



olmes eventually came to a safe place

to pause in his ongoing chemical

experiment and toddled down the stairs to see what the uproar was. The cook set before us a pot of powerful tea and a plate of scones flavoured with outrage; Patrick leant his gun inside the door and joined us, trusting to his dogs to raise an alarm; we sat around the kitchen table for a council of war.

Holmes and I had long been prepared for this day when his past came to roost on our heads. In fact, given a mere thirty seconds' warning, we were equipped to walk out with the essentials of life on our persons, and disappear permanently.

This, we thought, would not require such extreme measures. Instead, we planned how best to instigate our second defence, which we had come up with some years earlier when the local amateur Eastbourne Dramatic Society put on a production of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The gentleman playing the lead, a local solicitor of barely forty, did a competent (if somewhat flamboyant) job of acting Holmes; later, we invited him to the house and arranged with him a smaller-scale dramatic rendition of the Great Detective.

The thought of acting a pseudo-Holmes in place of the actual Holmes appealed to his droll, Sussex-born sense of humour, and he agreed to be available, if and when we called on him.



It was time to raise the curtain on our idiosyncratic one-man show.