C. & N. W. R. R

East Bound.

No. 8 due out of Denison ..... 2.40 p. m
No. 6 ..... 7.50 p. m
No. 10, Mail train ..... 9.47 p. m
No. 46, Way freight ..... 12.15 p m
No. 12—Passenger ..... 10:07 a. m
No. 22, Carroll Local ..... 6.52 p. m

West Bound.

No. 21, Council Bluffs local ..... 7.14 a. m.
No 1 ..... 6 50 a. m.
No. 5 ..... 9 35 p m.
No. 3 ..... 1.07 p m.
No. 11 ..... 5 22 a. m.
No. 9, Fast mail ..... 6.34 a. m.
No. 15, Fast mail ..... 12.40 p.m

Boyer Valley

No 46 Leave ..... 6:05 a m
No 42 " ..... 2:45 a m
No 41 Arrive ..... 2:40 p m
No 45 " ..... 5:50 p m

Illinois Central R. R. Time Table

—East Bound—

No. 4 Omaha, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Chicago Express, (Daily) 9.17 A. M
No. 92 Co. Bluffs & Ft. Dodge Way Freight, (Daily except Sunday) 10. 35 A. M
No. 32 Co. Bluffs & Ft Dodge Local (Daily except Sunday) ..... 5. 52 P. M.
No. 2 Omaha, St. Paul, Minneapolis & Chicago Limited (Daily) 9. 38 P. M

—West Bound—

No. 1 Chicago, St. Paul & Minneapolis Limited, (Daily) ..... 6. 18 A. M
No. 31 Ft. Dodge & Co. Bluffs Local, (Daily except Sunday) .8. 32 A. M
No. 91 Local Way Freight, (Daily except Sunday) ..... 1. 00 P. M
No. 3 Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul & Omaha Express, (Daily) 8. 33 P. M

Nos. 1 and 2 stop only at Rockwell City Wall Lake, Denison and Logan.

No. 3 stops at Arion, Dow City, Dunlap, Woodbine and Logan.

No. 4 stops only at Wall Lake and Rockwel City.

Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4 are daily; Nos. 31, 32 and 92 daily except Sunday.

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The Return of SHERLOCK HOLMES

By A. CONAN DOYLE,

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Hound of the Baskervilles," "The Sign of the Four," "A Study in Scarlet," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. D. STEELE

The Adventure of the Dancing Men

No. 3 of the Series

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HOLMES had been seated for some hours in silence, with his long, thin back curved over a chemical vessel in which he was brewing a practicularly malodorous product. His head was sunk upon his breast, and he looked from my point of view like a strange, lank bird with dull gray plumage and a black topknot.

"So, Watson," said he suddenly, "you do not propose to invest in South African securities?"

I gave a start of astonishment. Accustomed as I was to Holmes' curious faculties, this sudden intrusion into my most intimate thoughts was utterly inexplicable.

"How on earth do you know that?" I asked.

He wheeled round upon his stool with a steaming test tube in his hand and a gleam of amusement in his deep set eyes.

"Now, Watson, confess yourself utterly taken aback," said he.

"I am."

"I ought to make you sign a paper to that effect."

"Why?"

"Because in five minutes you will say that it is all so absurdly simple."

"I am sure that I shall say nothing of the kind."

"You see, my dear Watson"—he propped his test tube in the rack and began to lecture with the air of a professor addressing his class—"it is not really difficult to construct a series of inferences, each dependent upon its predecessor and each simple in itself. If, after doing so, one simply knocks out all the central inferences and presents one's audience with the starting point and the conclusion, one may produce a startling though possibly a meretricious effect. Now, it was not really difficult by an inspection of the groove between your left forefinger and thumb to feel sure that you did not propose to invest your small capital in the gold fields."

"I see no connection."

"Very likely not, but I can quickly show you a close connection. Here are the missing links of the very simple chain: First, you had chalk between your left finger and thumb when you returned from the club last night; second, you put chalk there when you

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"Well, Mr. Holmes, what do you make of these?"

play billiards to steady the cue; third, you never play billiards except with Thurston; fourth, you told me four weeks ago that Thurston had an option on some South African property which would expire in a month and which he desired you to share with him; fifth, your check book is locked in my drawer, and you have not asked for the key; sixth, you do not propose to invest your money in this manner."

"How absurdly simple!" I cried.

"Quite so," said he, a little nettled. "Every problem becomes very childish when once it is explained to you. Here is an unexplained one. See what you can make of that, friend Watson." He tossed a sheet of paper upon the table and turned once more to his chemical analysis.

