

The Bilge Pump

Vol. 10, No. 12 - December, 2022

*The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the
Barque Lone Star - founded November, 1970*



PLEASE NOTE: February 05, 2023 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on **February 05** at 1:00 pm central. I will send out the link for the meeting the week before the meeting. The story for the month is "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton".

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story of "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton".

Rich Krisciunas will look at the legal aspects of the story.

Bob Stek, BSI, will be our featured guest speaker.

IN THIS ISSUE

• Summary of the December, 2022 Meeting	03
• "A Unique Publishing Company" by Steve Mason, BSI, ASH	04
• Priory School Limerick by Sandy Kozinn, ASH	05
• "What's On Your Head", by Liese Sherwood Fabre	09
• "Stud Farm", by Judith Freeman	11
• "Do You Write Like Arthur Conan Doyle" by Karen Murdock	15
• Baker Street Elementary, by Joe Fay, Rusty Mason, and Steve Mason, BSI, ASH	17



For more information concerning our society, visit: <http://www.dfw-sherlock.org/>

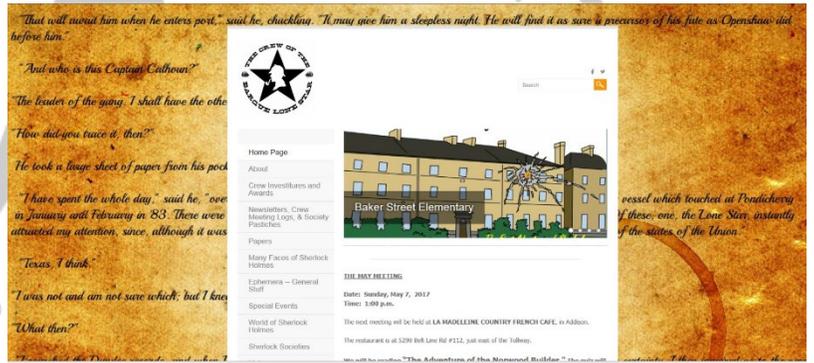
You can follow us on Twitter at: @barquelonestar

You can friend us on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/BarqueLoneStar>

Who dunnit: 	Third Mate Helmsman Spiritual Advisors	Steve Mason, BSI Walter Pieper Don Hobbs, BSI Dr. Jim Webb, BSI	mason.steve8080@gmail.com waltpieper@att.net 221b@verizon.net jimrwebb@ix.netcom.com
	Secretary Historian Webmaster	Cindy Brown Pam Mason Rusty Mason	myrkrid08@yahoo.com

Our Website:

www.dfw-sherlock.org



Our Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/BarqueLoneStar/>

DECEMBER 04 SUMMARY

Cindy Brown

There were 63 in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The meeting was opened by **Steve Mason**, who did the Toast "A Unique Publishing Company" (see page 4).

We then proceeded to the quiz on today's story, "The Adventure of Black Peter".

Next our own **Bob Katz, BSI, ASH** lead a discussion of the story for the month.

Baker Street Elementary completed their 8th year of existence, with many thanks to Joe Fay and Rusty Mason for creating such wonderful characters from the Canon.

The Legion of Zoom will have another virtual conference in February 2023 (see page 6).

The Lone Star Holmes conference will be held in Dallas during the weekend of May 26-27 (see page 7).

Our Society would like to start re-publishing old articles from various Sherlockians that may have never been published, or were published long enough ago that many of our members may have never seen it. Our members have been enjoying reading articles in our newsletter that have been previously published in other journals or newsletters.

Sandy Konzinn, ASH then did a limerick of "Black Peter".

Our guest speaker for the month was **Joe Eckrich, BSI**, who spoke on "A Few of My Favorite Things, a discussion of his collection and those that mean the most to him.

We next had the lighting round of the use of Shaw's puns (the sequel) in the story titles.

Our next meeting, in **February, 2023**, the story will be "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton", and the featured speaker will be **Bob Stek, BSI**. .

Rich Krisciunas then did the closing toast, to the Crew of the Barque Lone Star.

As always, thanks so much to Cindy Brown for keeping the notes of the meeting.

A UNIQUE PUBLISHING COMPANY

Steve Mason, BSI, ASH

In 1887, 135 years ago, all of this started with the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*.

Over a century later, we still have not completely finished writing about the master and his trusty chronicler.

In the past 6 years, the Crew of the Barque Lone Star has seen fit to ask their members

to contribute to 6 wonderful books concerning our hobby, passion, and those who participate in the study of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson.

We have recently put the books on a commercial website for sale (basically at cost I may add), so that more of an audience may see what we have done and enjoy the essays, limericks, pastiches, and other writings.

