

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

A full-length play

The Incredible Murder of Cardinal Tosca

by

ALDEN NOWLAN

and

WALTER LEARNING



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P. O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT
THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work.

THE INCREDIBLE MURDER OF CARDINAL TOSCA

is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. On all programs this notice should appear: Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

©MCMLXXXI by
ALDEN NOWLAN and WALTER LEARNING
Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(THE INCREDIBLE MURDER OF CARDINAL TOSCA)
Cover design by Lea Learning

**We dedicate this volume to the original cast,
crew and director and all those who will
follow them. Also to Timothy Bond, who
will understand why.**

**Alden Nowlan
Walter Learning**

INTRODUCTION

It is a summer's night in 1976. To gain admittance to this suite, which occupies an entire floor of an hotel across the street from The Playhouse in Fredericton, New Brunswick, the two men were required to identify themselves to both an officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who looked quizzical, and a Scotland Yard inspector, who made no attempt to conceal his distaste. What possible business could this raffish pair have to transact with the Illustrious Lady within?

They have made their bows to the Illustrious Lady and she has graciously given them her hand. Now, with that same hand, she unlocks a red dispatch box bearing the arms of the Great House of which she is the head. Inside there is a second box, this one of battered tin. The two men draw long, deep breaths in unison. They could be priests contemplating a holy relic. The Illustrious Lady smiles.

"I met them both," she says. "Of course, I was a very little girl at the time. My grandmother took me to the Sussex Downs. She said she was going to introduce me to one of England's great monuments. I was quite astonished when the monument turned out to be an old gentleman who kept bees." The Illustrious Lady smiles again.

"He treated me exactly as if I were an adult," she says. "I suspect he treated all children like that. My grandmother said that I must never forget that afternoon and, of course, I never have." She opens the tin box. Each of the two men who stand facing her observes that the other is trembling.

"The Doctor was very different," says the Illustrious Lady. "My father often invited him to go shooting in the Highlands. Even when he was past seventy, the Doctor was one of the best shots in Europe, my father always said." She laughs aloud. "At breakfast, the Doctor would give me sugar cubes soaked in coffee while Papa pretended not to notice. Of course, we daren't play our little game if my grandmother was there."

She places the manuscript on a coffee table. "I'm afraid a little girl's impressions aren't very relevant," she says. But the two men are no longer listening. This does not disturb her. She smiles. The manuscript begins:

"Mr. Sherlock Holmes was in active practise as a consulting detective for twenty-three years, from 1880 until 1903. For seventeen of those years, I, Dr. John H. Watson, enjoyed the singular privilege of being his friend, his confidant and, in some measure, his colleague . . ."

Dr. Alden Nowlan and Dr. Walter Learning came into possession of the papers on which they have based their highly-successful play, *The Incredible Murder of Cardinal Tosca*. Those papers had been entrusted to the heirs of a certain Illustrious Client until such time as they might be made public, in whole or in part, "without shaking the Christian Church to its foundations and threatening the existence of dynasties which have flourished for a thousand years."

As all Holmesians are aware, the Master's investigation into Cardinal Tosca's sudden death is mentioned in passing in *The Adventure of Black Peter*. Even today, eighty-three years later, the case involves such political, religious and human ramifications that Drs. Nowlan and Learning have felt it their duty to withhold or disguise certain details — as, for example, the real name of Cardinal Tosca and the true cause of his eventual death.

They have knowingly altered the sequence of actual historical events only once: in anticipating by more than three years the assassination of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria which did not, in fact, take place until 1898, when she died in exactly the manner described in the play.

Neither Dr. Nowlan nor Dr. Learning will entertain speculation as to the identity of the Illustrious Lady for whose House they, like Mr. Holmes, have been privileged to perform some small services, in recognition of which they have been entrusted with these priceless documents.

We now entrust you with this priceless play, as earlier it was entrusted to the Actors Theatre of Louisville, where its success was quite extraordinary. As a famous Holmesian in the audience was heard to exclaim: "Good show!"

The Incredible Murder of Cardinal Tosca was first performed by Theatre New Brunswick at The Playhouse, Fredericton, N.B., Canada. The U. S. premiere at the Actors Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky.

