



Watson's Finances
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Preface

This story is not so much a pastiche (a faithful imitation of Dr. Watson's narration) as it is a piece of fanfiction told in third person. It is a short scene that attempts to amusingly explain the problem of how Watson paid the rent at Baker Street while he was a bachelor for six or seven years. When he lived with Holmes, he only had his army wound pension and no medical practice. (At least, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did not make explicitly clear whether Watson had a practice prior to his marriage.) Also, the first novel about Holmes would not be published until December 1887, so Watson could not rely on his writings for income either. So how did Watson support himself?

I originally posted "Watson's Finances" on the Hounds of the Internet, a mailing list for Sherlockians to discuss the original Holmes stories and any related ephemera. Then my story was posted on a friend's Sherlockian website.

I later added onto the story and published it on my slash website, with footnotes. Slash, for those who do not know, is a term for fiction that depicts romance or sex between two same gender characters. In this case it would be a romance between Holmes and Watson. Since the slash version is already available on my website, I choose to publish the non-slash version here, with one footnote.

Thank you for reading, and please post any comments here at Feedbacks or at my blog.

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Watson's Finances

Holmes opened his mail a few days following the case of the Giant Rat of Sumatra,¹ for which the world is still not prepared. From an envelope bearing his clients' address, Holmes withdrew a cheque and then casually tossed the letter at Watson. "Read," he instructed, while getting up from the settee and going to his desk.

Watson looked over the letter with curiosity, one sentence particularly catching his eye: "On the question of the medical services fee, Mr. Holmes, we certainly do not object to remunerating for this expense, and we hope that you will convey our deep appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Watson for the significant assistance that he rendered to us and to all involved." Watson wrinkled his brow, "Holmes, what is this about?"

Holmes returned with a document and his cheque-book in hand. "A copy of the bill I sent to them," Holmes explained, giving the sheet to Watson. He turned and began to write out a cheque of his own.

Watson looked at the list of itemised expenses from their case, and soon spotted one expense that Holmes had asterisked. "Medical services rendered by Dr. Watson" was followed by a fee, and Holmes had inscribed below, "Please inform me if you have any objection to paying for this expense." Watson's eyes widened even more. "Holmes, but I never asked—"

"Tut, tut." Holmes tore out a cheque from his book and handed it to Watson. "Your portion of our bill, Watson."

"*Our* bill!"

"Watson, my dear fellow, how many people did you have to treat during this taxing affair? How many bites, nervous breakdowns, and disease scares, not to mention faintings, did you have to attend to? Did you think that I expected you to absorb all the expenses for medication, supplies, and so forth yourself? It is impractical. Illogical."

"Still, Holmes, to have presumed this way—"

"Watson, in my opinion, no client in his right mind ought to be ungrateful for your assistance in his time of need. If in any case a client is not in a position to defray your expenses, I shall do so myself."

1. An unpublished case which Holmes mentions in "The Sussex Vampire," saying that this is "a story for which the world is not yet prepared." The case also has something to do with a boat named Matilda Briggs. I'm thinking maybe the clients for this case may have been a shipping company, or even the mysterious legal firm of Morrison, Morrison, and Dodd, who apparently specialise "entirely upon the assessment of machinery."

"Holmes, this is really too much. I cannot accept money from a friend—" He tried to hand the cheque back to Holmes.

"Watson, for heaven's sake, we are partners are we not?" That remark silenced Watson and left a dumbfounded look upon his face. Holmes shrugged. "Consider, after all, what you would be doing if you were not always following me upon investigations: you would be applying your skills in a more professional setting, a practice or a hospital, and earning an income. Since you forgo this work to do me the courtesy of participating in these affairs with me as my assistant, my colleague, you should be justly compensated. These are your earnings in our humble little firm."

Watson raised an eyebrow. "I was not aware that we had a 'firm'."

Holmes lit his pipe thoughtfully. "Neither was I," he shook out his match, "until it seemed to spring up around you. I went from being an independent consultant paying out negligible fees to my Irregulars and other occasional informants, to being part of a going concern with a doctor, accomplice, and publicist rolled into one."

Watson eyed Holmes with wonder, then glanced at the cheque in his hand again.

"By the way," Holmes continued, "I shall not be paying you for your role as publicist. I do draw my limits somewhere."

A smile of quiet amusement crossed Watson's face. He rose and fetched his own cheque-book, almost beaming with pride as he slipped Holmes's cheque inside. He also folded up the copy of the bill carefully, keeping it as a souvenir.

"We should both go to the bank today," Holmes commented.

Watson nodded and chuckled to himself. He wondered if Holmes would open a joint banking account for 'company expenses' and not tell Watson either—until he was asked to withdraw from it. Watson smilingly wrote upon the back of the folded sheet 'our bill.'

Holmes spoke from the settee. "Do you find my calculation of your wages flawed or amusingly amiss?"

"No, Holmes," he quickly assured, returning to his chair. "No, you are quite fair. As fair as you are to the Irregulars. I should have expected myself that you would do something like this, but that you—" Watson cleared his throat, "Forgive me. You are not thoughtless by any means, Holmes, but usually you seem rather unconcerned about my affairs—which is quite understandable, considering that you are a busy indiv—"

Waving Watson's apologies away, Holmes interjected in a perfect deadpan, "I believe the term is 'callous bastard', Watson. Or, among the more earthy classes, 'rotten sod'."

Watson laughed outright, and suddenly felt very happy to be a part of the Sherlock Holmes consulting detective agency.

THE END

From the same author on Feedbacks

Ella's Mother (2009)

Reflections on family, trauma, and ghosts, from a reluctant mother.

Excerpt:

I'm staring at Ella down by the stream. Not quite four, and she scampers about like an elfin who has all the world in her hands. I wonder why and how she can be so resilient. Of course she has no conscious memory of the trauma anymore, but what about her subconscious? Personally, I still can't recover, even though I hadn't been there at all. —But I must have lived through it a thousand times in nightmares.



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