So I would like to pay tribute to all of those who have made the 6 books possible... so hang on...

Thanks to:

Melissa Aho, Bruce Aiken, Rudy Altergott, Curtis Armstrong, Beth Austin, Bill Beeson, Anna Behrens, Peter Blau, Barbara Brannon, Alexander Braun, Ann Caddell, Carol Cavalluzzi, Lauren Cercone, Dean Clark, Micah Cover, Margie Deck, Don Dillistone, Denny Dobry, Joe

Eckrich, Kerry Entrekin, Jeff Falkingham, Joe Fay, Lawrence Fischmann, Beth Gallego, Jay Ganguly, Cliff Goldfarb, Mark Hanson, Jim Hawkins, Karen Haynes, Eleanor Hébert, Thomas Hébert, Marland

The Crew of the Barque Lone Star is pleased to announce six years of pastiches are now available in paperback through Barnes and Noble.



dfw-sherlock.org



Henderson, Wendy Heyman-Marsaw, Don Hobbs, Nancy Holder, Val Hoski, Brenda Hutchison, Naching Kassa, Bob Katz, Richard Kearns, Brad Keefauver, Denis Keiser, Tim Kline, Sandy Kozinn, Rich Krisciunas, Jane Langston, David Leal, Edward Lear, Jen Liang, Ron Lies, Sandra Little, Bonnie MacBird, Diane Madsen, Judith Margolin, Alastair Martin, Pam Mason, Rusty Mason, David McCallister, Julie McKuras, Rebecca McManamy, Maureen Mosher, Rob Nunn, Karen Olson, John Pace,

Joe Page, Walter Pieper, Dorothy Pollack,
Gayle Puhl, Michael Quigley, Dana Richards,
Brenda Rossini, Greg Ruby, Barbara Rusch,
George Scheetz, Bob Sharman, Robert Stek,
Bob Tomalen, Jim Webb, Janice Weiner,
Vincent Wright, Leilehua Yuen, Donny Zaldin,
and Adriana Zayia.

And a special thanks to Liese Sherwood-Fabre
who formatted each of the books for final

printing and helped get them posted to the
website...

If I left out a name, it was truly inadvertent,
or maybe I just don't like the person
anymore... who's to say ?

But, the Crew is very proud and honored to
have all these people participate in our little
endeavor for the past 6 years... we look
forward to year 7 in 2023.

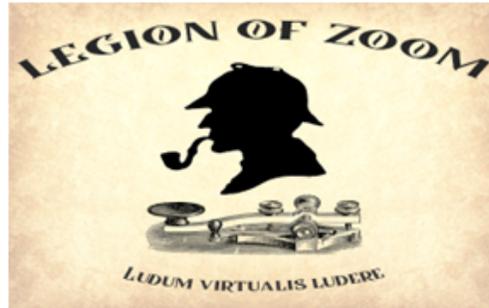
A ship's captain, widely known as Black Peter,
Was a murderer and notorious wife beater.

He gave a passenger no quarter -

Tossed him into the water -

Then was harpooned! Now what could be sweeter?

Sandy Kozinn, ASH



2nd Annual Legion of Zoom Virtual Conference "The Sitting Zoom at 221b Baker Street"

Sunday, February 19, 2023

**2 pm Eastern, 1 pm
Central, 11 am Pacific**

**Last year we had a
wonderful inaugural
meeting, including
representatives from 7
different countries...**

Confirmed Speakers

- **Catherine Cooke, "The Book of Life"**
- **Susan Dahlinger, "The Bruce-Partington Plans"**
 - **Beth Gallego Clifford Goldfarb, "Fordham, the Horsham Lawyer"**
- **Mark Jones, "Peter Jones"**
- **Burt Wolder, "The Third Pillar from the Left"**

For more information and to register, go to:

<http://www.dfw-sherlock.org/2023----2nd-annual-virtual-conference.html>

Please Mark Your Calendars "Lone Star Holmes"

A look at Sherlock Holmes past, present & future
May 26 – 27, 2023

Tentative Speakers include:

Barbara Rusch, BSI, ASH, MBt

Tim Johnson, BSI

Marino Alvarez, BSI

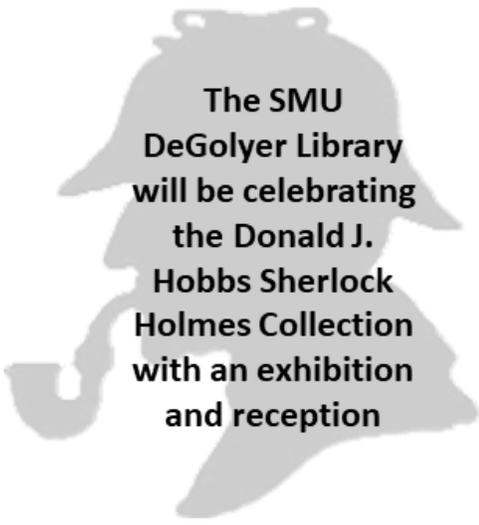
Robert Katz, BSI, ASH

Russell Merritt, BSI, ASH

Glen Miranker, BSI

Keynote Speaker

Peter E. Blau, BSI, ASH, MBt



The SMU
DeGolyer Library
will be celebrating
the Donald J.
Hobbs Sherlock
Holmes Collection
with an exhibition
and reception

We will post further
information in the near
future at our website
at: [www.dfw-
sherlock.org](http://www.dfw-sherlock.org)

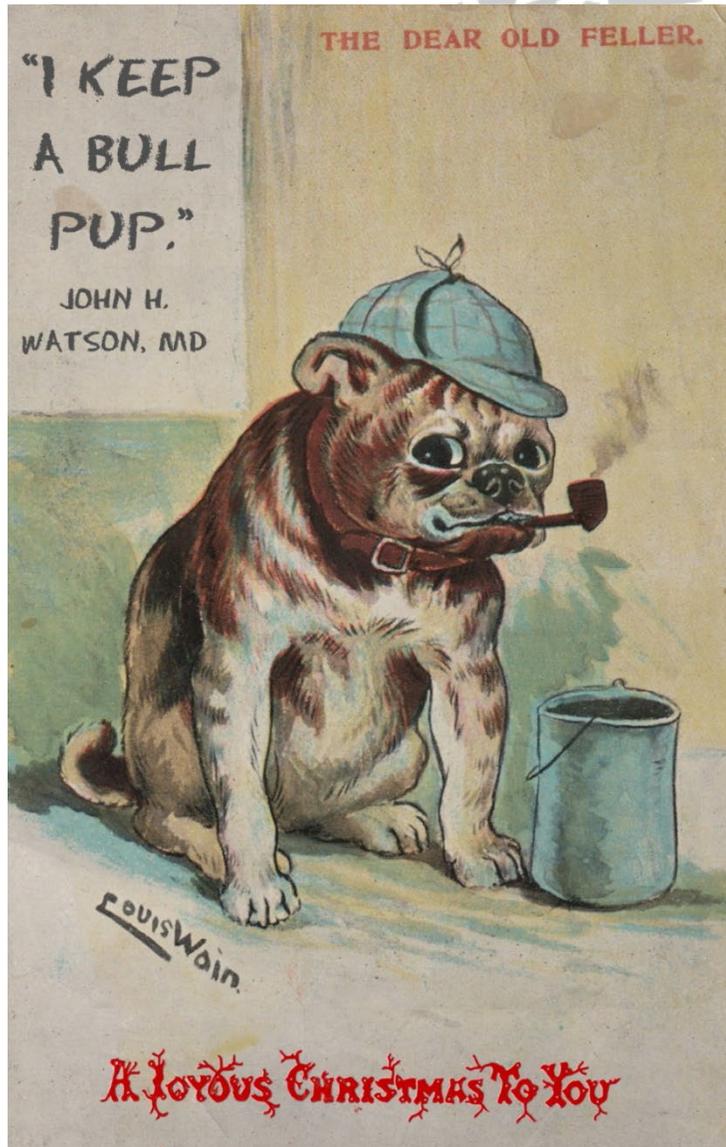
Co-hosted by Southern Methodist
University, DeGolyer Library, and the Crew
of the Barque Lone Star Society

Lone Star Holmes

(A look at Sherlock Holmes past, present & future)
Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX
May 26 -27, 2023



From our wonderful friends in England...



Louis Wain (1860-1939) is famous for his paintings and drawings of cats, but as this card shows, he was equally adept at depicting other creatures.

We have slightly adapted the picture. The original wording on the poster reads:

**BILL SYKES HIS DOG
GREAT SUCCESS
500 NIGHTS RUN**

That explains the deerstalker. In London, a cloth cap of any sort was only for the working class - honest or otherwise. A gentleman like Sherlock Holmes would wear a topper or a bowler. Unless he was in disguise, of course.

But Louis Wain does have authentic Holmes connections. His caricature of William Gillette as a cat, parodying the portrait of Gillette by 'Spy', is almost as famous as the original. And in 2021 he was portrayed on film by Benedict Cumberbatch in 'The Electrical Life of Louis Wain'.

The Compliments of the Season

Roger Johnson & Jean Upton
BSI, ASH ASH, BSI

Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE

WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR HEAD?

Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD, Lone Star Deck-Mate

In five cases, Holmes tells Watson, "Get your hat" prior to them heading out on an adventure. Every proper Victorian knew one simply did not go out in public, including the office, without an appropriate head covering. (1) Unless they were in the country, for example, Holmes would never have joined Watson on the street with a deerstalker. While many of the original illustrations included him in such attire, the hat was never mentioned in the Canon, (2) and was not appropriate for the city. A variety of other choices existed for Victorian men, however, one's social status and the fashion at the time dictated the exact style.

While not an exhaustive list of either the type of hat mentioned in the Canon or during the 1800s, men's hats included the flat cap, the top hat (to be distinguished from the stovepipe and the opera hat), the bowler, the Homburg, and the boater. The wool cap has perhaps the longest history. In 1571, Parliament decreed that all males over the age of six must wear a wool cap on Sundays and holidays. The nobility was excluded, leading to an association of the flat cap with the working class. (3)

Top hats have a long history in England and were originally made of felt from beaver or rabbit fur. The silk top hat made its appearance in England in 1797. Young men who made their grand tour in continental Europe returned with French top hats. Cheesecloth, linen and felt were arranged around a

wooden hat mold and then shellacked to create the stiff form. The final step was covering it in French silk. The top hat had a different shape from the stovepipe (worn by Abraham Lincoln). This tall hat was straight while the top hat was curved. (4) The opera hat lacks the shellacked stiffness of the top hat with a mechanism to make it collapse. (5) While the upper class introduced the top hat, by mid-century all classes wore the style (becoming a symbol for chimney sweeps), and then it returned to the upper classes by the end of the century. (6)

The bowler (such as the one shown in the original illustrations on Watson's head) was invented in 1850 and was originally used by gamekeepers but was adopted by the upper classes and then moved to the cities where the lower classes used it as well. This particular hat even made it to South America where a shipment to British railway workers in Bolivia found them too small for their heads. The Britons shifted their sales approach to women, convincing them the hat was the latest fashion in Europe. The hats found their way into the traditional dress of the Cholita, indigenous Bolivian women. (7)

The Homburg appeared in 1870 and was popularized by the Prince of Wales. This was considered an informal hat. The straw boater also made its appearance in 1870 with a machine that could sew straw. (8)



As noted, several hats were made with felt. This process involves using steam to draw fibers from rabbits, beavers, or wool into a cone mold. This material is then washed in hot water several times to make it shrink to the appropriate thickness for hat-making. (9) In addition to hot water, mercury nitrate was often used to increase the binding process. This led to mercury poisoning for workers in the hat factories, and the term “mad as a hatter.” The process did not end until the 20th century. (10)



resulted from shifting fashions and seasons. An appropriate hat for summer—usually made of straw—would never do for winter attire made of such materials as velvet. Over time, brims would change length, often adapted to the current hairstyles. Adornments from feathers to whole birds

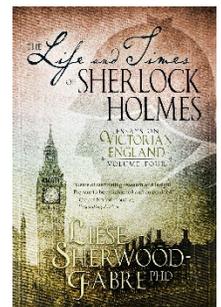
appeared. Hat pins arrived to hold the item in place. (11) Although Holmes’ superior observational skills might have been able to keep up with the changes, Watson might simply have been unable to do the same.

While the Canon includes more than sixteen types of hat and eight types of cap worn by Holmes and various clients, Watson included few descriptions of what women wore on their heads. This lack of discussion of women’s headwear most likely

In answer to the directive, “Get your hat,” both Holmes and Watson had a variety of choices, but rarely the beloved deerstalker.

- (1) <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/117987.html>
- (2) Steven Doyle and David Crowder, *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2010.
- (3) <https://www.britain-magazine.com/features/history-of-hats/>
- (4) <https://www.hatrealm.com/what-is-the-difference-between-top-hats-and-stovepipe-hats/>
- (5) <https://www.silktophats.eu/historytophat.html>
- (6) <https://press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/117987.html>
- (7) <https://travelandkeepfit.com/en/2018/06/29/bolivian-cholitas-and-the-very-weird-story-of-their-bowler-hats/>
- (8) <https://victorianweb.org/art/costume/nunn22.html>
- (9) <https://www.discoverbritainmag.com/hat-making-history/>
- (10) <https://www.hatrealm.com/why-was-mercury-used-in-hat-production/>
- (11) <https://sites.udel.edu/rockwoodarchives/exhibit/fashion/#:~:text=They%20were%20used%20primarily%20as,a%20woman%20left%20the%20house>

Liese Sherwood-Fabre has assembled essays similar to this into four collections, “*The Life and Times of Sherlock Holmes*.” The latest hit the shelves on December 6. You can find out more about this and her other works at liesesherwoodfabre.com.