Director..... Ted Follows
Designer..... Ed Kotanen
Technical Director, Lighting Designer..... Misha Tarasoff
Lighting Designer..... Gary Clarke
Stage Manager..... Pat Thomas
Assistant Stage Manager..... Shirley Third

CAST

Mother Midnight, Mrs. Hudson..... Eleanor Beecroft
Mr. Berry, Sir George Atkinson..... David Bulger
Moriarty..... Vern Chapman
Constable, Henchman, Chidiock Tichborne,
Boris - nonspeaking..... Billy (William) Dunlop
Dr. Watson..... Dan MacDonald
Sherlock Holmes, Fu Teng..... Jack Medley
Colonel Dashwood..... Jack Northmore
Inspector Hopkins, Birlstone, Henchman,..... William Samples
Violet Tichborne..... Wenna Shaw
Cardinal Tosca..... Kenneth Wickes

The play is written to be played in two acts but it is possible to play it as three acts by treating Act Two, Scenes One and Two, as separate acts.

THE INCREDIBLE MURDER OF CARDINAL TOSCA

A Full-Length Play

For Twelve Men and Two Women, plus Extras
(fewer men, with doubling)

CHARACTERS

Sherlock Holmes	..... himself
Dr. Watson	..... Holmes' faithful friend
Mrs. Hudson	..... their landlady
Professor Moriarty	..... an arch-fiend
Colonel Dashwood	..... Moriarty's assistant
Inspector Hopkins	..... of the police
Constable	..... also of the police
Sir George Atkinson	..... their superior
Chidlock Tichborne	..... a young priest
Violet	..... his "sister"
Cardinal Tosca	..... of the Pope's secret service
James Berry	..... a merchant
Henchman	..... one of Moriarty's followers
Boris, Satanists	..... non-speaking parts

PLACE: London.

TIME: 1895.

Act One

SCENE ONE

SCENE: Inside a cathedral-like structure. Entrances are at UC, L and R. At UC is an altar, with incense burners standing left and right of it.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: Organ music. Black stage. Dimly lit FIGURES enter L and R, the first two carrying candles which are placed on an altar UC. They line up at L and R running from upstage to downstage. After they are in place, a HOODED FIGURE in an appropriate mask enters from UC and stands before the altar.

A PRISONER is brought in from DR. He wears a loose robe. He has obviously been drugged and is barely conscious. He is stripped and laid across the altar. Throughout, he utters two phrases: "The eagle has two heads" and "It is he who partakes of the blood."

The hooded and masked figure, who is COLONEL DASHWOOD, the warlock of this coven of witches, takes a dagger and ceremoniously carves an inverted cross from the throat to the navel of the prisoner. He slowly raises the dagger to deliver the death thrust.

MORIARTY suddenly appears DR in a pin spot and shouts, "Enough! Let him live!"

BLACKOUT.

The atmosphere for this scene should be as dream-like as possible.

END OF SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO

SCENE: 221B Baker Street, the lodgings of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson. The entrance to the living room is at L, the door to other rooms at R. In the upstage wall is a fireplace, with the usual accessories. A large table stands at C with chairs about it, and other comfortable chairs are placed about the room. On the wall behind the door L is a rack with hooks for hats and coats; a walking stick hangs on the rack. At DL is a window. In the corner DR is a file of magazines – *The Illustrated London News*. On a side table (or in the cabinet) is a humidor of pipe tobacco. A cabinet upstage holds a decanter, glasses and a tray. On it also are a vase and two candles, one black and one white. Holmes' coat and hat are carelessly flung on the floor at L.

AS THE LIGHTS COME UP: From offstage we hear the music of a violin. The room is heavy with tobacco smoke. DR. WATSON and MRS. HUDSON enter L. WATSON is carrying a medical bag, which he puts down, and wearing a hat and topcoat, which he takes off.

