

This old story, like its fifty-nine siblings, invites endlessly enjoyable exercises in re-examination and re-presentation. Creating this version of "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" was certainly an enjoyable exercise. We hope reading and looking at it is too. Our selections and descriptions are, of course, neither definitive nor authoritative, but, rather, merely suggestive and illustrative (as well as largely derivative, thanks to the good work of Arthur Alexander, William S. Baring-Gould, Bernard Davies, Alistair Duncan, David Hammer, Michael Harrison, Christopher Redmond, David Sinclair, Thomas Bruce Wheeler, and many other scholars to whom we apologize for failing to name them). Please be on the lookout for extensions of and improvements to the remarks printed here, which will be sprinkled throughout the 2015 Green Bag Almanac & Reader.

From the point of view of the criminal expert," said Mr. Sherlock Holmes, "London has become a singularly uninteresting city since the death of the late lamented Professor Moriarty."

"I can hardly think that you would find many decent citizens to agree with you," I answered.

"Well, well, I must not be selfish," said he, with a smile, as he pushed back his chair from the breakfast-table. "The community is certainly the gainer, and no one the loser, save the poor out-of-work specialist, whose occupation has gone. With that man in the field, one's morning paper presented infinite possibilities. Often it was only the smallest trace, Watson, the faintest indication, and yet it was enough to tell me that the great malignant brain was there, as the gentlest tremors of the edges of the web remind one of the foul spider which lurks in the centre. Petty thefts, wanton assaults, purposeless outrage — to the man who held the clue all could be worked into one connected whole. To the scientific student of the higher criminal world, no capital in Europe offered the advantages which London then possessed. But now —" He shrugged his shoulders in humorous deprecation of the state of things which he had himself done so much to produce.

At the time of which I speak, Holmes had been back for some months, and I at his request had sold my practice and returned to share the old quarters in Baker Street [1]. A young doctor, named Verner, had purchased my small Kensington practice [2], and given with astonishingly little demur the highest price that I ventured to ask — an incident which only explained itself some years later, when I found that Verner was a distant relation of Holmes, and that it was my friend who had really found the money.

Our months of partnership had not been so uneventful as he had stated, for I find, on looking over my notes, that this period includes the case of the papers of ex-President Murillo, and also the shocking affair of the Dutch steamship *Friesland*, which so nearly cost us both our lives. His cold and proud nature was always averse, however, from anything in the shape of public applause, and he bound me in the most stringent terms to say no further word of himself, his methods, or his successes — a prohibition which, as I have explained, has only now been removed.

Mr. Sherlock Holmes was leaning back in his chair after his whimsical protest, and was unfolding his morning paper in a leisurely fashion, when our attention was arrested by a tremendous ring at the bell, followed immediately by a hollow drumming sound, as if someone were beating on the outer door with his fist. As it opened there came a tumultuous rush into the hall, rapid feet clattered up the stair, and an instant later a wild-eyed and frantic young man, pale, dishevelled, and palpitating, burst into the room. He looked from one to the other of us, and under our gaze of inquiry he became conscious that some apology was needed for this unceremonious entry.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Holmes," he cried. "You mustn't blame me. I am nearly mad. Mr. Holmes, I am the unhappy John Hector McFarlane."

He made the announcement as if the name alone would explain both his visit and its manner, but I could see, by my companion's unresponsive face, that it meant no more to him than to me.

"Have a cigarette, Mr. McFarlane," said he, pushing his case across. "I am sure that, with your symptoms, my friend Dr. Watson here would prescribe a sedative. The weather has been so very warm these last few days. Now, if you feel a little more composed, I should be glad if you would sit down in that chair, and tell us very slowly and quietly who you are, and what it is that you want. You mentioned your name, as if I should recognise it, but I assure you that, beyond the obvious facts that you are a bachelor, a solicitor, a Freemason, and an asthmatic, I know nothing whatever about you."