STUD FARM

Judith Freeman, Holmes-Watson Report, March, 2004

There are seven separate kinds of birds, four separate kinds of insects, seventeen separate kinds of mammals and one lone reptile mentioned in *A Study in Scarlet*. Many of these animals are mentioned more than once, some as similes, others as characters in their own right. One mammal in particular, the horse, is mentioned forty times. Statistics like these makes *A Study in Scarlet* a veritable farm - you could say a STUD farm.

If you're afraid I'm about to launch into a laundry list of all the animals that inhabit STUD - relax, even I would find that boring.

Nevertheless, many of these animals are of interest and worthy of our attention, so let's look at a few.

Since there are so many horses mentioned in STUD, what better place to start than with *equus*. The earliest known horse fossils have been found right here in North America. The remains of *Hyracotherium* (a.k.a. "eohippus" or "dawn horse") date back to about 55 million years ago and were found in West River Valley, Wyoming. *Hyracotherium* wasn't much bigger than a dog. It had three toes per foot and relatively small teeth, which was all it needed to browse on the tender tree leaves of the forest. Over time, when the climate of North America changed from wet and warm to dryer and somewhat cooler, the forests shrank and the vast plains opened up. The horse adapted. It gradually became taller, its two side toes receded and eventually atrophied, and its teeth grew larger, all the better to chew the tougher grasses that now made up its diet.

Also, over time, horses migrated over land bridges to other continents, establishing populations in Asia, Europe, etc. This was fortunate because for reasons that are still not

clear, at the end of the last Ice Age horses went extinct in the Americas and did not return until the 16th century with the Spanish Conquistadors. The Conquistadors, who came here to loot and plunder, were high maintenance. They brought their food, their clothes, their furniture, their men at arms, and their horses with them. When they finished looting and plundering and they filled up the holds of their ships with the same, they had a problem - too much weight. They had to abandon something. Food and water were necessities, as were the men at arms, who also sailed the

ships. Since they now had riches to replace them, the furniture and the horses could be left behind.

Some of the horses were given or traded to the native Mesoamericans, but others ran free and eventually found their way back to their original stomping grounds, the Great Plains of North America. It was there, a century or so later, that they first encountered the various

tribes of Plains Indians. It is said that the reintroduction of the horse to North America more radically changed the lives of the Plains Indians than did the subsequent introduction of the automobile at the turn of the last century. Also, it was from that stock of smaller, wild horses, known as mustangs, that Lucy Ferrier's Pancho came.

Horses are extremely well designed: they are strong, they are fast, they have great stamina and they are trainable. This makes them outstanding athletes, such as Shoscombe Prince and Silver Blaze. They are essential as beasts of burden; they are a source of recreation, not to mention that they are handy for rescuing a wounded doctor.



Well, what would a farm be without cows? There are a number of bovines mentioned in this adventure - in addition to cows, we find cattle, bulls, bullocks, and oxen, as well bison and buffalo. It may be that the greatest appeal of cattle for many people is on a menu. Cattle were one of the first animals we humans domesticated roughly 10,000 years ago. They evolved from the aurochs, a species of wild ox that stood six feet tall at the shoulder. While their domestication initially took place in Africa and India, it might interest you to know that according to the Natural History Museum of London, the fossil remains of a 170,000 year old aurochs have been found in Knightsbridge. They also report that fossils of hippopotamus have been found in Trafalgar Square and woolly mammoth fossils along the Strand.

By the way, there is a difference between bison and buffalo. Bison, those woolly, nearsighted natives of North America's Great Plains (alkali or otherwise), are one of the few surviving species left from the end of the last Ice Age. Buffalo, which are found in Africa and Asia, have smooth hides and horns that are parted in the middle of their foreheads, not unlike the coiffure of Our Gang's Alfalfa. These animals enjoy a good wallow and are often referred to as water buffalo. While many people use bison and buffalo interchangeably, it should be noted Holmes observed (quite correctly) that it looked as if a herd of buffalo had destroyed evidence outside #3 Lauriston Gardens. Obviously, he knew bison are indigenous to the vast plains of North America.

On those same plains you can still find another animal mentioned in STUD, the ferret. They used to occupy much of the same territory as the cattle and bison just discussed. However the need for land for grazing cattle is one of the major reasons why the black-footed ferret is the most endangered mammal in North America. Ferrets feed on prairie dogs, and both animals build extensive networks of tunnels underground. Those tunnels are dangerous to cattle: if they step on a tunnel entrance they can be seriously injured. So, ranchers set about killing off the prairie dog.