It is important to bear in mind that DR. WATSON is no simpleton; if he occasionally appears to be one it is only because we are comparing him with a man of genius, Sherlock Holmes. Born in Northumberland in 1852, Watson served as a medical officer with the British Army in the late war in Afghanistan, where he was wounded and invalided home to England, shortly before his first meeting with Holmes. A widower for the past three years, he is once again sharing lodgings with Holmes who, until a year ago, was believed to have been killed in an encounter with Professor Moriarty, his arch-enemy, at the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland.

WATSON. I take it from the music that the game is afoot again, Mrs. Hudson. (He hangs his hat and topcoat on a hook behind the door.)

MRS. HUDSON. I don't know about that, Doctor, but he's not had so much as a wink of sleep or a bite of food for three days.

WATSON. He must be on the track of very big game indeed.

MRS. HUDSON (picking up Holmes' coat and hat from the floor and hanging them next to Watson's). Well, at least, it's better for him than when he's bored and starts taking those terrible injections.

WATSON. The less said about that, the better, Mrs. Hudson.
MRS. HUDSON. Of course, Doctor.

WATSON. However, it will comfort you to know that a remarkable new medicine has been developed for the treatment of cocaine addiction. (He shows her a bottle.)

MRS. HUDSON. What is it?

WATSON. It's called heroin.

MRS. HUDSON. It will be a blessing for many a poor soul. Will there be anything else, sir?

WATSON. I'll ring if we need anything.

MRS. HUDSON. Try to get him to eat something. (WATSON nods. MRS. HUDSON exits. WATSON knocks lightly on Holmes' door, R.)

WATSON. Holmes? (The violin music continues. There is no reply.) Holmes? Are you there? (Aloud to himself as he turns away.) Of course he's there, Watson.

(HOLMES enters R, carrying a violin.)

HOLMES. My dear fellow! Of course I'm here!

WATSON. I hope I didn't interrupt you.

HOLMES. You did indeed interrupt me, Doctor. However, that does not lessen my pleasure at having you home. (He lays the violin down on a table.)

WATSON. I must apologize for not letting you know that I had to leave town for a few days. I actually had to run to catch the train.

HOLMES. To Portsmouth, where your old army orderly, Murray, the man who saved your life when you were wounded in Afghanistan, lay perilously ill. I'm delighted to perceive that his condition has improved.

WATSON. Holmes, you never cease to astonish me. How could you possibly have known about poor Murray?

HOLMES. When I observe that an old soldier has reverted to carrying his handkerchief in his sleeve as he did in his army

days, I may safely assume that something has reminded him of his military past. (WATSON takes his handkerchief from his sleeve.) Furthermore, you were limping slightly a moment ago, although it has been some time since your old wound actually pained you. The inference was fairly obvious.

WATSON. But how did you deduce that Murray was sick and was on the road to recovery?

HOLMES. Tut, Doctor! You took your medical bag. Moreover, the right shoulder of your coat bears an inordinate amount of lint such as can be found only on the seats of a London and South Western railway carriage. Evidently, you slept very peacefully during your journey home, something you'd scarcely have done if you were still concerned for your old comrade.

WATSON. Extraordinary!

HOLMES. Elementary. (We hear the downstairs doorbell.) Ah – that will be my visitor.

WATSON. Visitor, eh? It's not difficult for me to deduce that you've been occupied during my absence. May I ask what you're working on?

HOLMES. A number of things. Among them, I was successful in recovering a packet of somewhat compromising letters for Mr. Oscar Wilde.

WATSON. Compromising? I'm not surprised.

HOLMES. In one of them, he describes a very plain cockney stableboy as being "like a hyacinth, all white and gold."

WATSON. Abominable!

HOLMES. Extravagant, certainly.

WATSON. The fellow ought to be in prison.

HOLMES. Don't you think that a rather severe punishment for a bad simile?

(There is a knock on the door L, and MRS. HUDSON enters.)

MRS. HUDSON. Mr. Holmes, there's a strange gentleman asking to see you.

WATSON. Strange?

MRS. HUDSON. He's wearing a kind of mask, sir.

HOLMES. That will be Colonel Dashwood. Show him in.

MRS. HUDSON. Yes, sir. Oh! May I bring you anything, sir? Some beef tea, perhaps.

