The Bilge Pump

Vol. 13, No. 04 April, 2025

The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star

founded November, 1970

PLEASE NOTE: May 04, 2025 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on **May 04** 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 Shoscombe Old Place"**.

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story of **"The Adventure of the Shoscombe Old Place"**.

Our special guest speaker will be our own **Rich Krisciunas,** who will speak on **"Would Sherlock Holmes Be a Good Witness in Court?"**

IN THIS ISSUE

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

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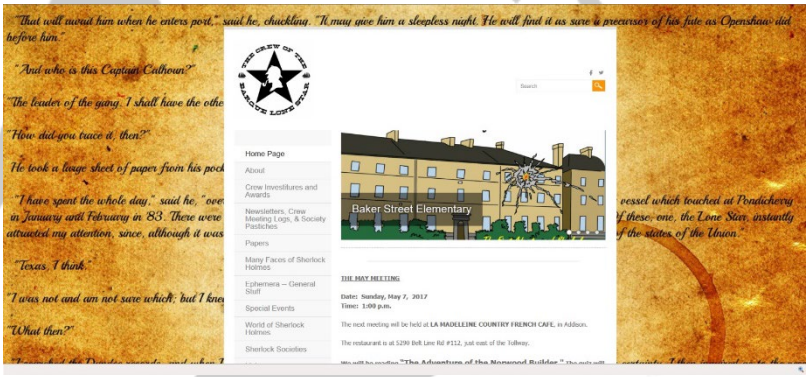


Our Facebook Page:

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

APRIL 06 SUMMARY

There were **57** in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The meeting was opened today with a toast by Ann Caddell (see page 5), and was followed by the Quiz on today's story, "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger."

Bob Katz, BSI, then led us in a discussion of the story. It was suggested that maybe it was a circus story by Doyle and he later decided to make it into a Sherlock Holmes story, possibly so he could make more money from it. Others suggested that it was a plea by Doyle to remodel the divorce laws on Victorian England.

The second part of the discussion was the question presented by Bob, Who Wrote this Story? Many thought the story was written by either Watson, as are most of the Holmes stories, or by Eugenia Rhonda, the female lead in the story.

Our next agenda item was announcements, and they are as follows: The CW network is premiering Sherlock and Daughter on April 16. The show Watson on CBS has been signed for a second season.

The next book by the Crew of the Barque Lone Star will be titled "Rejected Holmes" and will be stories supposedly submitted by Doyle but were rejected by the publicist. The Third Mate, Steve Mason would like to make this a two-volume set. One set will be written by members of the Crew and one volume written by kids and for kids.

Today is the finals for Facebook Holmes Hysteria. People have been voting on who is the best Watson and the two with the most votes currently are Edward Hardwick and David Burke.

Next month is the last story of the canon, before we start over again. The story will be "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place." And our featured speaker will be Rich Krisciunas.

Steve Doyle, BSI, mentioned that the Illustrious Clients auction was a huge success and raised a lot of money for the society, plus redistributed the collection of many seasoned collectors to some newer members. He also reminded people of the upcoming Sherlockian Conclave on April 26, in Indianapolis. The Conclave is sold out.

The Atlanta 221b.con will be next weekend, April 19, in Atlanta, GA.

Brian Wilson from the Afghanistan Perceivers will be going to the Art House Cinema on May 24, to watch two Sherlock Holmes movies.

Bruce Beaman mentioned that the new PBS series Ghost Stories by Arthur Conan Doyle and M.R. James will air this Friday, April 11.

Edith Pounden noted that the All of Doyle meeting will be May 13 to discuss Sherlock Holmes in Switzerland.

David MacGregor's play Sherlock Holmes and the Fallen Souffle, will be seen in the Dallas/Fort Worth area at Stage West on June 21. Also in Texas, the play Moriarty will be in Cleburne, TX on July 26.

Leilehua Yuen from the Hawaii scion would like help getting her pastiches downloaded to a public library site.