Needless to say, this has had a devastating effect on both prairie dog and ferret populations.

Ferrets have long bodies, swift reactions, and voracious appetites. They are known for their sense of curiosity and their skill at hunting. The black-footed ferret, *Mustela nigripes*, is a member of the Mustelid family. Its European counterpart is *Mustela putorius* also known as the polecat. There, people sometimes used them for hunting - an activity known as ferreting, which Holmes employed to locate Jefferson Hope.



In STUD our old friend Lestrade is accused of being as "lean and ferret-like as ever." For a detective, being ferret-like isn't really a bad thing. If Lestrade did indeed look like a ferret, he would be rather cute. Unfortunately ferret isn't the only animal simile applied to him. By his own account he was no chicken, which in context seems to refer to his many years of experience with Scotland Yard. The poor man has also been described as "rat-faced" and having "the tenacity of a bulldog." Now would be a good time to talk about dogs.

It is not uncommon to find dogs on a farm, they often help with the guarding and herding of other animals. We find a variety of pooches that populate STUD. Even though they are different breeds, they are all the same species, with the exception of that mad dog Enoch Drebbler. He is quite another matter.

Coincidentally, dogs are another group of Canonical animals that originated in North America. Like the horse, the earliest known fossils of family Canidae are found here, dating to about 37 million years ago. Also like the horse, they trotted off across land bridges exploring other venues. Over time they changed and changed again until the first true wolf evolved about 1 million years ago.

All animals classified as being members of the genus *Canis* are considered dogs. That means that all of the canines mentioned in STUD are dogs, including the wolf

(*Canis lupus*), which Holmes wasn't, the coyote (*Canis latrans*), that denizen of the Great Plains as well as the various dogs (*Canis familiaris*).

Often reference books use the terms wolf and dog interchangeably. The difference in their DNA is said to be minuscule, far less than the difference between our DNA and that of our nearest relative, the chimpanzee.

At one time the wolf had the widest distribution of any mammal in the world; there wasn't a terrestrial environment they couldn't adapt to. As hunters, they have all the gifts: sensitive hearing, excellent eyesight, an acute sense of smell. They are well muscled and intelligent. Wolves are social animals - they live in packs. They work cooperatively and share the responsibility of raising their young. For eons, all of these factors made them superbly successful.

So what happened to them? Why have they disappeared from most of their former range? Why are they listed as endangered? For better or worse, the answer is us. Maybe we considered them too great a threat because they were better at hunting than we were. While we humans enjoy being competitive, we also enjoy eliminating the competition, which is what we've almost done to the wolf. We have demonized them to justify our actions. From our earliest childhood stories, like "Little Red Riding Hood," we are taught to hate and fear wolves. Small wonder Brigham Young did not want them in the Mormon fold.

Wolves are not sly, but rather they are shy of humans and avoid us when they can. Happily, since the enactment of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 their population numbers in the lower 48 states have gone from a mere few hundred to an estimated 3,500.

Dogs and wolves are very vocal, able to make a variety of howls, growls, yips, and barks. While many a pet dog has been encouraged by its human to sing, I very much doubt that any could carol like a lark - certainly not bloodhounds. This makes a good segue to the birds.

It is in *STUD* that Holmes quotes Charles Darwin as having said, "The power of producing and appreciating it [music] existed among the human race long before the power of speech." What music would have been available to the earliest humans? The answer is birdsong. Without a doubt, birds have provided us with both pleasure and inspiration for some time.



We were obviously impressed with their ability to take to the wing as well as the beautiful sounds that many of them produce. It took millennia for us to be able to do what most of the 9,000 species of birds do naturally

- fly. It took much less time for us to try to imitate the music they make. The evidence for this is flute-like instruments made of bone and ivory, artifacts that have been dated at 43,000 to 82,000 years old.

In *STUD* we also find Mormons imitating birds. Calls of the whip-poor-will and the owl are used as conspiratorial signals. The owl they most likely imitated was the Great Horned Owl, whose habitat includes the plains, forests, deserts, and swamps of North America. It is the largest of North America's owls, and it is called homed because the feathers on top of its head give the appearance of horns. Owls also have specially modified flight feathers, which have downy fringes allowing for silent flight and success in hunting.

Owls are part of the group of birds known as raptors, a group that also includes eagles, hawks, and vultures, all of which are to be found in *STUD*. If Eagle Ravine, where young Hope had stashed the getaway mule and horses, was located near a body of water, those eagles might have been bald eagles, America's national symbol.