Familiar as I was with my friend's methods, it was not difficult for me to follow his deductions, and to observe the untidiness of attire, the sheaf of legal papers, the watch-charm, and the breathing which had prompted them. Our client, however, stared in amazement.

"Yes, I am all that, Mr. Holmes; and, in addition, I am the most unfortunate man at this moment in London. For Heaven's sake, don't abandon me, Mr. Holmes! If they come to arrest me before I have finished my story, make them give me time, so that I may tell you the whole truth. I could go to gaol happy if I knew that you were working for me outside."

"Arrest you?" said Holmes. "This is really most grati — most interesting. On what charge do you expect to be arrested?"

"Upon the charge of murdering Mr. Jonas Oldacre, of Lower Norwood [3]."

My companion's expressive face showed a sympathy which was not, I am afraid, entirely unmixed with satisfaction.

"Dear me," said he, "it was only this moment at breakfast that I was saying to my friend, Dr. Watson, that sensational cases had disappeared out of our papers."

Our visitor stretched forward a quivering hand and picked up the *Daily Telegraph*, which still lay upon Holmes' knee.

"If you had looked at it, sir, you would have seen at a glance what the errand is on which I have come to you this morning. I feel as if my name and my misfortune must be in every man's mouth." He turned it over to expose the central page. "Here it is, and with your permission I will read it to you. Listen to this, Mr. Holmes. The headlines are: 'Mysterious Affair at Lower Norwood. Disappearance of a Well-known Builder. Suspicion of Murder and Arson. A Clue to the Criminal.' That is the clue which they are already following, Mr. Holmes, and I know that it leads infallibly to me. I have been followed from London Bridge Station [4], and I am sure that they are only waiting for the warrant to arrest me. It will break my mother's heart — it will break her heart!" He wrung his hands in an agony of apprehension, and swayed backwards and forwards in his chair.

I looked with interest upon this man, who was accused of being the perpetrator of a crime of violence. He was flaxen-haired and handsome, in a washed-out negative fashion, with frightened blue eyes, and a clean-shaven face, with a weak, sensitive mouth. His age may have been about twenty-seven, his dress and bearing that of a gentleman. From the pocket of his light summer overcoat protruded the bundle of indorsed papers which proclaimed his profession.

"We must use what time we have," said Holmes. "Watson, would you have the kindness to take the paper and to read the paragraph in question?" Underneath the vigorous headlines which our client had quoted, I read the following suggestive narrative:

1 Baker Street: To reflect on possible 221Bs, please see page 2.



Kensington: Dr. Watson relocated back to Baker Street from some place just off Church Street, near Kensington Gardens. This picture shows (at right) the intersection of Kensington High Street with Church Street near the south-west corner of Kensington Gardens. The High Street was lined with shops, and on the north side of the thoroughfare sat two main attractions, the public library (in the middle, with an elaborate clock tower over its front entrance) and town hall (to the library's left). Several smaller, quieter streets that intersect with Church Street to the north and west are also good candidates for the location of Watson's former home. Image source: *The Queen's London 145* (1897). See also Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventure of the Empty House* (1903); G.E. Mitton, *The Fascination of London: Kensington 42-43* (Walter Besant ed., 1903).



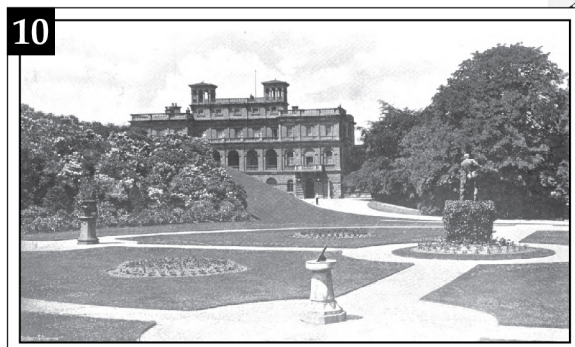
Newgate Prison: No jail is mentioned by name in *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder*, but when Inspector Lestrade refers to "gaol" as the place from which John Hector McFarlane would have had to escape "in the dead of night in order to strengthen the evidence against himself," he probably means the Newgate — that big, dark, nearly windowless block of a building. At that time, it "was used exclusively to hold prisoners awaiting trial or execution." Image source: *The Queen's London 313* (1897). See also Mark Jones & Peter Johnstone, *History of Criminal Justice 151* (5th ed., 2012).



