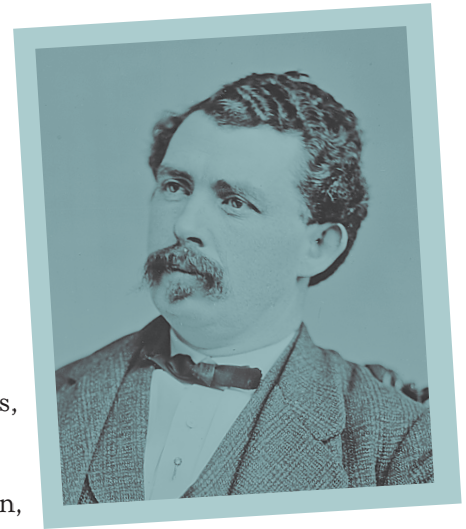


---

**I** *smiled and shook my head.* “I can quite understand your thinking so,” I said. “Of course, in your position of unofficial adviser and helper to everybody who is absolutely puzzled, throughout three continents, you are brought in contact with all that is strange and bizarre. But here”—I picked up the morning paper from the ground—“let us put it to a practical test. Here is the first heading upon which I come. ‘A husband’s cruelty to his wife.’ There is half a column of print, but I know without reading it that it is all perfectly familiar to me. There is, of course, the other woman, the drink, the push, the blow, the bruise, the sympathetic sister or landlady. The crudest of writers could invent nothing more crude.”

“Indeed, your example is an unfortunate one for your argument,” said Holmes, taking the paper and glancing his eye down it. “This is the Dundas separation case, and, as it happens, I was engaged in clearing up some small points in connection with it. The husband was a teetotaler, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife, which, you will allow, is not an action likely to occur to the imagination of the average story-teller. Take a pinch of snuff, Doctor, and acknowledge that I have scored over you in your example.”



He held out his snuffbox of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid. Its splendour was in such contrast to his homely ways and simple life that I could not help commenting upon it.

“Ah,” said he, “I forgot that I had not seen you for some weeks. It is a little souvenir from the King of Bohemia in return for my assistance in the case of the Irene Adler papers.”

“And the ring?” I asked, glancing at a remarkable brilliant which sparkled upon his finger.