HOLMES. Later, Mrs. Hudson.

MRS. HUDSON. A poached egg?

HOLMES. No.

MRS. HUDSON. Very well, then.

(MRS. HUDSON starts to exit and bumps into DASHWOOD, who wears a half-mask made to resemble a human face.)

DASHWOOD. I haven't got all day, Holmes.

MRS. HUDSON. Well! (She exits, closing the door.)

HOLMES. I'm delighted to see you again, Colonel. There are so few occasions nowadays when one can mix business with pleasure.

DASHWOOD. I find your sarcasm rather childish.

HOLMES. Oh, dear! I shall have to do better. I don't believe you've met my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson.

WATSON. How do you do, Colonel?

DASHWOOD. I do as I bloody well please.

WATSON (to HOLMES). Perhaps you'd prefer that I withdraw?

HOLMES. Not at all, my dear fellow.

DASHWOOD. I didn't come here to natter, Holmes. The price is five thousand pounds. Take it or leave it.

HOLMES. You jest, of course.

DASHWOOD. The devil I do. Either I get my five thousand pounds or your chum Wilde will trade his velvet suit for a prison uniform.

HOLMES. Against my better judgment, I have been given the authority to offer you ten pounds to compensate you for any expense you have incurred in recovering Mr. Wilde's manuscripts.

DASHWOOD. Wilde had better not play games with me. I won't stand for it.

HOLMES. "Mister" Wilde, if you please.

DASHWOOD. He could be "Lord" Wilde, for all I care. I warn you that I'm not a man to be trifled with.

HOLMES. You had best take the ten pounds, Colonel. You'll not get a farthing more.

DASHWOOD. Then you had better hand your client a loaded pistol and advise him to use it on himself, for he's a ruined man.

HOLMES. Tut! The moment the manuscripts are back in their author's possession, I shall urge him to publish them as a suite of prose-poems. If he calls them "Hymns to Apollo," not even Queen Victoria will be shocked.

DASHWOOD. You've not seen the last of me, Holmes. Our paths will cross again. And when they do . . . (DASHWOOD picks up a poker and bends it double.)

WATSON (warning). Holmes! (He is very impressed with Dashwood's strength.) By Jove!

DASHWOOD. Bear that in mind, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. (He gives HOLMES the bent poker and exits, slamming the door.)

WATSON. The fellow's a dangerous lunatic.

HOLMES. A most entertaining chap, however. (Effortlessly, HOLMES straightens the poker and hands it to WATSON.)

WATSON. Incredible! (He tries to bend the poker and fails.)

HOLMES. Meretricious.

WATSON. Why does he wear that hideous mask?

HOLMES. He was once the handsomest officer in the Life Guards. His avocation was seduction until a lady he ruined threw vitriol in his face.

WATSON. Good Lord! No wonder he's insane.

HOLMES. It did rather sour his disposition.

WATSON. But, Holmes, I don't understand. You told me you had recovered Wilde's letters.

HOLMES. And so I have. I was amusing myself at the Colonel's expense.

WATSON. But how did you recover them?

HOLMES. Burglary, with the unwitting assistance of the Colonel's head house-parlormaid, to whom I had to become engaged.

WATSON. Engaged — to be married?

HOLMES. Yes. I was disguised as a footman from a neighboring house.

WATSON. Holmes, if you'll forgive my saying so, that was downright caddish of you.

HOLMES. Not at all, Doctor. I assure you that by now my ex-fiancee has found solace in the arms of my hated rival, the postman. But, come, pray fill your pipe from the Persian slipper and let me tell you about a far more important case.

(WATSON does so. They both sit.) Imagine, if you can, that you are an elderly priest of the Church of Rome. You go into your church one morning to say Mass and there you find that the statuary has been smashed as though by a madman armed with a sledgehammer; the sanctuary has been violated and the sacred Host obscenely profaned. Then, more shocking still, you discover that one of your young curates is in the church . . .

WATSON. Dead?

HOLMES. No. Kneeling half-naked before two black candles, babbling like a madman, an inverted cross cut into his chest, a circlet of iron around his brow.

WATSON. Why a circlet of iron?