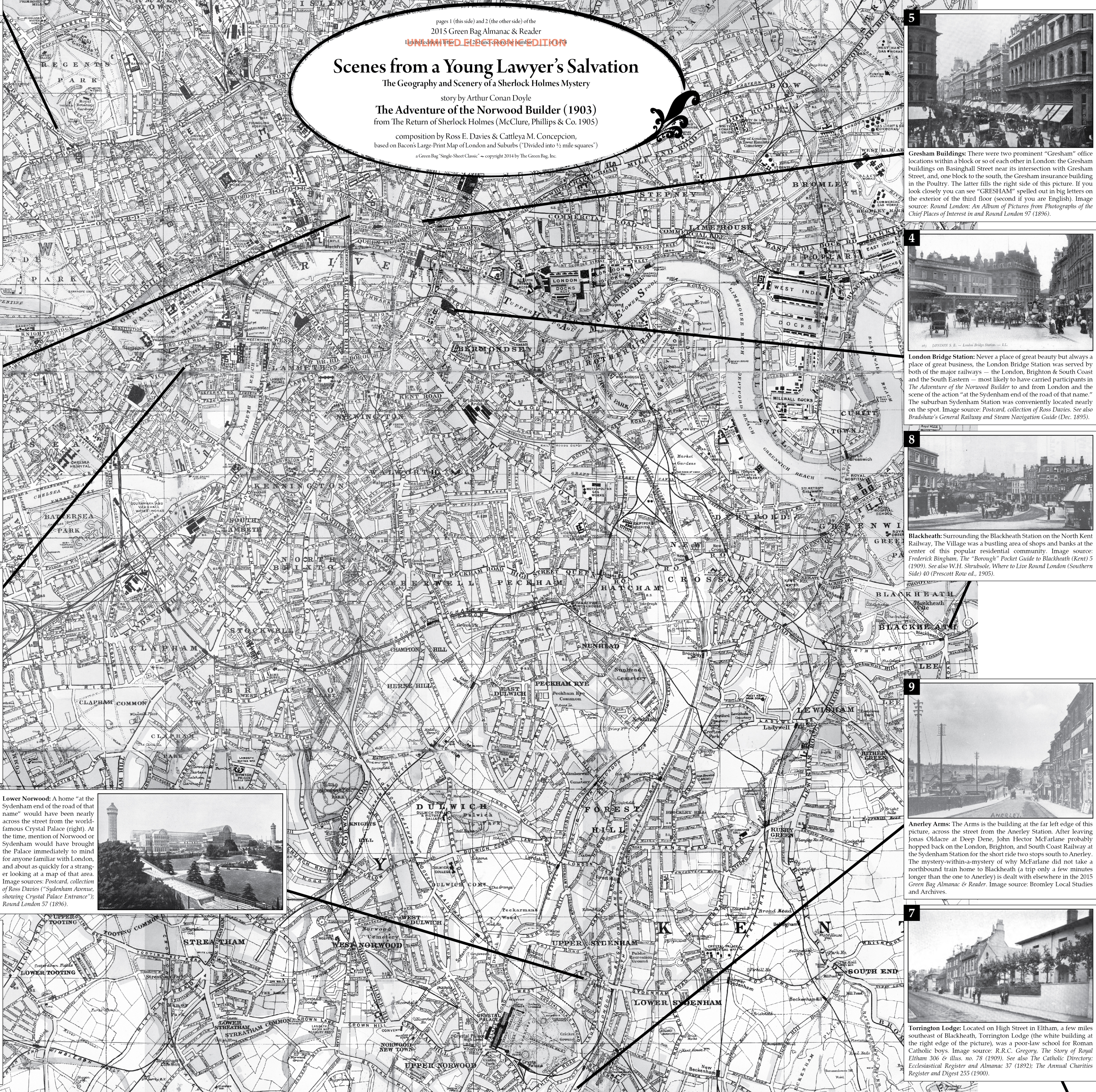
Scotland Yard: This may not be the spazziest picture of Scotland Yard, but it does show the facility as it appeared between its opening in 1890 and its expansion in the early 1900s. We also like this photo because it is credited to "Russell and Sons, Baker Street." Image source: *New Scotland Yard: Its Customs and Curiosities, 18* *The English Illustrated Magazine 355, 359* (Dec. 1897).



