The Bilge Pump

Vol. 12, No. 04 – April, 2024

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

PLEASE NOTE: May 05, 2024 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on **May 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 Valley of Fear (Part II)".

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story of "The Valley of Fear (Part II)".

Our Special Guest Speaker will be **Rob Nunn, BSI**, who will discuss "An Interesting Though Elementary Evening."

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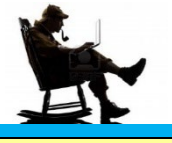

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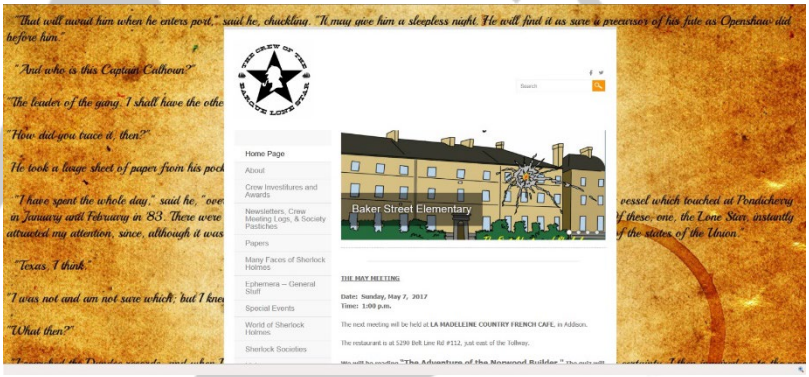


Our Facebook Page:

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

APRIL 07 SUMMARY

Cindy Brown, BSI, ASH

There were **59** in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

Rudy Altergott, BSI, provided a wonderful toast to "Interesting Characters."

Cindy Brown, BSI, gave a moving "Stand with Me on the Terrace" for our dear friend, Stu Nelan.

We then proceeded to the quiz on this month's story, *The Valley of Fear* (Part 1).

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

The Crew's 9th book is being planned for 2024. *Mr. Holmes Neighborhood* will tell stories about the people who live on Baker Street, and what they must think of their curious neighbor (see page 6).

The 500th episode of *Baker Street Elementary* came out last week. Congrats to Steve and Rusty Mason, and Joe Fay, the creators of this cartoon series.

Sandy Kozinn, ASH then did a limerick of *The Valley of Fear*.

Rich Krisciunas, ASH, then did his monthly presentation of Sherlockian Law 101.

Tim Kline was our featured presenter this month, and he discussed "The Joy of Collecting."

Brad Keefauver, BSI, presented his premiere *Canonical Top 10*, "What you can do with an umbrella or parasol."

Shana Carter, ASH, then conducted a reading from the *Baker Street Journal* (see page 4).

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

Thanks to Cindy Brown, BSI, Deckmate, for keeping the minutes.

WHO IS A BAKER STREET IRREGULAR?

Shana Carter

From the *Baker Street Journal,* Volume 3, number 2, 1948, Editor: Edgar W. Smith

By CANONICAL DEFINITION, a Baker Street Irregular is one who, in the Sherlockian world, is prepared—and equipped—to "go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone." That is a large if somewhat technical specification; but the source from which it derives commends it to consideration.

More narrowly, a Baker Street Irregular is a member, in good and accepted standing, of that small band of zealots which grouped itself together, one June evening in the far-gone year of 1934, for the avowed and unashamed purpose of keeping green in perpetuity the name and fame of Sherlock Holmes.

The solid core of that organization is composed of some sixty individuals, otherwise admittedly if not provably sane, who spend the better part of their leisure time in activities dedicated to the propagation of the faith.

And adhering to that core, so closely that distinction has become impossible, are the members of the Scion Societies throughout the land, whose only peculiarity — although none but a New Yorker would regard it as such—is their residence in the strange and distant provinces.

But the attribution of true Irregularity is not to be found in any of these categoric definitions.

An Irregular is, in sober fact, any kindred soul who gives spontaneously and abundantly of his time and thought in devotion to the Sacred Writings and to the writings about the Writings; who feels his pulses quicken and his step seem lighter whenever, in a darkling world, he turns the corner of reality into the most magic of all streets.

