



The Adventure of the Abbey Grange

A2 Version

Part 1: A Body at the Abbey

Very early on a cold winter morning, Holmes wakes Watson. A message has arrived from Inspector Hopkins. They travel by the first train to Abbey Grange, a large house in Kent — the area to the south-east of London.

Sir Eustace Brackenstall is dead on the dining-room floor. He has been struck on the head with his own fireplace poker. The poker is bent from the force of the blow. His wife, Lady Brackenstall, is on a sofa with a bruise over her eye. Her maid, Theresa Wright, is looking after her.

Lady Brackenstall tells her story. Three burglars came in through the French windows — tall glass doors opening onto the garden. They tied her to a chair using a piece of bell-rope torn from the wall. A bell-rope is a cord that rings a bell in the kitchen to call servants. Her husband ran in to help but was struck down immediately. The burglars drank some wine, took some silver objects, and left.

Inspector Hopkins is satisfied. He thinks he knows the burglars. Holmes seems to agree, and they leave.

Part 2: Something Is Wrong

On the train back to London, Holmes makes them get off the train suddenly. He cannot leave the case. He lists the problems with the story: these burglars would not risk another job so soon after their last one. They would not kill a man when three against one gave them enough advantage. They did not take much silver when there was much more to take. And they stopped to drink wine after committing a murder.

But the most important clue is the wine glasses. Three glasses were used. But only one has beeswing — the dark natural sediment that forms in old red wine. If three people had each poured from the same bottle, the glasses would either all have sediment or all be clear. The only explanation is that only two glasses were really used. Someone poured the remains of both into a third glass to make it look like three people drank.

Holmes is now certain: Lady Brackenstall and Theresa are lying. They are protecting someone.

Part 3: The True Story

Holmes goes back to Abbey Grange and examines everything carefully. He finds that the bell-rope was cut cleanly near the top — not torn down by force. The person who cut it must have been very tall. Holmes can only just reach the place himself by climbing onto the fireplace mantelpiece.

He also finds a bloodstain on the seat of the chair where Lady Brackenstall was tied. If she was already sitting there when her husband was killed, how did his blood get onto the seat? She must have been placed in the chair after he died.

Holmes tells Lady Brackenstall he knows the truth. She breaks down and tells him everything.

Sir Eustace was a violent drunkard who had hurt her many times. On the voyage from Australia to England, she had fallen in love with a man named Jack Crocker, the first officer of the ship — a tall, strong, honest sailor. On the night of the murder, Crocker came to say goodbye before his next voyage. Sir Eustace found them together and attacked his wife with a stick. Crocker picked up the poker and struck him to protect her.

Theresa helped them invent the burglary story. Crocker cut the bell-rope — he is tall enough to reach it — tied Lady Brackenstall to the chair, and took some silver objects to make it look like a robbery. He poured two glasses of wine, then added the remains into a third glass to suggest three burglars had been drinking.

Part 4: Holmes Decides

Holmes wants to hear the story from Crocker himself. He sends a telegram. That evening, Crocker arrives at Baker Street. He is a tall, strong, sun-burned sailor. He tells his story honestly. He is not sorry. He would do the same again. But he will not let Lady Brackenstall suffer for what he did.

Holmes asks Watson to act as a jury — the group of ordinary people who decide guilt or innocence in a British court. Watson says: 'Not guilty.' Holmes declares Crocker free in

his own private court of judgement. He has already given Hopkins a clue about the silver — it is hidden in a pond near the house — but has kept the real story secret.

As Crocker leaves, Holmes tells him to come back to Lady Brackenstall in a year. He hopes their lives will justify the decision he has made tonight.