Lower Norwood: A home "at the Sydenham end of the road of that name" would have been nearly across the street from the world-famous Crystal Palace (right). At the time, mention of Norwood or Sydenham would have brought the Palace immediately to mind for anyone familiar with London, and about as quickly for a stranger looking at a map of that area. Image sources: *Postcard, collection of Ross Davies* ("Sydenham Avenue, showing Crystal Palace Entrance"; *Round London 57* (1896)).



Deep Dene House: The most famous home with this name was not a "big modern villa of staring brick," nor was it in Lower Norwood, "at the Sydenham end of the road of that name." Rather, it was a great old estate well to the southwest (in Dorking), renowned both for the art collection it housed and the gardens surrounding it. Image source: *Country Life Illustrated, May 20, 1899*, at 624, 628.



pages 1 (this side) and 2 (the other side) of the 2015 Green Bag Almanac & Reader
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Scenes from a Young Lawyer's Salvation

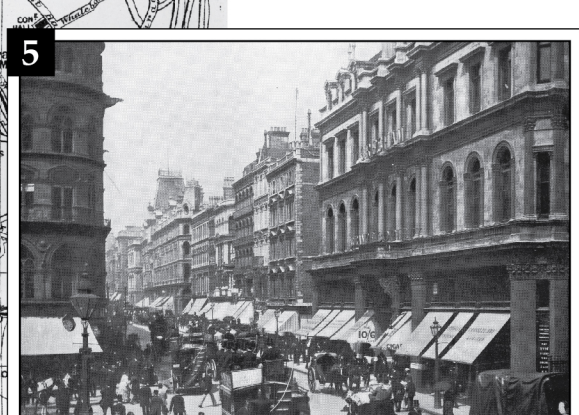
The Geography and Scenery of a Sherlock Holmes Mystery

story by Arthur Conan Doyle

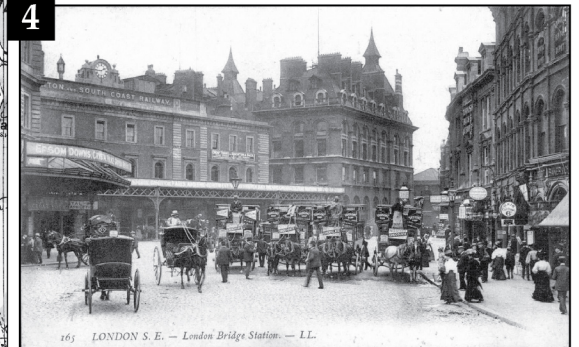
The Adventure of the Norwood Builder (1903)
from *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (McClure, Phillips & Co. 1905)

composition by Ross E. Davies & Cattleya M. Concepcion,
based on Bacon's Large-Print Map of London and Suburbs ("Divided into 1/2 mile squares")

