



seeing the press of eager faces at my window,

I knew in an instant that I was in mortal danger—or if not mortal, then certainly our sanity was to be challenged. At least ten of them, Americans all, each wearing one or several lapel-decorations depicting a bee or a calabash pipe or the address 221B. They were unmistakable, and unstoppable.

I raised my voice in alarm, and scurried as fast as a woman of 92 can to check the locks on the doors. The cook came to see, and being a woman of wit as well as culinary ability, joined instantly in battenning down our defences. While she went around the perimeter, closing the curtains, I picked up the telephone and summoned assistance: the stout, and stout-hearted, grandson of my old farm manager, both of the generations named Patrick.

In minutes, young Patrick was roaring over the paddocks in his Land Rover, dog and shotgun to hand. The Sherlockians made a hasty retreat, first to the road and then, when Patrick took up a position mid-drive with his shotgun over his arm, up the road in the direction of the village. I was tempted to telephone the inn and request that they deny these invaders entrance, or at least make certain their beer was overly warmed, but on second thought, an open declaration of war might only stir these Americans' dander.

Still, a declaration of war it had become.

