

HIS LIMITS

"Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero" [FIVE]

In A Study in Scarlet, we're getting to know Sherlock Holmes through the eyes of Dr. Watson.

The good doctor noted some of the peculiarities of his friend and fellow lodger Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and he put together that helpful list that has defined what Sherlock Holmes was capable of.

- *Sherlock Holmes—his limits.*
- *Knowledge of Literature.—Nil.*
- *Philosophy.—Nil.*
- *Astronomy.—Nil.*
- *Politics.—Feeble.*
- *Botany.—Variable. Well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally. Knows nothing of practical gardening.*

- *Geology.—Practical but limited. Tells at a glance different soils from each other. After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers and told me by their colour and consistence in what part of London he had received them.*
- *Chemistry.—Profound.*
- *Anatomy.—Accurate, but unsystematic.*
- *Sensational Literature.—Immense. He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.*
- *Plays the violin well.*
- *Is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman.*
- *Has a good practical knowledge of British law.*

HIS LIMITS

"Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero" [FIVE] (continued)

As an aside, isn't it interesting Sherlockians somehow always come back to that famous list when analyzing Sherlock Holmes?

As if that snapshot of life at Baker Street dictates how the Great Detective would forever exist, frozen in amber.

But we know for certain that such is not the case. Holmes became quite philosophical in his 'rose soliloquy' in "The Naval Treaty":

"There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion," said he, leaning with his back against the shutters. "It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness

of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its color are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers."

Watson himself was taken aback, but ascribed it more as naturalism than philosophy, noting it was "a new phase of his character to me, for I had never before seen him show any keen interest in natural objects."

HIS LIMITS

*"Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero"
[FIVE] (continued)*

Over the years, though, Holmes clearly became quite reflective.

In the Preface to His Last Bow, Watson fills in the gaps from decades of their acquaintance:

"He has, for many years, lived in a small farm upon the downs five miles from Eastbourne, where his time is divided between philosophy and

agriculture."

So, once again it's that confluence of nature and philosophy we witnessed in "The Naval Treaty."

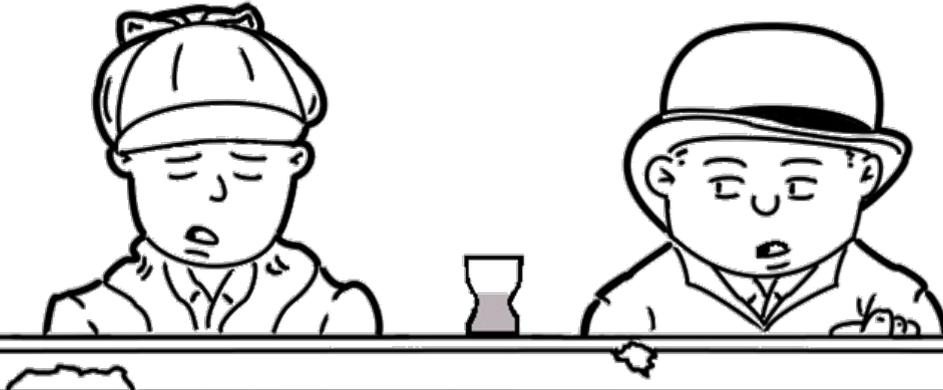
Where did Holmes get it from. Perhaps it can be linked to an early experience at Baker Street Elementary...

**HOLMES, I'M CONDUCTING A PHILOSOPHICAL
EXPERIMENT FOR ENGLISH CLASS...**

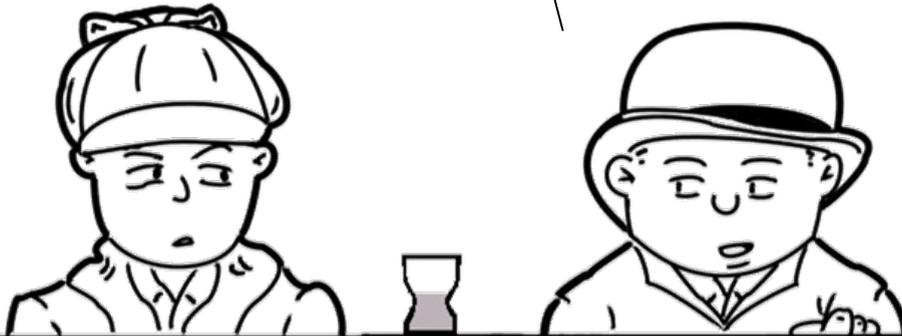


**WOULD YOU CONSIDER THIS GLASS
IS HALF-FULL OR HALF-EMPTY...?**

**DEPENDS... WHAT'S THE
CONTENTS OF THE GLASS?**



OH... NON-ALCOHOLIC LAMB'S WOOL.



EMPTY...

*THAT CLEARLY WASN'T
ONE OF YOUR CHOICES...*