He is one of that legion who cluster about the banners which Dr. Watson and his followers have raised, and who occasionally, as the spirit moves them, raise a modest banner of their own.

He is a zealot in his own right, and a defender and protagonist of the zeal in others that seeks to keep alive the cause in which he shares belief.

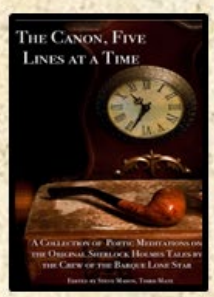
That is why the Irregulars themselves, in whatever category they may be found, extend a hand of honoring and honored welcome.

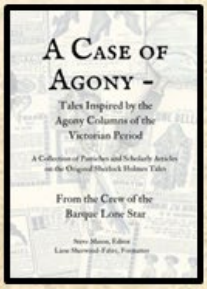
The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society has published 8 wonderful books. You may download a free copy of the books (as .pdf files) on our website...

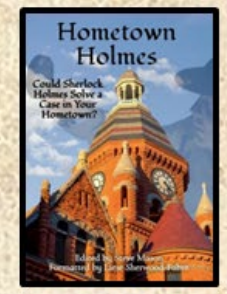
https://www.dfw-sherlock.org/society--crew-member-anthologies-pastiches.html

Or you may purchase a soft-back version of any of our books (at cost) at...

https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/the%20crew%20of%20the%20barque%20lone%20star







The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society is producing our 9th book in our 54th year of existence.

Have you ever wondered how the neighbors of 221 Baker Street, or those who worked on the street (such as the police officer, commissionaire, delivery boys) dealt with the constant drama permeating from the most famous address in the world?

Mr. Holmes' Neigbourhood will let residents and workers to voice their take on the world of Sherlock Holmes.

1. Stories should be 3,000 – 5,000 words, which is the average length for a short story. Obviously, a shorter story is fine.
2. Your story will be edited by one or two member volunteer editors, but only for grammar, typos… we will not edit the content of your story.
3. This project is not limited to just those members in the DFW area. Any member, or true Sherlockian, is welcome to submit a pastiche.
4. We plan to finalize the anthology by the end of the calendar year, so we ask for members to submit their entry by October 1.

The final product will be put together in book form and posted on our website and shared with all society members as a .pdf file. We plan on publishing copies of the book as a gift for those who submit a pastiche in the anthology.

BREAKING THE MOLD

Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD, BSI, Deck-Mate

Holmes utilized a wax replica of himself in two cases. In "The Adventure of the Empty House," Colonel Sabastian Moran attempted to assassinate Holmes with an air rifle. His target, however, turned out to be a wax bust created by Monsieur Oscar Meurnier. The second case, "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone," saw him using a similar wax bust (crafted by Tevernier, another French sculptor) to lure out the jewel thief Count Negretto Sylvius. Even though different cultures have been creating wax models for thousands of years, the concept gained a popular following in the 1800s with the invention of paraffin wax and Madame Tussaud's famous wax figure collection.

The use of wax figures dates back to ancient times. Egyptians included wax figures of gods in graves. Greeks fashioned wax dolls for children. Romans created wax models of ancestors to display in their homes and carry in funeral processions. (1) Wax models were also used in a process called lost-wax casting that dates back at least 5000 years. A figure is first carved in wax and covered in clay to create a mold. After the mold is heated and the wax is melted out, it is filled with bronze to create a permanent figure. (2) One of the oldest examples of this method is at least 4500 years old. (3)

Wax models regained prominence in 14th-century central Italy as votive objects presented to a saint to ask for grace or give thanks for receiving grace.