Bob Katz mentioned that for the next couple of months we will be studying and discussing *A Study in Scarlet*, and he wants people to focus on the American portions of the story.

We then were entertained by Sandy Kozinn and her limerick on today's story.

Next Rich Krisciunas then led us through Sherlockian Law 101.

Our featured speaker for the month was Beth Gallego, BSI, a children's librarian from California. She discussed Showman of the Day, Wombwell, Sanger, and Victorian Traveling Menagerie.

We then had the Canonical Top 10 as written by Brad Keefauver, BSI, but this month presented by Rob Nunn, BSI. The top 10 covered stories where nothing really happens.

The meeting then had a reading by Shana Carter, BSI, from the *Baker Street Journal*, from Vol.3, Number 4 (see page 7).

The closing toast was by Rich Krisciunas as he did his famous toast to the Crew of the Barque Lone Star.

THE CORMORANT TOAST

Ann Caddell

In Dr. Watson's accounts of Sherlock Holmes's adventures, he often references other cases, some that he has already described, but many that he never has, and never will, set before the public. And of course we Sherlockians love to hunt up these references and speculate on what strange adventures lie behind the tantalizing titles.

We all dream of retrieving that battered tin dispatch box that still slumbers in the bank vaults of Cox and Company, at Charing Cross.

Several notable Sherlockians have tried to count up and catalog these untold cases.

While their totals vary, the consensus seems to hover around 100. The Hounds of the Internet ran a highly scientific online poll to determine which of these cases sound the most interesting to the everyday Sherlockian-on-the-web, and published the top 10 results on Randall Stock's Best of Sherlock website.

Which brings us to today's story. The number-one most fascinating untold tale, the one Sherlockians are most longing to hear recounted, is the whole story concerning the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant. Why this level of excitement? The description itself is bizarre enough, but no more so than many other untold case references, such as the ancient British barrow, the two Coptic patriarchs, or the cutter Alicia which never emerged from a patch of mist.

Perhaps the interest stems from Watson's belief that some unnamed but menacing force is determined to prevent this story from becoming public – so determined, in fact, that the malefactor is attempting to get at and destroy the relevant papers. Watson's threat to give the whole story to the public if the attempts continued must have been an effective deterrent, since I haven't found any accounts of British political scandals involving lighthouses and cormorants.

So, we know that this particular case was of great importance to at least one contemporary reader of the Holmes adventures. What else makes it so compelling? There's a pattern in the top 10 untold cases: Fully five of them involve animals, birds, or icky invertebrates. The other four cases are, in order of interest: the giant rat of Sumatra (a story for which the world is not yet prepared); the case of

Isadora Persano and the remarkable worm unknown to science; the arrest of Wilson, the notorious canary-trainer; and the repulsive story of the red leech. And of these top five critters, two are not just birds, but trained birds.

Was there some sinister Victorian underworld of avian education that Holmes was determined to infiltrate? Was Professor Moriarty amassing an army of flying feathered fiends? Or, did the cormorant connection reach all the way to the top of the British monarchy?

Well, In the early 17th century, King James I got very interested in cormorants. He appointed John Wood as "Master of the Royal Cormorants" and set up ponds, gardens, and housing where the birds could live and be trained. Presumably, James just enjoyed watching the cormorants fish for carp and eels and bring their catch back to the royal master. Kind of like aquatic falconry, I guess. And after James's reign, there's not much mention of subsequent monarchs being involved with cormorants.

Was it simply a fad that had run its course – or did cormorant husbandry become a state secret, with the birds being put to clandestine uses in international intrigue and espionage? The association of a trained cormorant with a politician and a lighthouse, and the extreme measures being taken to hush the matter up, certainly suggest as much.

Until someone finds that battered tin dispatch box, we won't know for sure. But, as with all of the untold cases, we can have a lot of fun speculating. So let's raise a glass to that mysterious politician, to that remote and wave-battered lighthouse, and to the bird whose importance led Dr. Watson to actually threaten one of his readers – to the trained cormorant!

