she began. "At present my poor brother-in-law Puddy is lying in the Moldy Cottage Hospital in a delirious condition. Two weeks ago he started a chicken farm."

"It wasn't the chickens that were responsible, Mr. Sholmes," she continued. "How he got into the trouble he is in at present, no one can say. And so I have come to you as an old friend to try and solve the mystery."

"The fee is five pounds in advance!" murmured Sholmes.

Absent-mindedly, Mrs. Pudsnick fanned herself with the haddock.

"Money is no object, Mr. Sholmes," she said. "Fortunately my late husband left me well provided for. I will double your usual fee if you can solve the mystery of Moldy Manor."

"What's that?" asked Sholmes.

"The Manor is the place where my brother-in-law rented, near the little village of Moldy, in Sussex. He started a chicken farm there, having as an assistant a deaf old man named Garge Gobbles. I tried to persuade dear Puddy not to take it, for it had a reputation of being haunted by the ghost of a

highwayman, who was hung in chains outside the place in the seventeenth century. But Puddy would have his own way, and now he is raving in the Moldy Cottage Hospital."

She paused, and flicked a big, wet tear from her eye with the haddock.

"Yes," she continued, "it happened a few days after he had taken possession of the Manor. Old Gobbles went in one morning to find my brother-in-law lying fully dressed and unconscious on the flags of the large cellar under the house. A revolver was by his side, and five cartridges were in the weapon."

"Was it a six-shooter?" demanded Sholmes alertly.

"It was," answered Mrs. Pudsnick. "The evidence would seem to show that my unfortunate brother-in-law had fired one shot from the revolver for a villager called Daft Jimmy, passing the house about midnight, distinctly heard a loud report."

"Your brother-in-law was not wounded?"

"No. Clearly he had not pointed the revolver at himself. The strange thing was that the cellar walls show no mark of the bullet. There was an expression of deadly fear on poor Puddy's face which reminded me of my dear late husband every time a summons was served on him. It is clear that his brother saw something dreadful in that cellar. What did he see?"

"Ah, what?" I demanded eagerly.

"That is what I wish Mr. Sholmes to discover," she said. "The doctors at the Cottage Hospital believe that poor Puddy saw some terrible apparition. Sometimes he cries, 'The ghost—the ghost! I can hear the chains a-rattling and banging.'"

Despite that the day was warm for the time of the year, I gave a shiver. I sincerely hoped that Herlock Sholmes would not undertake this eerie case. But I was doomed to disappointment.

"Mrs. Pudsnick," he said, "you can safely leave the matter in my hands. Dr. Jotson and I will proceed to Moldy Manor forthwith, if not sooner, and lay this phantom which has brought such misfortune to your brother-in-law!"

"Ah, thank you, Mr. Sholmes! Here is five pounds, and I will send you a cheque for five pounds more directly you have solved the mystery."

Directly after a meal, Sholmes took the railway time-table, and looked up the trains to Moldy. The distance, we discovered, was nineteen miles from London, and the three o'clock express on the Southern Railway did the journey from London Bridge in a little under three hours.

Luckily the train was only three-quarters of an hour late in reaching Moldy. In the village itself, Sholmes stopped to question the lad, Daft Jimmy, who had heard the report while passing the Manor. His story was a simple one. He was returning from

a shove-ha'penny tournament just after midnight, when he heard a bang "like a bust balloon." He ran all the way home.

Sholmes thanked the honest fellow, and gave him a pat on the back.

"Now to interview old Garge Gobbles," said my famous friend cheerfully.

We found the man Gobbles chasing snails off one of the chicken-houses near the imposing pile known as the Manor.

"Good-evening!" said Sholmes.

He handed Gobbles a card. The old man took it.

"I am Herlock Sholmes, the detective," said my friend, with dignity. "I have come to question you about the strange affair of Mr. Puddersby Pudsnick. It has been reported to me that the Manor is habited of ghosts."

"Heh?" said Garge Gobbles, cupping his hand to his ear. "Speak up, young fellow! I be a bit hard of hearing!"

"I say," repeated Sholmes, in a louder tone, "that I understand you have ghosts about?"

"No, only chickens," said Gobbles. "Goats don't pay."

Sholmes took a silk handkerchief from the breast-pocket of his overcoat, and wiped his brow. Then, in a loud voice, he said, slowly and clearly:

"Kindly show us the place where Mr. Pudsnick had his adventure with the spirits."

Old Gobbles seemed to understand, and, taking a lantern, he led the way into the Manor, and down to the cellar. There he pointed out some black, dust-covered bottles labelled "Old Methuseleh."

"There 'ee be, sir," said Gobbles. "Powerful fond of 'er spirits he were an' all."

"The silly old mugwump's potty!" whispered Sholmes to me.

Strangely enough Gobbles heard that.

"Who be a potty ole mugwump?" he demanded angrily. "Now 'ee can find out things without my help!" And he strode fiercely up the cellar steps and out of the house.