Nobles would have a life-size figure made of them with colored wax, dress them up in their clothes, and present them to the church as "an act of devotion." In the 1700s, Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II ordered all such artifacts removed from churches, melted down, and used to make candles. (4)

While affluent individuals captured their likeness in wax, other models were used to assist medical students in their anatomical studies. The first to create wax figures without skin to show the muscles and organs were Renaissance artists. Drawing, painting, or sculpting a body's anatomy is referred to as *écorché,* or "flayed" in French. (5) The most famous collaboration in creating such models was between French physician Guillaume Desnoues and Gaetano Guilio Zumbo, an artist. With Desnoues' cooperation, Zumbo created colored wax anatomical sculptures used for instructing new doctors. (6)

Another physician who created such anatomical wax figures was Philippe Curtius. His models so impressed the French Prince of Conti that he was offered patronage if he would relocate from Bern to Paris. He brought along his housekeeper and her daughter, Marie Grosholtz.

Once in Paris, he opened two permanent exhibitions showcasing figures of famous people. Along the way, he trained Marie in the art of wax modeling. When the French Revolution began, Marie reported they were asked to make death masks of many of those guillotined. (7)

Following the Revolution and Curtius' untimely death in 1794, Marie inherited his wax figures. A year later, she married Francois Tussaud with whom

she had two sons. It wasn't a happy marriage and in 1802, she and her four-year-old son traveled to England to exhibit her works. Due to the Napoleonic War, she was obliged to stay in England, and then remained there for the next thirty years displaying her exhibit all around the country. She finally found a permanent home for her figures on Baker Street in 1835. (8)

While early wax models would have been formed from beeswax, the discovery of paraffin wax revolutionized both it and the candle industry.

Because beeswax was expensive, most candles were made of tallow (fat). Paraffin, however, became the preferred substance in the 1850s. (9) Karl Von Reichenbach invented paraffin in 1830, (10) but it wasn't refined until two decades later.

Holmes' wax model would have most likely been a paraffin-based bust. While Colonel Moran's bullet passed through the figure in "The Adventure of the Empty House," an experiment shows how a bullet would have actually shattered the wax. (11)

Given the proximity of Madame Tussaud's wax collection, Holmes might have used that connection to find the French sculptors who made his own figure—with a very unique purpose in mind. For Holmes, not only did Madame Tussaud's artistry preserve history, it also provided a cunning tool to catch a killer—proving once again, in the world of crime-solving, sometimes the truth does wax poetic.

Liese Sherwood-Fabre is pleased to announce the release of her first full-length audiobook on April 16 through Amazon and Audible. In "Saving Hope," an unemployed Russian microbiologist must foil a plot to export a deadly virus from the country. Check out the links on her website www.liesesherwoodfabre.com

1) https://www.britannica.com/art/wax-sculpture
2) https://www.beprimitive.com/stories-descriptions/lost-wax-casting
3) https://www.artisera.com/blogs/expressions/the-lost-wax-technique-of-casting-how-the-finest-sculptures-are-made-around-the-world?source=post_page-----e5e519c63e----------
4) https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2815944/
5) https://drawpaintacademy.com/ecorche/
6) https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2815944/
7) https://www.geriwalton.com/madame-tussauds-mentor-philippe-mathe-curtius/
8) https://exploring-london.com/tag/philippe-curtius/
9) https://www.waxmelters.com/Tradition-History-Development-of-Candles-s/53.htm
10) https://www.howtomakecandles.info/article/2008/candle_waxes_paraffin_wax
11) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBylU6WoXiA

HANDS UP!

Karen Murdock, Deck Mate

published in *Serpentine Muse, Volume 28, number 4 (Fall 2012)*

In a Saga which stretches over 60 stories and 40 years, some plot elements inevitably repeat themselves. The secret chamber in a house, the thuggish foreign secret societies, the jilted lover who wants to get even, the stolen secret government documents: all these plot elements, and more, are repeated in the Saga. Sherlockian scholars have long noted such repeated plot elements. In *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes,* Vincent Starrett wrote of the stories in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*:

> *It is to be noted, however, how curiously many of Holmes's problems, in effect, repeat themselves, from first to last. It is almost as if, returning after his reputed death in Switzerland, he began the cycle over again—so much in common have A Scandal in Bohemia and The Norwood Builder; The Blue Carbuncle and The Six Napoleons; The Greek Interpreter and The Solitary Cyclist; The Naval Treaty and The Second Stain. [. . .] And, no doubt, it is merely further evidence in support of Holmes's own contention. "There is nothing new under the sun," he told Inspector Gregson, in A Study in Scarlet, adding significantly, "It has all been done before."*[1]