The punishment befit the crime.
Her life after was not worth a dime.
She succeeded in tryin'
To murder, via lion,
Then Holmes said: don't take yours, not this time.

Sandy Kozinn, Deckmate

RE: PASTICHES

Shana Carter, ASH

There is no Sherlockian worthy of his salt who has not, at least once in his life, taken Dr. Watson's pen in hand. and given himself to the production of a veritable tale.

The writing of a pastiche is compulsive and inevitable, and nothing to be ashamed of. It Is a wholesome and welcome manifestation of the urge to be Intimately a part of the Baker Street scene; a sublimation of the desire that is in us all to revel in the glory of the Saga, not only receptively, but creatively as well.

All this is as it should be, despite the fact that there is something faintly blasphemous, when we come right down to it, about taking Dr. Watson's name in vain. The imitation we display is, in fact, the sincerest form not merely of flattery, but of adulation as well.

And yet I like to think that pastiches are made to be written but not to be read. They are the stuff of dreams, the projection of our fancies, the release of our repressed desires, in which we, but not others', should be expected to take delight.

Once in a while, when there is one superbly done, it may with some trepidation be, shared with those who understand and sympathize; but, as a rule, these emanations of our deeper selves are things to be cherished in secret, like some grandiose childhood aspiration or, some happy antisocial thought of our maturer years.

When, therefore, a whole spate of these simulacra is poured forth — not just for the sheer enjoyment of writing them, or, let us suppose, not entirely out of filial piety; but with a certain admixture of worldly gain also in view — we may be pardoned for, looking upon them with a. jaundiced eye.

If they were flawless of their kind, and flashed like the jewels that stand in a crown, we might forgive even the motive that prompted them. But if they are stiff and contrived, smelling more of the literary hot—house than of the vaults of Cox and Co., we are entitled to say that they are no better than you or I might have done.

And maybe not so, good.

Such a series of pastiches would not merit detailed comment and criticism, for no one has ever taken such pains for you or me. But It is not amiss to point out that we might, perhaps, find buried in their texts a passage that would put them in their place such a passage, let us say, as this:

> "I would draw your attention to the fireplace chair."
> "But there Is no fireplace chair."
> "That is why I draw your attention to it."

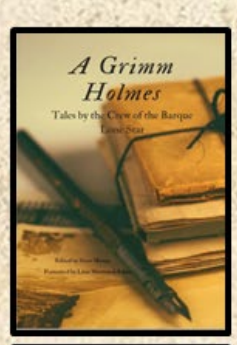
If you find such a passage, you will know what we are driving at. For that, ladies and gentlemen, is not just corn. It is ineffable twaddle; It is unmitigated bleat.

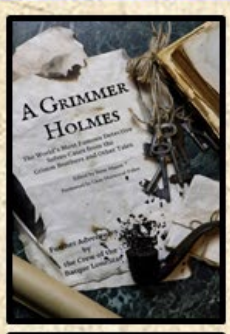
The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society has published 9 wonderful books. Each book is chocked full of wonderful essays and pastiches by our own Society members. You may download a free copy of the books (as .pdf files) on our website…

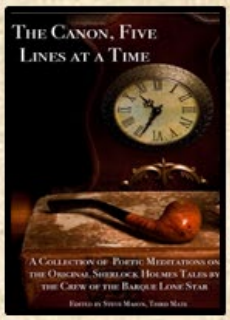
https://www.dfw-sherlock.org/society--crew-member-anthologies-pastiches.html

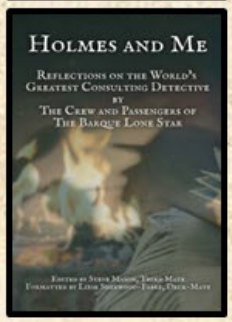
Or you may purchase a soft-back version of any of our books (at cost) at…

