

# Better Holmes and Watson

## The Granada Series Reviewed

### THE SOLITARY CYCLIST

Adaptation: Alan Plater

Direction: Paul Annett

"You really have done remarkably badly," sniffs Mr. Sherlock Holmes, having dispatched Dr. Watson on an errand and, upon Watson's return, finding himself less than pleased with the fruits of the good doctor's labors. "What have we gained by your expedition? The fact that the girl's story is true. I never doubted that. That there is a connection between the cyclist and the Hall, I never doubted that, either. That the Hall is tenanted by a man called Williamson. Who is the better for that?"

"I shall go back tomorrow," offers Watson.

"No, my dear sir, do not commit yourself to rashness because you are temporarily depressed. We can do nothing useful until Saturday."

And with that Sherlock Holmes dismisses the matter and strides purposefully down Baker Street. Dr. Watson, however, is not inclined to end the discussion without gaining at least one tiny crumb of praise from the Great Detective: "Did I really do remarkably badly?" he asks plaintively.

Holmes, surprised to find the subject not yet closed, pauses at the entrance to 221B and considers Watson's question for the briefest of moments. "Yes," he replies simply.

THE SOLITARY CYCLIST, Granada TV's fourth episode in THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, finds our friends in moods markedly more playful than those on view in A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA, THE DANCING MEN, and THE NAVAL TREATY. Indeed, Holmes is uncharacteristically warm and affable, even when he's interrupted in the testing of a vital chemical reaction by the unexpected arrival of Miss Violet Smith. At first, Miss Smith's troubles seem better suited to the administrations of a lovelorn columnist, or "agony aunt," than

they do to Holmes. Already engaged to Mr. Cyril Morton, the pretty musical teacher has been offered marriage by both Robert Carruthers (her employer) and by Carruthers's unpalatable companion, Jack Woodley. Temporarily at sea in such romantic waters, the Master Sleuth swims into action at the mention of Miss Smith's most pressing problem: she is being followed by a mysterious bearded man on a bicycle. Before the case is closed, Holmes and Watson have foiled a kidnapping (well, not quite), stopped a wedding (well, not quite), and saved Miss Smith from "a fate worse than death" (Victorian propriety wins out over all).

One of the high points of this episode is a sequence in which the cerebral Mr. Holmes engages in a bout of fisticuffs with the villain Woodley—and wins. It's a delight to watch the preening detective display his single scar to Watson while bragging that his opponent had to be carried home in a cart. (The good doctor's indulgence of his companion's unbridled ego gives the scene an added dash of humor.)

THE SOLITARY CYCLIST benefits tremendously from an excellent supporting cast. Barbara Wilshire is charmingly self-reliant as Miss Violet Smith, and Rosalie Williams brings her usual splendid



Jeremy Brett

gifts to the role of Mrs. Hudson. The adventure is all but stolen, though, by a triad of memorable villains: John Castle as the brooding Carruthers, Michael Siberry as the repugnant Woodley, and Ellis Dale as the bibulous, defrocked Williamson.

As Holmes and Watson, Jeremy Brett and David Burke have quite a fight on their hands against such formidable acting "foes"; that they manage to emerge victorious is a foregone conclusion to fans of the series.

—Richard Valley

Granada Television of England



**RIGHT:** Holmes and Watson are just moments too late to foil a dastardly kidnapping. Will they be in time to stop a forced wedding?

**NEXT PAGE:** On a lonely country road, Miss Violet Smith (Barbara Wilshire) is followed by a mysterious stranger on a bicycle (a disguised John Castle).