Less remarked on than the literary repetition are some physical gestures repeated throughout the Canon. One of these is fainting. Twenty-five characters keel over in a faint in the stories and another 22 come close to fainting but manage to hang onto consciousness.[2] Such a dramatic gesture occurs at moments of high drama. The author "used the act of fainting to represent acute emotional stress and, of course, to heighten an already dramatic event."[3]

Clenched hands

Emotional crises less drastic than those that result in fainting are sometimes expressed by a character's clenching his hands. When Sherlock Holmes tells Count Sylvius in MAZA that "Ikey has peached and the game is up," the Count responds physically.

> *The veins stood out on the Count's forehead. His dark, hairy hands were clenched in a convulsion of restrained emotion.*[4]

When in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson thinks that Sir Henry has fallen over a precipice and died of a broken neck, he blames Stapleton. "The brute! the brute!" I cried with clenched hands. "Oh, Holmes, I shall never forgive myself for having left him to his fate."[5]

Holmes clenches his hands in frustration after being turned out of the house of Holy Peters in LADY:

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[1] Vincent Starrett, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, revised and enlarged, University of Chicago Press, 1960, page 33. Originally published 1933.

[2] see my article "Insensible Upon the Bearskin: Fainting in the Canon," *The Serpentine Muse*, Volume 20, no. 3, Summer 2004.

[3] Rodin, Alvin E. and Jack D. Key, *Medical Casebook of Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle: From Practitioner to Sherlock Holmes and Beyond*. Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company Inc., 1984, page 228.

[4] MAZA, Doubleday 1018

[5] HOUN, Doubleday 744

> *Holmes's expression was an impassive as ever under the jeers of his antagonist, but his clenched hands betrayed his acute annoyance*[6]

In "His Last Bow," when Von Bork hears of the double-crossing of his man "Altamont," he "clutched at his own throat in despair."[7] (He might have raised his hands in a more dramatic gesture, but he is unable to do so since he is trussed up with "a strap round his upper arms and another round his legs" and is lying supine upon his own sofa.)

In "The Devil's Foot," clenched hands nearly turn into fists for fighting when Holmes accuses Leon Sterndale of the killing of Mortimer Tregennis:

> *Sterndale's fierce face turned to a dusky red, his eyes glared, and the knotted passionate veins started out in his forehead, while he sprang forward with clenched hands towards my companion*[8]

Hand-clenching can be involuntary. In the "mind reading" segment at the beginning of both RESI and CARD, Watson falls into a "brown study" and, without really being aware of what he is doing, clenches his hands when he thinks of "the gallantry which was shown by both sides" in the American Civil War.[9]

Hands up!

When the emotion is more powerful, characters in the Canon do more than clench their hands. They throw them up. Dr. Thorneycroft Huxtable does this to emphasize the importance he places on the case of the kidnapped nobleman's son.

> *"Important!" Our visitor threw up his hands. "Have you heard nothing of the abduction of the only son of the Duke of Holdernesse?"*[10]

Neville St. Clair in TWIS raises his hands in surprise at seeing his wife walking down Swandam Lane near his hideout at The Bar of Gold. "He waved his hands frantically to her, and then vanished from the window."[11]

When the true story of the supposed vampirism of his wife is related to Big Bob Ferguson, he stands by her bed "his hands outstretched and quivering."[12]

In "The Illustrious Client," Colonel Damery reacts physically to Holmes's characterization of Baron Gruner as "the Austrian murderer":

> *Colonel Damery threw up his kid-gloved hands with a laugh. "There is no getting past you, Mr. Holmes! Wonderful! So you have already sized him up as a murderer?"*[13]

[6] LADY, Doubleday 952
[7] LAST, Doubleday 979
[8] DEVI, Doubleday 967
[9] RESI, Doubleday 423-4 and CARD, Doubleday 888-889
[10] PRIO, Doubleday 539
[11] TWIS, Doubleday 234
[12] SUSS, Doubleday 1044
[13] ILLU, Doubleday 985

After seeing the face of Eugenie Ronder, ravaged by the bite of a lion, "Holmes held up his hand in a gesture of pity and protest."[14]

Clenching or clawing

The most dramatic hand gesture in the Canon occurs when a character not only raises his hands in the air but also clenches them in fists or claws the air with them. There are three circumstances under which Canonical characters perform this gesture: trying to regain lost balance, gesturing before dying, and expressing overpowering emotions.