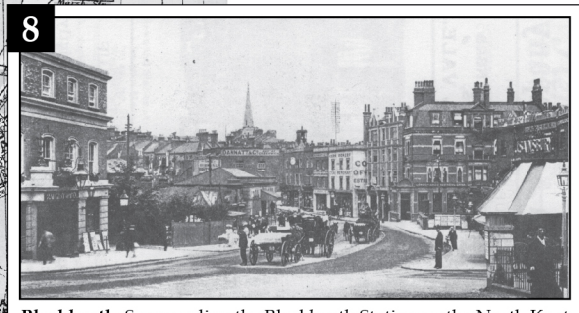
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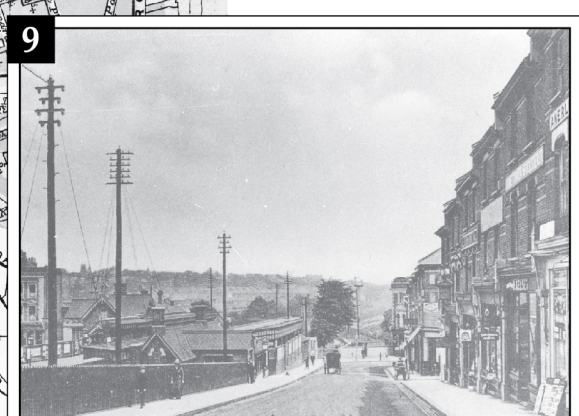
Gresham Buildings: There were two prominent "Gresham" office locations within a block or so of each other in London: the Gresham buildings on Basinghall Street near its intersection with Gresham Street, and, one block to the south, the Gresham insurance building in the Poultry. The latter fills the right side of this picture. If you look closely you can see "GRESHAM" spelled out in big letters on the exterior of the third floor (second if you are English). Image source: *Round London: An Album of Pictures from Photographs of the Chief Places of Interest in and Round London 97* (1896).



London Bridge Station: Never a place of great beauty but always a place of great business, the London Bridge Station was served by both of the major railways — the London, Brighton & South Coast and the South Eastern — most likely to have carried participants in *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder* to and from London and the scene of the action "at the Sydenham end of the road of that name." The suburban Sydenham Station was conveniently located nearby on the spot. Image source: *Postcard, collection of Ross Davies*. See also Bradshaw's *General Railway and Steam Navigation Guide* (Dec. 1895).



Blackheath: Surrounding the Blackheath Station on the North Kent Railway, the Village was a bustling area of shops and banks at the center of this popular residential community. Image source: *Frederick Bingham, The "Borough" Pocket Guide to Blackheath* (Kent 5 (1909). See also W.H. Shrubsole, *Where to Live Round London (Southern Side) 40* (Prescott Row ed., 1905).



Anerley Arms: The Arms is the building at the far left edge of this picture, across the street from the Anerley Station. After leaving Jonas Oldacre at Deep Dene, John Hector McFarlane probably hopped back on the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway at the Sydenham Station for the short ride two stops south to Anerley. The mystery-within-a-mystery of why McFarlane did not take a northbound train home to Blackheath (a trip only a few minutes longer than the one to Anerley) is dealt with elsewhere in the 2015 *Green Bag Almanac & Reader*. Image source: *Bromley Local Studies and Archives*.



Torrington Lodge: Located on High Street in Eltham, a few miles southeast of Blackheath, Torrington Lodge (the white building at the right edge of the picture), was a poor-law school for Roman Catholic boys. Image source: *R.R.C. Gregory, The Story of Roman Catholic Eltham 306 & illus. no. 78* (1909). See also *The Catholic Directory: Ecclesiastical Register and Almanac 37* (1892); *The Annual Charities Register and Digest 255* (1900).

MY COMPANION'S EXPRESSIVE FACE SHOWED A SYMPATHY WHICH WAS NOT, I AM AFRAID, ENTIRELY UNMIXED WITH SATISFACTION.

"STREY," SAID I, "THE MAN'S APPEARANCE WOULD GO FAR WITH ANY JURY." "THAT IS A DANGEROUS ARGUMENT, MY DEAR WATSON."

