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Holmes Has a Visitor

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who usually got up very late in the morning, was sitting at the breakfast table. I was standing in front of the fireplace, looking at a walking stick. A visitor had left it outside our door last night. Engraved on a silver band around the stick were the words: “*To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.*”

Without looking up, Holmes said, “Well, Watson, what do you make of it?”

Holmes was sitting with his back to me. “How did you know what I was doing?” I asked. “I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.”

Holmes smiled and said, “This silver-plated coffeepot in front of me makes an excellent mirror. But what do you make of the stick? Since we missed our visitor last night, let me hear what his stick can tell us about him.”

“He seems to be an elderly, successful doctor,” I said. “This handsome gift from his friends shows he is well liked.”

“Good!” *said* Holmes, lighting a cigarette.

“I believe he lives in the country,” I went on. “‘C.C.H.’ is probably a hunting club. I would also guess he walks a great deal. This stick has been very much knocked about.”

“*Excellent!*” *said* Holmes. “Since you have been so kind as to write accounts of my detective work, you should have given yourself more credit. I owe much to you.”

Holmes had never given me such praise before. I was pleased indeed.

He took the stick from my hands and examined it with a magnifying glass. “Interesting,” he said.

“Has anything escaped me?” I asked.

“I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your ideas were wrong. However, the man is a country doctor. But I believe this gift came to him from a hospital, not a club. ‘C.C.H.’ is probably Charing Cross Hospital.”

“You may be right,” I said.

Holmes said, “It seems likely. I would guess the stick was presented when our doctor left the

hospital to start his own practice. He is absent-minded—or he would not have left the stick at our door—and he has a medium-sized dog.”

I laughed. Holmes leaned back and blew wispy rings of smoke at the ceiling.

I took my medical directory from the shelf and looked up the name. James Mortimer had indeed worked at Charing Cross Hospital before moving to Devonshire. I showed this listing to Holmes, who smiled in satisfaction.

“No mention of a hunting club,” said Holmes, “but he is a country doctor, as you guessed.”

“Why do you believe he has a medium-sized dog?” I asked.

Holmes rose and stood by the window. “The tooth marks on the stick are too far apart for a terrier’s jaw, and not broad enough for a mastiff. It may have been . . . yes, by Jove, it *was* a spaniel.”

“But my dear fellow, how can you possibly be so sure?” I chuckled.

“For the very simple reason that I see the dog himself at our doorstep,” said Holmes.

Just then the doorbell rang and Dr. Mortimer entered. He was very tall and thin, with a long nose like a beak. Two big gray eyes sparkled from behind a pair of glasses. When he saw the stick



in Holmes' hand, he ran toward it. "You have it! I would not lose that stick for the world," he cried.

"A gift, I see," said Holmes.

"Yes, sir."

"From Charing Cross Hospital?"

"Yes," said Dr. Mortimer, "it was given to me when I got married."

"Dear, dear, that's bad!" said Holmes, shaking his head.

"Why is that bad?" asked Dr. Mortimer.

"Only that you have upset our little deductions," said Holmes. "You say you got married?"

"Yes," said Dr. Mortimer. "That's why I left