Lost balance

Clawing the air in an attempt to regain lost balance only occurs once in the Canon, but this is in a crucial climactic scene, the confrontation of Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls. As Holmes relates the scene to Watson, "I slipped through his grip, and he with a horrible scream kicked madly for a few seconds, and clawed the air with both his hands. But for all his efforts he could not get his balance, and over he went."[15]

Dying gesture

That is the Professor's dying gesture. Several other Canonical characters, their balance more or less intact, claw or clutch the air as they are in the act of dying dramatically. In "The Speckled Band," Helen Stoner recounts the death of her twin sister Julia:

> *"I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro"*[16]

Two other dying gestures involve the raising of hands but not clutching or clawing with them. Inspector Stanley Hopkins tells Holmes of Susan Tarlton's account of the death of Willoughby Smith in "The Golden Pince-Nez":

> *He [Willoughby Smith] tried desperately to say something else, and he held his right hand up in the air. Then he fell back dead.*[17]

Stung by an exotic jellyfish, Fitzroy McPherson in "The Lion's Mane" manages to stagger to the top of the cliff, where, at the feet of Harold Stackhurst and Sherlock Holmes "he threw up his hands and, with a terrible cry, fell upon his face."[18] It is his last gesture.

Overpowering emotion

Finally, characters may shake clenched fists or claw in the air when they are overcome by strong emotion. The emotion is particular to the individual. In the case of Hall Pycroft in "The Stockbroker's Clerk" this emotion is chagrin. When he realizes how he has been duped, he shakes clenched hands in the air and cries "Good Lord!"[19]

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[14] VEIL, Doubleday 1102
[15] EMPT, Doubleday, 486
[16] SPEC, Doubleday 262
[17] GOLD, Doubleday 610
[18] LION, Doubleday 1084
[19] STOC, Doubleday 372

Anger is another overpowering emotion. Henry Wood, after seeing Nancy Barclay for the first time in 30 years, recalls his anger at being betrayed by James Barclay and stands beneath a lamp-post "shaking his clenched fists in the air as if he were mad with rage"[20] Anger mixed with an overwhelming desire for revenge motivates Kitty Winter in her feelings toward Baron Gruner in ILLU. She says to Holmes

> *"If I can help to put him where he belongs, I'm yours to the rattle," said our visitor with fierce energy. There was an intensity of hatred in her white, set face and her blazing eyes such as woman seldom and man never can attain. "You needn't go into my past, Mr. Holmes. That's neither here nor there. But what I am Adelbert Gruner made me. If I could pull him down!" She clutched frantically with her hands into the air. "Oh, if I could only pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many!"*[21]

Frustration, mixed with a certain contempt for the official police, motivates Sherlock Holmes to "rave" with clenched hands in the air, twice, when told of the "[i]ncredible imbecility" of the police in their indifference to the danger which faces John Openshaw in "The Five Orange Pips."[22] The Duke of Holdernesse experiences strong feelings of shame and guilt when Sherlock Holmes accuses him of complicity in the kidnapping of his son. The Duke's reaction is to claw with his hands in the air "like one who is sinking into an abyss" then to drop his "last attempt at self-command" and begin "pacing the room with a convulsed face and with his clenched hands raving in the air."[23]

It is hard to say what powerful emotions (anger? guilt? jealousy? disappointment?) move in the breast of Josiah Amberley in "The Retired Colourman" when he finds that Sherlock Holmes knows about the murder of his wife and her lover, but, like others in the Canon, he claws the air in the intensity of whatever emotions move him:

> *The man sprang to his feet with a hoarse scream. He clawed into the air with his bony hands. His mouth was open, and for the instant he looked like some horrible bird of prey. In a flash we got a glimpse of the real Josiah Amberley, a misshapen demon with a soul as distorted as his body.*[24]

Though not as common as fainting, raving with hands in the air is the perpendicular equivalent of fainting in the Saga. It is the outward physical manifestation of intense inner emotion. It may also serve to get the blood moving to the brain, because none of the characters who "rave" go on subsequently to faint. "Hands up!" should be the command to all queasy Canonical characters who feel their grip on consciousness slipping from them.

