

## Without My Boswell: Five Early Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Hugh Ashton



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"I am lost without my Boswell," declares Sherlock Holmes in "A Scandal in Bohemia". Indeed, the interplay between the solid ex-Army doctor, and the more mercurial purveyor of "ineffable twaddle" forms a large part of the appeal of the adventures which Watson caused to be published, and Watson himself, as well as acting as a publicist for Holmes' business, provides more solid assistance on many occasions.

But... before John Watson had that fateful encounter with the eccentric beater of corpses at Barts, there was a consulting detective by the name of Sherlock Holmes, who had already built up a practice and a reputation that extended to Scotland Yard. However much he may have felt lost without his Boswell later in his career, Holmes was playing a solo game when he started out.

We see a little of Holmes alone (apologies for the inevitable pun) in "The Case of the Gloria Scott" and "The Musgrave Ritual", and it is in Watson's account of this latter adventure that we hear of some other cases at a time when Holmes was presumably learning his trade.

The written accounts of some of these were in the dispatch-box, bound together in an envelope, in Watson's writing.

The envelope was inscribed "Before My Time", again in Watson's hand. The stories in here are all somewhat less interesting from the point of view of the interplay between Holmes and other characters, but they all shed a light on Holmes' methods of deduction as he learned his trade, and often also shed light on his character. As Holmes himself remarked, not all of these may be seen as successes, but none of the cases here may be regarded as a complete failure. Here they are - with five original illustrations by Andy Boerger.

- The Tarleton Murders
- The Case of Vamberry, the Wine Merchant
- The Singular Affair of the Aluminium Crutch
- The Case of the Abominable Wife
- The Adventure of the Two Bottles

The stories in this volume are authorized by the Conan Doyle Estate.

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