I looked with amazement at the absurd hieroglyphics upon the paper.

"Why, Holmes, it is a child's drawing!" I cried.

"Oh, that's your idea!"

"What else should it be?"

"That is what Mr. Hilton Cubitt of Riding Thorpe Manor, Norfolk, is very anxious to know. This little conundrum came by the first post, and he was to follow by the next train. There's a ring at the bell, Watson. I should not be very much surprised if this were he."

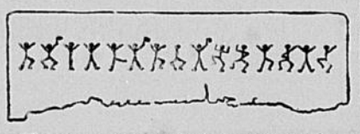
A heavy step was heard upon the stairs, and an instant later there entered a tall, ruddy, clean shaven gentleman whose clear eyes and florid cheeks told of a life led far from the fogs of Baker street. He seemed to bring a whiff of his strong, fresh, bracing east coast air with him as he entered. Having shaken hands with each of us, he was about to sit down when his eye rested upon the paper with the curious markings which I had just examined and left upon the table.

"Well, Mr. Holmes, what do you make of these?" he cried. "They told me that you were fond of queer mysteries, and I don't think you can find a queerer one than that. I sent the paper on ahead, so that you might have time to study it before I came."

"It is certainly rather a curious production," said Holmes. "At first sight it would appear to be some childish prank. It consists of a number of absurd little figures dancing across the paper upon which they are drawn. Why should you attribute any importance to so grotesque an object?"

"I never should, Mr. Holmes, but my wife does. It is frightening her to death. She says nothing, but I can see terror in her eyes. That's why I want to sift the matter to the bottom."

Holmes held up the paper so that the sunlight shone full upon it. It was a page torn from a notebook. The markings were done in pencil and ran in this way:



Holmes examined it for some time, and then, folding it carefully up, he placed it in his pocketbook.

"This promises to be a most interesting and unusual case," said he. "You gave me a few particulars in your letter, Mr. Hilton Cubitt, but I should be very much obliged if you would kindly go over it all again for the benefit of my friend, Dr. Watson."

"I'm not much of a story teller," said our visitor, nervously clasping and unclasping his great, strong hands. "You will just ask me anything that I don't make clear. I'll begin at the time of my marriage last year, but I want to say first of all that, though I'm not a rich man, my people have been at Riding Thorpe for a matter of five centuries, and there is no better known family in the county of Norfolk. Last year I came up to London for the jubilee, and I stopped at a boarding house in Russell square, because Parker, the vicar of our parish, was staying in it.

"There was an American young lady there—Patrick was the name—Elsie Patrick. In some way we became friends, until before my month was up I was as much in love as man could be. We were quietly married at a registry office, and we returned to Norfolk a wedded couple. You'll think it very mad, Mr. Holmes, that a man of a good old family should marry a wife in this fashion, knowing nothing of her past or of her people, but if you saw her and knew her it would help you to understand.

"She was very straight about it, was Elsie. I can't say that she did not give me every chance of getting out of it if I wished to do so. 'I have had some very disagreeable associations in my life,' said she, 'I wish to forget all about them. I would rather never allude to the past, for it is very painful to me. If you take me, Hilton, you will take a woman who has nothing that she need be personally ashamed of, but you will have to be content with my word for it and to allow me to be silent as to all that passed up to the time when I became yours. If these conditions are too hard, then go back to Norfolk and leave me to the lonely life in which you found me.' It was only the day before our wedding that she said those very words to me. I told her that I was content to take her on her own terms, and I have been as good as my word.

"Well, we have been married now for a year, and very happy we have been. But about a month ago, at the end of June, I saw for the first time signs of trouble. One day my wife received a letter from America. I saw the American stamp. She turned deadly white, read the letter and threw it into the fire. She made no allusion to it afterward, and I made none, for a promise is a promise, but she has never known an easy hour from that moment. There is always a look of fear upon her face—a look as if she were waiting and expecting. She would do better to trust me. She would find that I was her best friend. But until she speaks I can say nothing. Mind you, she is a truthful woman, Mr. Holmes, and whatever trouble there may have been in her past life it has been no fault of hers. I am only a simple Norfolk squire, but there is not a man in England who ranks his family honor more highly than I do. She knows it well, and she knew it well before she married me. She would never bring any stain upon it; of that I am sure.