Sadly, these magnificent hunting birds are listed as endangered. Due to our use of DDT we nearly had to choose a different national symbol. We banned the use of this pesticide in 1972, and since then our bald eagle population has gone from about 800 breeding pairs to about 7,000 breeding pairs today.

So what does it matter, one species more or less? Well, it matters a lot. The number of living things on this planet greatly affects the quality of our lives. I'm not talking about aesthetics, although aesthetics are good. No, I'm talking about the actual quality of our lives. Studies done in the American mid west during the 1990s established the fact that the more diverse the biomass the healthier the environment.

That means the greater the variety of living things in a given area, the cleaner the air, the purer the water, the healthier the soil. We, as a species, breathe air, drink water, and eat foods grown in soil. Duh, dare I say it, it's elementary!



There is one other reason, one last thought I would like to leave you with. To many a Sherlockian, it is always 1895. However, there are future generations of readers yet to come - people who will someday find a comfortable place to sit and open to read for the first time a book we all know and love.

It would be nice to think that they will exist in a world where there are still real live eagles, real live ferrets, real live lions and tigers and bears, oh my! - that these animals and all the animals mentioned in the Canon will not have gone the way of the gaslit street lamp and the hansom cab.

Bibliography

Bradley, Daniel G., "Genetic Hoof prints," *Natural History Magazine*, February 2003.

Busch, Robert H., *The Wolf Almanac*, The Lyons Press, 1998.

Cheater, Mark, "Three Decades of the Endangered Species Act," *Defenders Magazine*, Fall 2003.

Clarkson, Stephen, *The Canonical Compendium*, Calabash Press, 1999.

Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1930.

Goodrich, William D., *The New Good Old Index*, Gasogene Press Ltd., 1987.

Greeley, Maureen, *Wolf*, Friedman/Fairfax Publishers, 2001.

Maestro, Vittorio, editor, *Mammals and Their Extinct Relatives*, A.M.N.H., 1994

Terres, John K., *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.

Walters, Martin, *Wildlife Factfinder*, Dempsey Parr, 1999.

Wilford, John Noble, "Playing of Flute May Have Graced Neanderthal Fire," *The New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1996.

Yoon, Carol Kaesuk, "Ecosystem's Productivity Rises with the Diversity of Its Species," *The New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1996.

DO YOU WRITE LIKE ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Karen Murdock

Started July 23, 2010. Finished March 12, 2011. Published in *The Serpentine Muse*, Volume 27, no. 4 (Summer 2011)

Winner of the “Jan WHIMSEY” award for “most whimsical” *Muse* article for 2011

It’s a bad combination — the seduction of new technology and the warm inner glow of egotism. Taken together, they can make the common sense you were born with get up and leave the room.

Take the hot new internet website “I Write Like” (<http://iwl.me>). Please.

It’s alluringly simple. You cut and paste a few paragraphs of English prose — any prose will do but egotism demands that it be yours — into the analyzer box and click the “Analyze” button. Without a moment’s hesitation “I Write Like” processes your prose and tells you “which famous writer you write like.”

The site is the work of a young Russian software programmer named Dmitry Chestnykh.

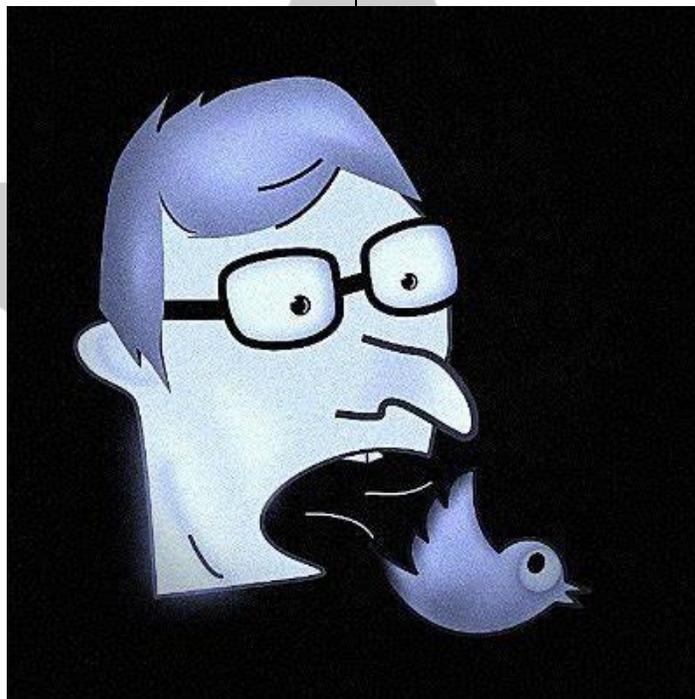
The program he wrote breaks prose down into simple computer code, analyzing word and sentence length to make its instant — and invariably flattering — assessment. Chestnykh, who apparently couples an appealing desire to please with entirely too much time on his hands, uploaded works from 50 of history’s greatest English writers to produce the IWL site.