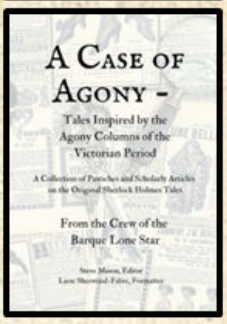
https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/the%20crew%20of%20the%20barque%20lone%20star

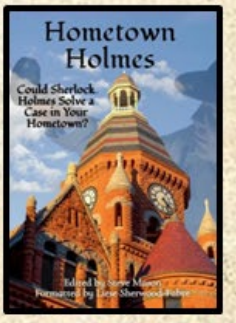


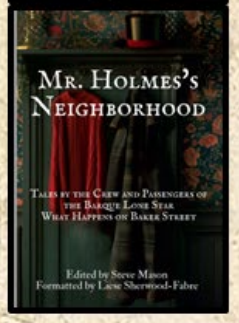












The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society is producing our 10th book in our 55th year of existence.

Dr. Watson published 60 stories chronicling his adventures with Sherlock Holmes, most of them in the Strand Magazine. Any he mentioned many, many, unchronicled cases. But have you ever wondered, did the Strand ever reject any of the stories?

Rejected Sherlock will finally reveal those stories the Strand would not publish, for whatever reason.

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.
5. Remember this is a family book, with minors participating, when picking up a topic.
6. We ask that you not only provide the story, but the actual rejection letter from the Strand editor.

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. The book will then be sold on Barnes & Noble, along with our other books at cost.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT 'SHOSCOMBE OLD PLACE'

1. Summary (Diogenes Club)

Watson is living at Baker St. A page is on duty.

Shoscombe Old Place came to Lady Beatrice from her late husband. It reverts to her husband's brother upon her death.

Robert is deeply in debt. He has placed his entire hope of financial salvation on winning the derby with Shoscombe prince. He worries about touts and runs the prince's half brother when they are about. Since the half-brother is much slower, this keeps the odds long on the prince.

Mason comes to Holmes with the story that Robert has been acting strangely. He has driven Lady Beatrice to drink. Lady Beatrice never visits the stable anymore and only goes out for an afternoon ride in the presence of her maid. Robert gave Beatrice's favorite Spaniel away to Barnes. He was seen visiting an ancient "haunted" crypt late at night in the presence of a strange man with a mean yellow face. He brings Holmes a piece of charred bone which was found in the ashes of the furnace by Harvey. Watson identifies the bone as part of a human femur.

Holmes ascertains the facts. Lady Beatrice, who has been extremely ill with heart and kidney disease, dies of natural causes two weeks before the derby. If Robert let this fact be known, Shoscombe Old Place would revert to his brother-in-law and the money lenders would ruin him. Therefore, he digs up the remains of one of his wife's ancient ancestors from the crypt and buries her there. He burns the disinterred remains in the furnace. That's where the femoral fragment came from. To carry off the illusion that Beatrice is alive, he has Norlett veil himself heavily and impersonate Beatrice on a drive every afternoon, accompanied by his wife. The spaniel raises such a fuss that Robert gives him to Barnes.

Shoscombe Prince wins the derby. Robert pays off his debts and has enough left to situate himself comfortably and the magistrates forgive him for everything.

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2. Story Info Sheet (McMurdo's Camp)

- First published in:
  Liberty, March 05, 1927; *The Strand Magazine*, April 1927

- Time frame of story (known/surmised):
  May 1902 (likely)

- Holmes & Watson living arrangements:
  Sharing quarters at 221B.

- Opening scene:
  Holmes had been bending over a low-power microscope. He straightened himself up and remarked upon an unrelated case. Then the new client, who was overdue, arrived and was shown in by the page. Holmes had earlier received from him a letter.

- Client:
  Mr. John Mason, the head-trainer at Shoscombe Old Place, a tall, clean-shaven man with the firm, austere expression which is only seen upon those who have to control horses or boys. Mason had many of both under his sway.