"Well, now I come to the queer part of my story. About a week ago—it was the Tuesday of last week—I found on one of the window sills a number of absurd little dancing figures like these upon the paper. They were scrawled with chalk. I thought that it was the stable boy who had drawn them, but the lad swore he knew nothing about it. Anyhow, they had come there during the night. I had them washed out, and I only mentioned the matter to my wife afterward. To my surprise she took it very seriously and begged me if any more came to let her see them. None did come for a week, and then yesterday morning I found this paper lying on the sundial in the garden. I showed it to Elsie, and down she dropped in a dead faint. Since then she has looked like a woman in a dream, half dazed and with terror always lurking in her eyes. It was then that I wrote and sent the paper to you, Mr. Holmes. It was not a thing that I could take to the police, for they would have laughed at me, but you will tell me what to do. I am not a rich man, but if there is any danger threatening my little woman I would spend my last copper to shield her."

He was a fine creature, this man of the old English soil—simple, straight and gentle, with his great, earnest blue eyes and broad, comely face. His love for his wife and his trust in her shone in his features. Holmes had listened to his story with the utmost attention, and now he sat for some time in silent thought.

"Don't you think, Mr. Cubitt," said he at last, "that your best plan would be to make a direct appeal to your wife and to ask her to share her secret with you?"

Hilton Cubitt shook his massive head.

"A promise is a promise, Mr. Holmes. If Elsie wished to tell me she would. If not, it is not for me to force her confidence. But I am justified in taking my own line—and I will."

"Then I will help you with all my heart. In the first place, have you heard of any strangers being seen in your neighborhood?"

"No."

"I presume that it is a very quiet place. Any fresh face would cause comment?"

"In the immediate neighborhood, yes. But we have several small watering places not very far away. And the farmers take in lodgers."

"These hieroglyphics have evidently a meaning. If it is a purely arbitrary one it may be impossible for us to solve it. If, on the other hand, it is systematic, I have no doubt that we shall get to the bottom of it. But this particular sample is so short that I can do nothing, and the facts which you have brought me are so indefinite that we have no basis for an investigation. I would suggest that you return to Norfolk, that you keep a keen lookout and that you take an exact copy of any fresh dancing men which may appear. It is a thousand pities that we have not a reproduction of those which were done in chalk upon the window sill. Make a discreet inquiry also as to any strangers in the neighborhood. When you have collected some fresh evidence come to me again. That is the best advice which I can give you, Mr. Hilton Cubitt. If there are any pressing fresh developments I shall be always ready to run down and see you in your Norfolk home."

The interview left Sherlock Holmes very thoughtful, and several times in the next few days I saw him take his slip of paper from his notebook and look long and earnestly at the curious figures inscribed upon it. He made no allusion to the affair, however, until one afternoon a fortnight or so later. I was going out when he called me back.

"You had better stay here, Watson."

"Why?"

"Because I had a wire from Hilton Cubitt this morning. You remember Hilton Cubitt of the dancing men? He was to reach Liverpool street at 1:20. He may be here at any moment. I gather from his wire that there have been some new incidents of importance."

We had not long to wait, for our Norfolk squire came straight from the station as fast as a hansom could bring him. He was looking worried and depressed, with tired eyes and a lined forehead.

"It's getting on my nerves, this business, Mr. Holmes," said he as he sank, like a wearied man, into an armchair. "It's bad enough to feel that you are surrounded by unseen, unknown folk, who have some kind of design upon you, but when, in addition to that, you know that it is just killing your wife by inches, then it becomes as much as flesh and blood can endure. She's wearing away under it—just wearing away before my eyes."

"Has she said anything yet?"

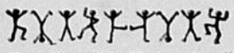
"No, Mr. Holmes, she has not. And yet there have been times when the poor girl has wanted to speak and yet could not quite bring herself to take the plunge. I have tried to help her, but I dare say I did it clumsily and scared her from it. She has spoken about my old family and our reputation in the county and our pride in our unsullied honor, and I always felt it was leading to the point, but somehow it turned off before we got there."

"But you have found out something for yourself?"

"A good deal, Mr. Holmes. I have several fresh dancing men pictures for you to examine, and, what is more important, I have seen the fellow."

"What—the man who draws them?"

"Yes; I saw him at work. But I will tell you everything in order. When I got back after my visit to you the very first thing I saw next morning was a fresh crop of dancing men. They had been drawn in chalk upon the black wooden door of the tool house, which stands beside the lawn in full view of the front windows. I took an exact copy, and here it is." He unfolded a paper and laid it upon the table. Here is a copy of the hieroglyphics:



"Excellent!" said Holmes. "Excellent! Pray continue."

"When I had taken the copy I rubbed out the marks, but two mornings later a fresh inscription had appeared. I have a copy of it here:"

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