[20] CROO, Doubleday 418
[21] ILLU, Doubleday 990
[22] FIVE, Doubleday 223
[23] PRIO, Doubleday 555
[24] RETI, Doubleday 1119

THE MORIARTY TRIANGLE

David Richardson
***The Holmes / Watson Report,* September, 2004**

The Bermuda Triangle is a somewhat ill-defined area in the Atlantic Ocean where ships and airplanes are said to disappear and where instruments seem to become quite unreliable. There is, I would venture to suggest, a trio of cases in the Canon which might serve to define our knowledge of Moriarty, but which seem to suffer something of the characteristics of the Bermuda Triangle, for implications and dates seem to go rather awry in them.

The identity of two of the cases - "The Final Problem" and *The Valley of Fear* - is obvious; that of the third is not, and I shall withhold identification of it until we have seen the nature of the problems posed by the first two.

The principal problem affecting the first two is the well -known one of Dr. Watson's knowledge of Moriarty. In 1891, in "The Final Problem," he seems not to have heard of him at all, but in "the late eighties," in *The Valley of Fear,* he seems to know him well enough to make a pawky joke, and receives an extensive description of him from Inspector MacDonald. It would seem that the calendar runs backwards in the Moriarty Triangle.

There are other, more subtle, indications that time has gone a bit wonky between the two accounts. In FINA we are led to believe that Holmes has only recently "sussed out" just who Moriarty is, and Moriarty himself tells us, in the process of telling Holmes, "You crossed my path on the 4th of January.

On the 23rd you incommoded me ... "This suggests that Holmes was working rather rapidly, and Holmes himself seems to imply that he was devoting full time to the task. Now the latest possible date for VALL is January of 1889, and that is something like two years before his path crossed Moriarty's. This seems an excessively long time for surreptitious visits (to his office) to lead to actual path-crossing.

In FINA Holmes tells us that "when the time came" (which can only mean when an opportunity came) "I seized my thread and followed it," and was able to discover the identity of this "deep organizing power" that he had sensed behind crime. Holmes does not tell us - at least Watson does not tell us - where that thread began, but clearly this is the crux of the matter.

If we accept that, just as there is really no "Bermuda Triangle" where instruments go away, and that there is also no "Moriarty Triangle" where calendars run backward and hotly pursued investigations take two years to complete, then we must look for some mundane solution to our problems. We must try to follow the thread backward from the events of early 1891 to its genesis. What can we surmise about this instigating event?

While it clearly must occur before January of 1891, I do not believe that it can have occurred very long before, for Moriarty would surely become quickly aware of an actively pursued investigation by Holmes. Also, while Holmes will not yet know the identity of Moriarty, it must clearly point to his presence in the shadows. And finally, it must offer a "wedge" - some plausible clue or opening that could, when pursued. lead to Moriarty himself.

I have a modest suggestion.

While we have no reason to suppose that this event will have been recorded in the Canon, there is one case in which, to misquote John Webster(l580-l625), crime is normal, but [a] Moriarty shrieks out. Just as Holmes knew a Moriarty when he saw one, I believe

that we, too, can recognized the signs, especially if we are looking for them.

My candidate? 'The Red-Headed League." I am hardly the first to have "detected" the presence of Moriarty behind this case, but I do believe I may be the first to realize that this may well be the very case that was the start of Holmes' thread.

What shrieks of Moriarty (to me and to so many others) is the very nature of the crime: the theft of 30,000 gold napoleons from the cellar of a branch of the City and Suburban Bank. That two men might dig a tunnel from Jabez Wilson's pawnshop to under that cellar is unlikely enough. That they could haul the bullion back to the pawnshop is perhaps marginally possible.