Considerately, he left the lantern. "Thank goodness, he's gone!" breathed Sholmes. "Now we can pursue our investigations in peace, my dear Jotson!"

Taking his magnifying-glass from his pocket, Herlock Sholmes began his examination of the cellar where poor Pudsnick had been discovered.

A number of cider-bottles occupied one dusty shelf. One of these was empty; the contents were still damp on the cellar flags. Sholmes picked up the cork in a far corner and slipped it in his pocket.

Leading the way upstairs, he entered a bedroom. In a drawer was a revolver that answered to the description of the one found by Pudsnick.

"This revolver was never fired, my dear Jotson," said Sholmes, dropping it in his pocket. "Now let us take blankets and pillows to the cellar."

"Great Scott! What for?" I asked, in alarm.

"We will sleep there," answered Sholmes. "Who knows?" he added, in a sepulchral tone. "We may be privileged to see or hear the dreadful thing that put poor Pudsnick in the casualty ward."

"I—I think I'll put up at the Knave's Head in Moldy village," I murmured.

But Sholmes would have none of it. He made me help take the blankets and pillows below stairs and make up beds on the floor.

We turned in at ten o'clock in the darkened cellar. Sholmes, rather tactlessly I thought, passed the time by narrating a true (?) ghost story of a spook who jumped at people in the dark and bit their ears.

I must have gone to sleep, but I awakened suddenly with a most unpleasant sensation in the vicinity of my ear.

"Yoops! Help!" I gasped, shuddering in the blankets.

Then I saw it, was the lean form of Herlock Sholmes, clad in a dressing-gown, standing near my feet.

"It is the hour of midnight," said Sholmes solemnly. "Come, Jotson!"

I had forgotten that Sholmes had arranged that we were to take watch and watch throughout the night.

But hardly had I stepped from between the blankets than I heard a faint squeak as of the agony of a lady who has sat on a hot stove. It was followed by the dull metallic rattle of a chain being dragged along the floor overhead.

Sholmes told me afterwards that my face

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# A Merry Maskerade!

An Amusing Story of St Sam's  
By DICKY NUGENT

**A** FANCY-DRESS ball was in progress in the big dancing hall at St. Sam's. And everybody was having a high old time, with the eggesgation of Gilbert de Filbert, the fop of the Fourth.

Gilbert was not a nice person to know. He was full of swank and conceit. He hated Jack Jolly & Co., the heroes of the Fourth, like poison, and they returned the compliment.

Gilbert de Filbert was wearing the dress of an Elizabethan courtier. He also wore a look of disgust. He sat in a corner and sulked.

The fact was, Gilbert was feeling very fed-up. He had danced with the Head's daughter—a priviledge which had been denied most of the fellows. But Bertha Birchmell was clumsy and flat-footed, and she had trodden on Gilbert's pet corn a duzen times. Finally, he had been rood to her, telling her quite bluntly, in sharp tones, that she couldn't dance for toffy. Then he went off in a huff, while Bertha rushed sobbing to her father.

"What's wrong, my dear?" asked the Head.

"That horrid boy Filbert has been rood to me, pappu. He tells me I can't dance for toffy."

"Well, I must say he is right," said the Head. "You're about as graceful on your pins as a nipperpotamus trying to walk a tight-rope. Still, I'm not going to have you insulted, my child. I'll wallop young Filbert in the morning. I'll birch him till he's black and blue, bust me if I don't!"

Having failed to enjoy himself in the company of the Head's daughter, Gilbert de Filbert had picked a fresh partner. He had danced with Loocy Lickham, the daughter of the master of the Fourth. But Loocy, who was dressed as Queen Ann, looked so silly that Gilbert soon got tired of trotting her round. Besides, she wore a long train, and this upset her carriage. Anyway, she kept tripping up; and as she weighed close on fourteen stone, Gilbert soon got tired of picking her up.

"You'd better find a fresh partner!" he growled.

Loocy Lickham culled to the roots of her hair.

"You are a rood cad to talk like that!" she cried. "I shall tell my pappu about it!"

Loocy Lickham duly reported the incident to her father. Mr. Lickham was furious.

"Don't cry, my dear," he said. "That young imp shall be severely punished for his imp-pertinence. I will give him ten thousand lines in the morning!"

One way and another, Gilbert de Filbert looked like catching it hot! After dancing with the Head's daughter and Loocy Lickham, Gilbert had tried his luck with Jessie Justiss, the daughter of the master of the Fifth. But Jessie was a pail, anemic sort of girl, who had a habit of swooning in the middle of a dance. And Gilbert soon got tired of holding a bottle of smelling-salts to her snub nose.

"I'm fed-up with these fainting fits," he said at last. "If you must swoon, go and swoon in Jack Jolly's arms—not in mine!"

Two spots of pink appeared on Jessie's pail cheeks.

"You are no gentleman, to talk like that!" she cried. "I shall tell Jack Jolly what you have just said."