- Crime or concern:
  Mason thought his employer, Sir Robert Norburton, had gone mad, and that everything he did was queer. Sir Robert wasn't sleeping, and was down at the stables at all hours. His eyes were wild, and his nerves were affected. He seemed to have caused his sister, Lady Beatrice, to ignore her main interests, and she became brooding and sulky, and took to drink. Sir Robert also was visiting an old ruined chapel on the property.

  Under the chapel was a crypt which had a bad name among the staff. The crypt was especially creepy during those hours of darkness when the powers of evil were exalted.

- Villain:
  Sir Robert. His name was that of a dangerous man. He was the most daredevil rider in England — once second in the Grand National. He was one of those men who overshot their true generation; he should have been a buck in the days of the Regency — a

boxer, an athlete, a plunger on the turf, and a lover of fair ladies. But by all account, he was so far down Queer Street he was unlikely to ever find his way back again. Sir Robert lived with his sister, who thought well of him.

- Motive:

Sir Robert's sister, Lady Beatice Falder, was heir to the Shoscombe estate. Upon her death title would go to her late husband's brother. Lady Beatrice died from dropsy 2 weeks before the big race. Sir Robert was on the verge of ruin, and had bet heavily on his horse. His whole life was on it. He was up to the neck; his last chance. Everything he could raise or borrow was on the horse — and at fine odds. He was holding off the Jews till then. He needed to hide his sister's death until his horse came in.

- Logic used to solve:

Holmes realized that something happened a week or so before his visit which cut deep into the life of the Shoscombe household. The brother stopped visiting his beloved invalid sister and gave away her favourite dog. The lady kept to her room, altered her habits, was not seen save when she drove out with her maid, she refused to stop at the stables to greet her favourite horse. and apparently took to drink. This line of thought, which concerned Lady Beatrice, had a vaguely sinister flavour. The second line of thought, a scandalous supposition, put forward for argument's sake — was that Sir Robert had done away with his sister. The visits to the crypt and some burned bones were suggestive.

- Policemen:

Merivale, of the Yard, who asked Holmes to look into a case. The Yard had begun to realize the importance of the microscope.

- Holmes' fees:

No mention.

- Transport:

On a bright May evening Holmes & Watson took a first-class carriage bound for the little "halt-on-demand" station of Shoscombe. They posed as visiting fishermen. Upon arrival they took a short drive to an old-fashioned tavern.

- Food:

After the "experiment", an encounter with the Lady Beatrice (?), Holmes & Watson did actually use their fishing tackle in the mill-stream with the result that they had a dish of trout for supper.

- Drink:

Prior to the queer business, Lady Beatrice would take her glass, but later it often became a whole bottle of an evening.

At the tavern, Holmes & Watson had their host in for a glass of his own wine, and held some high converse upon eels and dace in preparation for their "fishing" activities.

- Vices:

Listening to the client's story, Holmes, sat for some time in silent thought, and lit the oldest and foulest of his pipes.

- Other cases mentioned:

The St. Pancras case, in which a cap was found beside the dead policeman.

That of a coiner run down by Holmes based upon filings in his cuff.

- Notable Quotables:

"By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?" – Holmes "I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension." – Watson

"Things seem to be of a curiously mixed character. But that should surely help us. It is only the colourless, uneventful case which is hopeless." – Holmes

"You do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles." – Holmes

- Other interestings:

Lady Beatrice died from edema or oedema (British) both words from the Greek οἴδημα, then known as dropsy or hydropsy The disease is an abnormal accumulation of fluid beneath the skin or in one or more cavities of the body, often associated with heart problems.

- When all was said and done:

This singular episode ended upon a happier note than Sir Robert's actions deserved. His horse, Shoscombe Prince, did win the Derby, the sporting owner did net eighty thousand pounds in bets, and the creditors did hold their hand until the race was over, when they were paid in full, and enough was left to reestablish Sir Robert at a fair position in life. Both police and coroner took a lenient view of the transaction, and beyond a mild censure for the delay in registering the lady's decease, the lucky owner got away scatheless from this strange incident.

