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# The Last Sherlock Holmes Story

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OXFORD BOOKWORMS

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## Foreword

Many people enjoy Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories about the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes, and his friend, Dr Watson. But who now remembers that Holmes and Watson were real people? Everyone has forgotten that they lived before Conan Doyle gave them life in his books.

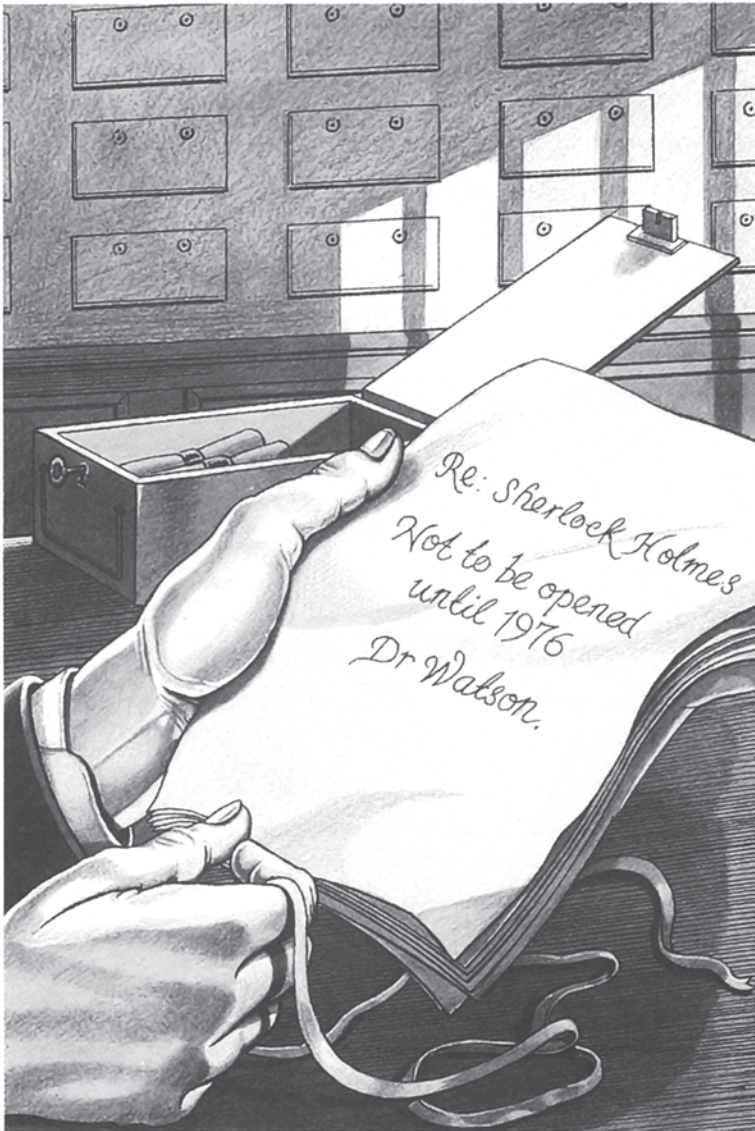
Dr Watson died in 1926. He was seventy-three. He left behind him a locked box, and orders that it must not be opened for fifty years.

For fifty years the box lay hidden in a dark room below a bank. Years came and went, and the world changed in a thousand ways.

In 1976 the box was opened. It contained a packet of papers. They tell a terrible story. Some people say it cannot be true. They say Watson was lying, or that he was sick when he wrote it. After so many years we cannot be sure. We have checked all the facts that we can. All we know is that the story could be true. It is possible. We think it is probable. Now you must read it and decide for yourself.

THE EDITORS

*The Last Sherlock Holmes Story*



*In 1976 the box was opened. It contained a packet of papers.*

## Introduction

How well my friend Arthur Conan Doyle would tell this story! How exciting and interesting he would make it. I cannot do that. I am no writer. I have been a doctor and a soldier. All I can do is make my report.

But who will read my words? What will the world be like in 1976? Perhaps by then nobody will know the names of Sherlock Holmes and Jack the Ripper. Perhaps all Conan Doyle's wonderful stories will be forgotten. There is so much to explain. I must ask my reader to be patient!

I had known and worked with Sherlock Holmes for almost four years when I first met Arthur Conan Doyle – ACD I always called him. Like me, he was a doctor, and we quickly became good friends. He told me amusing stories of hospital life, and I told him about my life as an army doctor in Afghanistan.

I often talked to him about Sherlock Holmes. At that time most people had never heard of him. Only the police and some criminals knew what a great detective he was. ACD seemed to enjoy my stories very much. He was never too tired to hear about another of Holmes's cases.