"I don't care a fig for Jack Jolly!" said Gilbert. And it was at this stage that he went and sat in a corner and sulked. He saw Jessie Justiss talking to Jack Jolly & Co., and pointing an accusing finger at him; but he simply shrugged his shoulders, and took no further notiss. He wasn't afraid of Jack Jolly.

After a time, however, Gilbert suddenly brightened up.

A girl came gliding gracefully into the dancing hall. She was dressed as Sweet Nell of Old Drury, and she was just such a girl as Gilbert had been dreaming about. Her hare was shingled—so much so that it was nearly as short as a boy's. And there was a merry sparkle in her eyes.

Instantly Gilbert de Filbert sprang to his feet.

"Just the girl I've been longing to meet!" he ejaculated. "I must try and bag a dance with her."

Lots of fellows were seized with the same impulse. The charming newcomer was surrounded.

"May I dance with you, miss?" asked Swotter of the Sixth eagerly.

The girl shook her head.

"You're not hansom enuff," she replied.

"I want a really hansom boy for a partner."

The girl's gaze then happened to fall on Gilbert de Filbert—without doing him serious injury.

"Ah! You are indeed a hansom boy!" she cried. "I will dance with you, with plezzure."

"Thanks awfully, miss!" drawled Gilbert. And he promptly grabbed her by the waste, and they prosed to waltz to and fro, to the sweet, soothing strains of "Does Your Mother Know You're Out?"

Gilbert soon found that his new partner was a topping dancer. Her feet were a trifle large, perhaps, for a girl, but she was so skilful and graceful that Gilbert forgave that little defect. When the dance was over, he begged another—and got it. Then he suxcessfully appealed for a third. He felt that he could go on dancing with this nimble fairy all night.

After the third dance, however, the girl said she felt peckish. So they adjourned to the refreshment-room.

The dancing had evidently given Gilbert's partner an appytite, for she ate ravenously. It was serprizing what a lot of tuck she got through. She started on froot sallad, and finished on strawberry ices. And she sampled quite a lot of dishes in between.

Gilbert de Filbert had to foot the bill, and he made rather a rye face. He was a welthy fellow, being the son of a war propheteer; but it was like having teeth out for him to part with munny.

"Shall we take a moonlite stroll on the balcony now?" he asked.

The girl nodded, and together they passed out into the cool air.

It was an enchanted night. The moon bathed everything in its splendor, and the stars twinkled like fairy lamps.

Gilbert turned to his companion.

"I'm a grate favorite with the girls," he said modestly. "All the masters' daughters simply rave over me!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes. Of course, I've never gone so far as to kiss any of them. They're much too

ugly. But you—you are a perfect peach! Will you give me the right—"

Gilbert was going to say, "Will you give me the right to kiss you?" But it was a different sort of "right" that he reseed. His companion's fist shot out, straight from the shoulder, and caught him squarely between the eyes.

"Yaroooooo!"

Gilbert was bowled over like a skittle. He sat up, dazed and blinking, and as he did so his companion removed her costume, revealing a suit of Etons underneath.

Gilbert de Filbert had the shock of his life. For the "girl" he had been dancing with was Merry of the Fourth!

"I hope this will teach you a lesson, you cad!" said Merry. "Jessie Justiss told us how you had insulted her, so we planned this jape on you, to make you feel small."

Gilbert de Filbert had certainly never felt so small as at that moment. With a fierce glare of hatred at the fellow who had spoofed him, he crawled away to hide his diminished head.

THE END.

## The Mystery of Moldy Manor.

(Continued from previous page.)

went the colour of ripe gorgonzola, and that I trembled like a leaf in the icy blast. Perhaps that was so. I know my feet refused to mount the cellar stairs until my famous friend assisted me with the toe of his carpet-slipper.

What dreadful spook should we behold? Sholmes pushed his way into the kitchen, which was directly above the cellar, in front of me. Stooping, he snatched something from the floor. I started back as I heard the dread jangle of a chain.

"No, do not be alarmed, my dear Jotson," said Sholmes, with a laugh. "The spook is scotched!" And he revealed a great rat caught in a steel trap to which was attached a heavy chain.

"A powerful brute," remarked my famous friend. "He dragged the trap fully three yards. The Manor is infested by rats. Old Gobbles is in the habit of setting this trap. Last night Pudsnick went to the cellar to pour himself a nightcap. A nervous man he took a revolver with him. While there he heard the death squeak of a trapped rat and the rattle of this chain. The circumstance proved too much for his weak nervous system, and he subsided in dire fear upon the floor, where old Gobbles found him."

"But the shot that Daft Jimmy heard?" I said. "How can you account for that?"

"He heard no shot," replied Sholmes. From his pocket he took the cork he had picked up in the cellar. "Daft Jimmy heard this cork fly out of the cider-bottle. The bursting of a cork is a common occurrence where cider-bottles are concerned, Jotson."

It now remains only to convince poor Pudsnick that his fear of a spook inhabiting the Manor is groundless. Then he will speedily recover. And, by the way, my dear Jotson, kindly remind me to collect that other fiver from his sister, Lena!"

THE END.