HOLMES. As protection against the fiends from Hell which might be called up by any who read from the Red Book of Appin.

WATSON. The Red Book of Appin?

HOLMES. The most terrible of all the ancient manuals of witchcraft.

WATSON. This is monstrous, Holmes.

HOLMES. What might have been your conclusion, had you been that elderly priest?

WATSON. The young fool of a curate had fallen in with those beastly Satanists and had got far more than he'd bargained for.

HOLMES. Quite so. Well done, Watson.

WATSON. Then where's the mystery?

HOLMES. I meant that you were correct as to the conclusions reached by the elderly priest.

WATSON. You have a different theory, then?

HOLMES. My dear fellow, you should know by now that I never form a theory until all the facts are in my possession. Young Hopkins is handling the case for Scotland Yard. Yesterday, at his invitation, I took the train down to Surrey to see the unfortunate curate, Father Chidioc Tichborne. His sister has moved him to a cottage and is, without great success, attempting to restore his mental and physical well-being.

WATSON. This must be hard on her. Is she a nurse?

HOLMES. I think not, but she does seem to know what she is about.

WATSON. Good.

HOLMES. She also refuses to believe that her brother could be guilty of such monstrous behavior.

WATSON. That's not unnatural.

HOLMES. Perhaps. Father Tichborne's sister is a most remarkable woman.

WATSON. In what way? Is she beautiful?

HOLMES. I believe that her bone structure and the texture and color of her skin would please most men.

WATSON. Holmes, there are times when I could swear that you were born on another planet.

HOLMES. Father Tichborne appears to be afflicted with a most distressing attack of brain fever. In the daytime, he becomes almost lucid. Each night, he resumes his ravings. His delirium is a singular thing. It's as though a finger were still tapping at the telegraph key but all the wires were down. He cries out again and again, "The eagle has two heads! It is he who partakes of the blood!"

WATSON. Crowley and his witchcraft-wallahs are always blathering about blood. Goat's blood, bat's blood, toad's blood . . .

HOLMES. God's blood! Of course. What has become of the brains my Maker gave me! Doctor, once again I am in your debt.

WATSON. I have no doubt that the connection between toad's blood and brain fever is a perfectly self-evident one to a logical mind, however . . .

HOLMES (fetching a short black candle and placing it on the table C). This is one of the candles from the church. (He fetches a long white candle.) And this candle is from the unfortunate curate's sick-room. (He places the white candle next to the black candle.)

WATSON. But, surely, you've already subjected both to chemical tests for poison.

HOLMES. Of course. And found nothing.

WATSON. Then I fail to see . . .

HOLMES. I made the unforgivable mistake of overlooking the obvious. A child would have lit the candles. I did not. Doctor, I beg you to assist me in a small experiment. Matches, please.

WATSON. I'm always happy to be of any service to you.
(During this conversation, HOLMES is using a knife to trim bits from the tops of the two candles.)

HOLMES. I must warn you that this could be dangerous.

WATSON. We've hunted dangerous game together before.

HOLMES. So we have, Doctor. (Then, referring to his work on the candles.) That should do very nicely. (He lights them with Watson's matches.) We shall put one here . . . and one here. Pray seat yourself directly in front of the white candle. (WATSON proceeds to do so.) I shall seat myself in front of the black. (HOLMES does so.) We are about to engage in a little exercise in the ancient art of witch-finding. Let us sit perfectly still and breathe deeply while each observes the other closely. (They do as HOLMES has indicated. There is a moment of silence.) How do you feel, Watson?

WATSON. I'm not sure. A bit giddy, perhaps. But that may be only my imagination.

HOLMES. Do you perceive any change in me?

WATSON. None. (A long pause.) I know it's absurd of me, Holmes, but this experiment is beginning to frighten me.

HOLMES. Yes.

WATSON. There's evil here. I can sense it. Unspeakable evil.

HOLMES. Blow out your candle. (HOLMES blows out his.)
I believe we've proved that my suspicions were correct. It would be folly to continue. Watson, can you hear me? (WATSON has begun to undergo horrible contortions of the face and body. HOLMES reaches over, seizes his candle and blows it out.)