We met many times and enjoyed many good dinners together before I realized that ACD had a special interest in Holmes. He wanted to be a writer, and had already enjoyed a little success. Now he wanted to write about Holmes, using the facts of a real case, but adding his own ideas to the story. I found this an excellent idea. I was happy to think that my

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dear friend would become famous.

I explained the plan to Holmes. He listened in silence, his pipe in his hand. Then he said, 'Can he write, this friend of yours? Can he tell a true story? Does he understand the difference between facts and lies?'

'I think so,' I said. 'He has just begun to write, but already he is becoming fashionable.'

'Fashionable!' Holmes said coldly. 'How can it interest me that he is fashionable? Can a fashionable writer have a serious interest in the facts of one of my cases?'

I could not reply. Holmes sat silently, looking into the fire. At last he said, 'Well, he may try. Let him do what he can. You may send him your notes on the Hope case, Watson.'

I wrote to ACD the next day, and he began work on the story. He called it *A Study in Scarlet*. When it appeared in the shops, I hurried out to buy it, and then sat for hours in a park reading it. The story was excellent – fast-moving, exciting and clever. I ran back to Baker Street. I could not wait to give the book to Holmes.

He looked up quickly as I entered the room.

'You're late, Watson,' he said. 'Were you ashamed to come here with that book in your hand?'

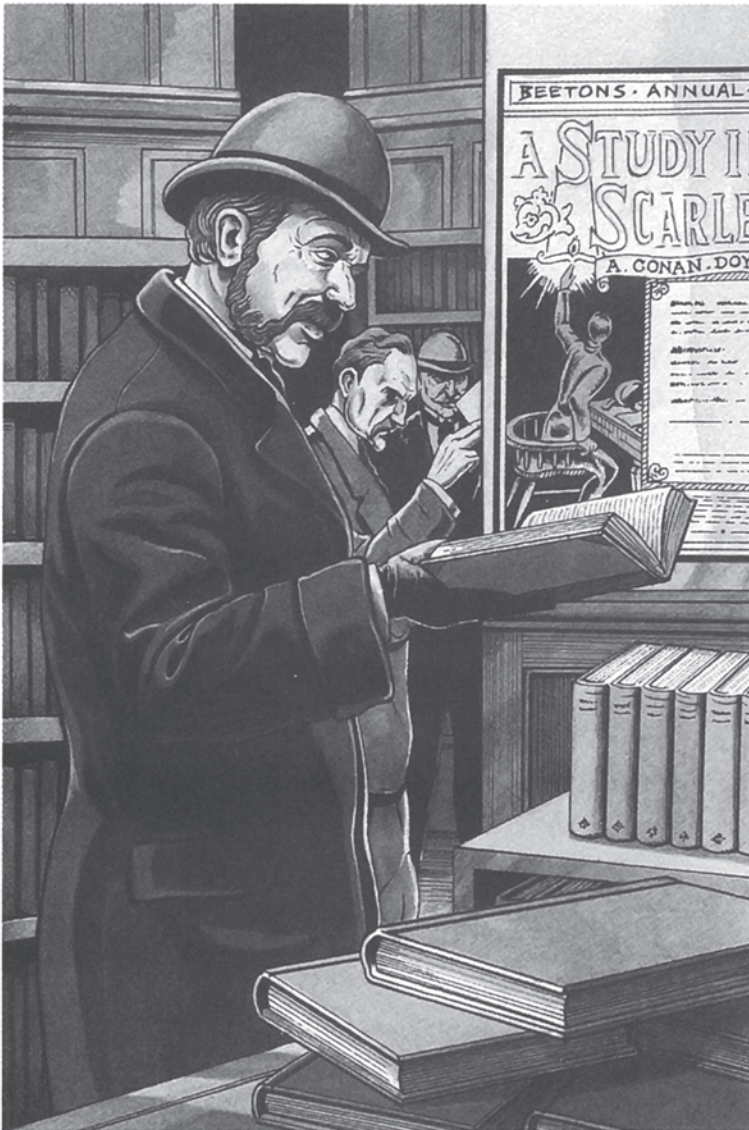
'Ashamed, Holmes?' I cried. 'No! ACD has done well. I see you have read it. Why don't you like it?'

I was soon sorry that I had spoken.

'Like it? It is rubbish, wild and fantastic rubbish. He has been careless with the facts, added all kinds of unnecessary lies, and made the most stupid mistakes.'



## Introduction



*When the book appeared in the shops, I hurried out to buy it.*

# The Last Sherlock Holmes Story



For fifty years after Dr Watson's death, a packet of papers, written by the doctor himself, lay hidden in a locked box. The papers contained an extraordinary report of the case of Jack the Ripper and the horrible murders in the East End of London in 1888. The detective, of course, was the great Sherlock Holmes – but why was the report kept hidden for so long?

This is the story that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never wrote. It is a strange and frightening tale ... (Word count 9,680)



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