But to haul it away from the pawnshop and then convert it (launder it, as we would now say) is the stuff of crime fiction. And how, we might ask, did they know where to dig in the first place? That is to say, where in the bank's cellars was the gold stored, and where was that relative to the pawnshop? How did they know that what they would encounter when they got there was a lightly-paved cellar, and not a properly reinforced vault floor?

So it clearly points to that "deep organizing power" that Holmes will identify as Moriarty, and it takes place in October of 1890, giving something over two months for Holmes to pursue his thread, a quite adequate time span, I believe, given the nature of Holmes' concentration when he was on a trail.

But what is the "wedge"? Consider the key elements of the information which Moriarty must supply to John Clay: where *exactly* is the bullion stored (just "in the cellar" will hardly do, and even which cellar will not do, since one does not want to 'free up' a paving stone on which a trunk full of bullion sits), and what will they encounter when they get there (that weak floor)? Who might be the most likely source of such information?

Clearly someone intimately associated with the bank, and for long enough to know the weakness of the floor (by being there when it was built, e.g.). And he must do something to call Holmes 's attention to him.

I rather suspect that it was Mr. Merryweather's striking the floor of the cellar with his stick that did it; it seems an oddly forceful demonstration for an elderly man whose primary concern seems to have been missing his rubber, and, as Holmes immediately recognized, it could easily have warned off Clay. Watson seems to have regarded it as incidental, but I suspect that Holmes began to wonder if it was not deliberate and here found one end of his thread.

And I further suspect that the fact that this case appears - and appears early - in the Canon might not be coincidental. During their flight from Moriarty, Holmes will have had ample opportunity to tell Watson of particular cases in which Moriarty was a factor, and he might well have reminded Watson of Jabez Wilson's little problem.

We know from FINA that Watson had decided not to write of the events surrounding Holmes's death, and this personal prohibition may well have extended to any mention or hint of Moriarty. But, recalling that at the time neither he nor Holmes knew of his involvement in the French bullion caper, he decided that he could write an account of it without violating his own prohibition, and so did.

But if this provides us with a plausible beginning for Holmes's quest after Moriarty, what explanation can we offer for the topsy-turvy chronology of FINA and VALL? I believe we can find one if we reflect on the dates of publication of the two accounts.

FINA was published in December, 1893, less than three years after the events it relates. VALL, on the other hand was written something like a quarter-century after the tragedy of Birlstone. The first was written somewhat in haste, in response to. letters which may have impugned the memory of Holmes.

The second is clearly a more lengthy effort, for Watson has obviously had time to investigate events in which he was not a participant, and has included them in his account. One is an emotional reaction to a provocation, the other a more studied account that, while ultimately dark, opens with that famous bit of humor.

It seems clear (at least to me) that what Watson has done here is what he did many times before: created a "story" out of a case (much to Holmes's oft-expressed annoyance). Besides including events at Birlstone in which he was not a participant, he recast the opening events to reflect what he later came to know was the true background of the case.

I think we can legitimately infer that the Birlstone tragedy did indeed occur in the late eighties, and was investigated by Holmes and Inspector MacDonald, but it seems quite likely that at that time Holmes had no suspicion Moriarty was involved- indeed was not yet even able to put a name to him - and knew Porlock only as an informant with "underground ties."

The Inspector's conversation with Moriarty will not have taken place then, but rather after Holmes had "found [his] thread," and might well be the "first time" that Moriarty says Holmes 's path crossed his, for Moriarty will surely have known who had set Scotland Yard upon him.

What this means, alas, is that Watson's wonderful example of his pawky humor could not have caught Holmes off-guard, since it could not have been uttered. Why Watson put it into the story is unknowable.

It may have been just to give his story a dramatic opening, but it might have been to give the reader a sly hint: Moriarty is "unknown to the general public," but Watson himself is a member of that public, and so will not have heard of Moriarty either.

You will have realized, of course, that if my identification of "The Red-Headed League" as the third vertex of the Moriarty Triangle is correct, then the thread that Holmes followed to Moriarty began as a *scarlet* thread.