WATSON (rising and knocking his chair over). Afghani horsemen at both ends of the valley.

HOLMES. To the window, man! (WATSON knocks HOLMES aside.)

WATSON. God in Heaven, we mustn't let them take us alive. I've seen what they do to their prisoners. My sabre! (WATSON snatches his old army sabre from the wall and advances on HOLMES.) You black-hearted Ghazi devil!

HOLMES. Watson, it's Holmes!

WATSON. You're not massacring women and children now, you blackguard!

HOLMES. Watson!

(HOLMES grabs a walking-stick to ward off Watson's sabre blows. They fence for a moment. MRS. HUDSON enters L.)

MRS. HUDSON. Stop it, both of you! Have you gone mad?
WATSON. Don't worry, madam. I'll protect you.

HOLMES. It's all right, Mrs. Hudson. (HOLMES manages to pinch a nerve in Watson's neck. WATSON falls unconscious to the floor. HOLMES opens a window.)

MRS. HUDSON. Mr. Holmes, what in Heaven's name has been going on here?

HOLMES. You could say that the Doctor and I called up the devil.

MRS. HUDSON. You haven't hurt him?

HOLMES. No, no. I merely quieted him temporarily with the aid of the ancient Japanese art of Baritsu. He'll be quite all right in a moment, given this fresh air and, if you'd be so kind, a small glass of brandy.

MRS. HUDSON (fetching brandy from the cabinet). I must have the strangest lodgers of any landlady in England. Colonels that wear masks, gentlemen calling up the devil. Drink this, Doctor. (She administers the brandy to WATSON. He drinks.) That's the good boy.

WATSON. Thank you.

MRS. HUDSON. Feeling better, lad?

WATSON. I'm fine now, Mrs. Hudson.

MRS. HUDSON. Then I'll go back to my kitchen. (To HOLMES.) You wouldn't care for a bit of toasted cheese? (HOLMES shakes his head.) If you die of starvation, it will be through no fault of mine. (MRS. HUDSON exits.)

WATSON. Holmes, what's in that candle?

HOLMES. The effects indicate that it is a chemical derivative of a root whose Latin name is Sanguis Lucifero.

WATSON. The blood of Lucifer.

HOLMES. The Lal-Taw tribesmen of Si-Kiang, who use it in their manhood initiation ceremonies, know it as Nal-Low-Ning-Nar, the wine of the black gods.

WATSON. Now we know why Father Tichborne's delirium worsens at night.

HOLMES. This drug was distilled from its natural state by someone singularly adept at chemistry. (He touches the white candle with a finger, tastes it and invites WATSON to do the same.) Taste it. It's quite harmless unless combusted.

WATSON (tasting it). Sugar!

HOLMES. The villain broke bits from a sugarloaf and soaked them in the chemical liquid, then cast them in the candles in such a way that they'd ignite at predetermined intervals.

WATSON. Why wasn't the sister affected?

HOLMES (putting on his coat and deerstalker). The odds were against her being present at the moment when the poison was ignited. Moreover, she'd have had to sit very close to the flame and breathe very deeply of its fumes, a highly unlikely exercise to perform while officiating in a sick-room. (At appropriate intervals, in terms of timing, we hear, through the open window, the sound of a carriage stopping outside and, a little later, the sound of the downstairs doorbell.)

WATSON. But why would anyone go to such lengths to destroy an obscure clergyman? (He returns the candles to the cabinet.)

HOLMES. There are times when the king does not consider it beneath his dignity to remove a pawn.

WATSON. Where are you off to now?

HOLMES. To Surrey.

WATSON. Without me?

HOLMES. Do you feel up to a railway journey?

WATSON. I feel absolutely fit.

HOLMES. Then let us be off for Waterloo Station. Now we can save Father Tichborne. I suggest you bring along your old service revolver.

(A knock is heard at the door L and MRS. HUDSON enters with HOPKINS and VIOLET.)

MRS. HUDSON. Inspector Hopkins and Miss Violet Tichborne.
(She leaves.)

VIOLET. Mr. Holmes, my brother is dead.