

## Sherlock Holmes And The Brexit Bandits

"I just don't understand it." Sherlock sighed and sat back in the armchair. Rarely had I seen my old friend look so puzzled and, indeed, downcast.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"This political debate. Or rather, one can barely call it a debate, this political conflict. At one point I thought I had some understanding but, well...." The sentence trailed off. He pointed to the pile of newspapers spread at his feet. "As you know, I always take 'The Times' for my main source of information on world events but recently, since it was acquired by an antipodean entrepreneur, standards appear to have slipped. I suppose from Australia the world will always look upside down in any case. And so, upon discussing this matter with my brother Mycroft who, as you know, has a secure niche doing something-or-other at the Foreign Office, he recommended I turn my attentions also to what he terms the 'Gutter Press'. Apparently they have a chap working full-time at the Office reading through these publications, though few can stand the posting for more than a month at a time. Tabloids, they are called. A dreadful word, I think. Always avoid a word that ends in '-oid', eh, Watson?"

These publications rely upon sensationalist tittle-tattle about theatrical thespians and their so-called private lives, which are made so public, and several of them include excessive illustrations of young women in corsetry or, indeed, without corsetry – I have never understood, either, what it is that young women need to wear in such circumstances nor, if it is so necessary, how they are able to stand and pose without it, but that is another matter. Still, says Mycroft, it helps to know what the People are thinking, by which those at the Foreign Office mean the lower middle classes and those even lower. So I began purchasing the 'Daily Mail'. Also owned by an expatriate patriot, it seems, its pages are filled with jingoism of the most baseless kind. The only matter that normally concerns this daily rag is the price of property, but it includes an attitude to what they term 'Johnny Foreigner' which is hardly in accordance with our attempts to forge friendly relations with European states, hence the need for the FO to keep an eye on it.

It is in many respects a fascinating publication though, as I have indicated, rather shallow and one-sided in its political analysis. 'Down-Market' is I believe the technical term. But it must indeed have an influence on its target readership, for behold what complications we face today! All speak of "the benefits for England", although how someone called Cameron could ever claim to speak for England when he is himself descended from the Picts, also escapes me. What does his Clan think of him? And how can anyone with the name 'Boris' claim to speak for English values? You and I, my dear Watson, have often taken the journey by Packet across to Boulogne and we know that, despite some unfortunate characteristics, the average foreigner can prove to be a sound chap and reliable, if spoken to loudly and slowly enough, but the people who write for this Gutter Press would rather have us cutting off all links across the Channel and somehow sailing off into the mid-Atlantic!

I have always considered it a well-minded mistake to allow the suffrage to artisans, manual labourers and persons of the female persuasion. It was bound to lead to catastrophe sooner or later. How many of such persons have ever enjoyed the benefit of a good classical education at one of our better schools? How many of them understand the lessons to be learned from the political undercurrents of Greek or Roman society? And would thus be enabled to make sound judgements upon current political issues within our Empire or the body politic?

Apparently this group of campaigners hired a pantechicon and painted on its side a populist message that, if we ceased paying our obligations to this Market, there would be vast amounts of money left over for the Workhouses and the Hospitals for the Poor. Then they drove this around the country. Well of course that sounds very attractive, but is it true, Watson, is it true? You know I always say that if one eliminates the impossible, the residue must be the truth, but... the figures are so vague. Still, promise the Poor more money and of course they will vote for it, if they are permitted to do so! It reminds me of the controversy over the Peter's Pence that proud Englishmen were once compelled to pay each year to Rome, until the Reformation. Talking of which, I see

reference here to a Treaty of Rome, and wonder if the two are connected. Is it all a perfidious Catholic plot?

Which brings me to an interesting problem concerning the Fenian issue? A new border is now proposed between Ulster and the rest of Ireland. Well, of course this is a wonderful idea and I am sure that such a mutually-agreed border would guarantee peace for decades, if not centuries, between these warring fundamentalist religious factions, and an end to these bomb outrages. But how is to be established, how is it to be policed?

Then it appears to have escaped the attentions of some of these rather amateurish politicians, that we possess no coal mines any more, and no iron ore mines, and no copper mines or lead mines; that we no longer build ships or locomotives but have to import almost everything, including most of our fuel and a large proportion of our foodstuffs. How will this be paid for, I ask myself? And what if our mighty Pound were to be reduced to a mere Twelve Ounces or equivalent? The British have never been good at understanding foreign money. There are references in these articles to maintaining our borders but, with the exception of this Ulster business I just mentioned, I always thought, perhaps naively, that the borders of an island are pretty easy to define, that the North Sea and the Irish Sea and the English Channel - note the name, Watson! - serve this purpose very well.

The Editor of this newspaper claims that the prices of houses are going up, which he considers to be a good thing, but I should consider that this is only a good thing if one already owns a house, or several, and not if one wishes to purchase same? It appears that many of our hospitals and prisons and other houses of correction are now owned by Americans, many of our buildings by Arabians, many of our railway systems by the Germans and the Dutch. Most English capital has been safely transferred to tax-free havens and most English jobs have been, the term is, "outsourced", which means that foreigners living abroad produce the clothing and respond to enquiries. If this is so, then I fail to understand why there is such an outcry against foreigners coming here and taking Englishmen's jobs! Logic would tell me that the more foreigners come to these shores, the fewer there are of them in their home countries to take our jobs when they have been outsourced abroad! But soon it seems the only professions not to be "outsourced" will be hansom cab drivers and engine drivers. There is an advertisement here – indeed, there are several such - which indicate to me that almost everything else can be ordered "online", whatever line that may be, even meals. Just think of it, we could outsource Mrs. Hudson and her estimable but indigestible breakfasts and order a takeaway to be delivered by some callow youth on a bicycle. Now, there may be a point to that.

But no, I digress. Though I was confused to find an advertisement offering 'foreign brides' for a small commission. I had thought slavery had been abolished some years ago.

They even attempted to prevent Parliament discussing this decision. The Mother of Parliaments! I am fully aware that, until now, nobody has been able to prove who the Father is, but even so! They seem to be stealing the entire country from under the noses of the populace. And hardly anyone is noticing! These so-called tabloid publications – I forebear to call them 'newspapers' – are so very down-market in every sense. Even the Sun is eclipsed by the Star! And yet their influence on the barely-reading populace is clearly enormous. I almost wish they would stick to corsetry and similar."

"My heavens, but you are indeed more concerned with Politics than I have ever seen you before," I said.

"Well, it simply annoys me. These people, they call themselves 'Brexiters', clearly a bastardised piece of vocabulary, are pushing their fake nostalgic arguments at the voting population."

"But how?" I asked.

"Why, Sentimentally, my dear Watson!"

..... Walter L. Rothschild. 30.09.2017