You cannot lose with this program. IWL will never tell you that you write like a semi-literate shepherd or like a roomful of students in the second week of an English-as-a-Second-Language class. No, you are a literary genius every time. No wonder the site is so popular.

It is irresistible, and the moment I heard about IWL, I surfed over to the site. Just as a test, I plugged in the first paragraph of the last article I published in *The Serpentine Muse*. I clicked “Analyze.” The all-wise, all-knowing website instantly rendered its judgment. It told me I write like Arthur Conan Doyle.

My little Sherlockian heart went pit-a-pat. My native common sense leaped up from the sofa and dove out the window. Showers of glittering confetti rained down upon my ego. For a moment — OK, maybe three or four moments — I actually felt that I could and did write like my literary hero.

Then my native common sense returned, a bit battered and covered with dead leaves and dirty snow. It was in a surly mood and simply growled two words — “Sez who??” — before collapsing on the sofa, eyeing me askance, and falling asleep.



So I decided to see how good the algorithms of IWL were.

I plugged in pages from five other randomly-selected Sherlockian articles I have published. IWL told me, consecutively, that I write like

Charles Dickens
Vladimir Nabokov
David Foster Wallace
Robert Louis Stevenson
Ursula K. LeGuin

My Cloyingly-Insincere-Flattery Detector began to hum, then to ring, then to shriek. My native common sense woke up and smirked at me knowingly.

I plugged in two paragraphs from *Moby Dick*. IWL said that Herman Melville wrote like Daniel Defoe. Two paragraphs from *Moll Flanders* revealed that Defoe wrote like Jonathan Swift.

I took some more modern examples. Two paragraphs from Virginia Wolff's *To the Lighthouse* revealed that Wolff wrote like James Joyce. Two

So, dear readers, do YOU write like Arthur Conan Doyle? As Edgar Allan Poe once wrote, "Isn't it pretty to think so?"



paragraphs from Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* produced the conclusion that Joyce actually wrote like Vladimir Nabokov. When I plugged in paragraphs from *Tender is the Night*, IWL told me that F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote like either Vladimir Nabokov or David Foster Wallace or Mary Shelly, depending upon which paragraphs one used — and these were consecutive paragraphs, mind you.

My native common sense, who had been standing behind me watching all this, patted me on the shoulder, not unsympathetically I thought. I

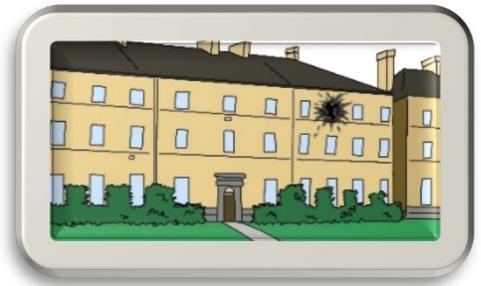
logged off "I Write Like" and began to type this article.

A large percentage of the readers of this journal have probably not read my article — scintillating and thought-provoking though it undoubtedly is, and downright Nabokovian in its wit and sophistication — even this far. They are all over on <http://iwl.me> seeking flattering assessments of their literary efforts.

Or maybe that was James Fenimore Cooper.

Baker Street Elementary

Created by: Joe Fay, Rusty & Steve Mason



BAKER STREET ELEMENTARY
NUMBER 430 - 12/11/2022

FAY, MASON & MASON

I FOUND OUT THIS WEEKEND I HAD A GREAT-UNCLE WHO WAS A 'HIGHWAYMAN', ROBBING VICTIMS IN THE HOUNSLOW HEATH AREA.



HE WAS KILLED DURING ONE SUCH ATTEMPT. WHAT IS BEWILDERING IS HIS FAMILY WAS NOT POOR, SO NO ONE KNOWS WHY HE CHOSE THIS PROFESSION.

Copyright 2022, Fay, Mason, Mason



THE MIND OF A CRIMINAL IS VERY PERPLEXING... WILL MAKE MY CAREER MUCH MORE CHALLENGING.

MAYBE WHEN I GET TO HEAVEN, I WILL ASK HIM WHY HE DID IT.



WHAT IF HE ISN'T THERE WHEN YOU GET THERE? IT IS UNLIKELY.

THEN YOU CAN ASK FOR ME.



I BELIEVE THAT IS A POINT FOR STAMFORD.



YOU CAN SEND ME A WIRE.