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3. Data! Data! Data! (Frank Mentzel)

- # 60 of the 60 stories
  First published in *The Strand Magazine*, April, 1927 In the *US Liberty* Magazine, March 05, 1927
  Part of *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* collection by John Murray, London, 1927
  George D. Doran, New York, 1927
  British illustrator – Frank Wiles

- Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Tuesday, May 6 to Wednesday, 7, 1902 making it 50th of the 60. This means that Holmes is 46 and Watson 48.

- Christopher Morley Says

"As in Silver Blaze, a horse and a dog are the explanation of the mystery: and here also there were legal anomalies that may puzzle students of law. Dr. Watson was always interested in horse-racing: in order to find out what was happening at the training quarters of the horse Shoscombe Prince (entered in the Derby) he and Holmes pretended to be fishermen and catch some trout for their supper."

- Dummies Short Summary

"Sir Robert Norberton has everything riding on his horse winning a race. Winning will save him from financial ruin. But why is he visiting an ancient family crypt at night? And how do you explain the human bone in the furnace? Sherlock's love of dogs holds the key to solving this case."

- How Many Words
  At 6,301 words SHOS has the 9th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

- Classifying This Case
  This case is one of fear of mounting debt. Holmes solved the problem but the debt was paid because of a winning horse.

- The Best Of Sherlock Holmes
  This one is rarely above the bottom 5 on everyone's list.
  • 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle did not have it on his list of 12 favorites.
  • 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars did not have it in the list of the worst 10.

- What Else Happened That Year (1898)
  - Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.
  - Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.
  - Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.
  - Anglo-Japanese Treaty, for mutual defense and to maintain status quo in Far East.
  - Institution of the Order of Merit for distinguished service to the state; limited to 24 holders at one time.
  - Esperanto introduced to England.
  - Establishment of Metropolitan Water Board, supplying London.
  - Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.
  - Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.
  - Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy) renewed to 1914.
  - Italian designs on Tripoli conditionally approved by France and Austria.

- Russo-Japanese Convention, Russia agrees to evacuate Manchuria in 18 months.
- French work day reduced to 9 1/2 hours.
- White settlement of Kenya begins.
- St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.
- F.A. Krupp takes over Germania shipbuilding yard at Kiel; great armaments firm develops.
- Conan Doyle publishes The Hound of the Baskervilles.
- Kipling publishes Just So Stories.
- Arthur Edward Woodley Mason publishes The Four Feathers.
- Beatrix Potter publishes Peter Rabbit.
- Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record--154 recordings in all.
- Picasso paints Nude, Back View.
- Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.
- Trans-Pacific Cable laid.
- Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

- Holmes And Watson – Personal Information
  Holmes and Watson are both residing at 221B.

- Dramatis Personae
  Many love it when a character in the cast has 4 legs.
  - Sir Robert Norburton, an adventuresome raiser of race horses.
  - Lady Beatrice Falder, Sir Robert's sister who lives with him at Shoscombe and raises prize-winning spaniels.
  - John Mason, head trainer for Sir Robert. Brought the case to Holmes.
  - Carrie Evans, maid of Lady Beatrice.
  - Norlett Evans, Carrie's husband. An actor.
  - Sam Brewer, a money lender. Once horse-whipped by Robert. Now his chief creditor.
  - Josiah Barnes, owner of the Green Dragon Inn. He took Lady Beatrice's spaniel.
  - Sandy Bain, Jockey for Robert.
  - Harvey Mason, son of John.
  - Stephens, butler to Robert and Beatrice.
  - Shoshcombe Prince, the fastest colt in England.
  - Half Bro. To The Prince, although very similar in appearance to Prince, not nearly as fleet of foot.
  - Merivale, of the Yard. A friend of Holmes.

- Quotable Sherlock
  - "By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?"
  - (Watson) "I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension."
  - "Things seem to be of a curiously mixed character. But that should surely help us. It is only the colourless, uneventful case which is hopeless."
  - "You do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles."
  - "Dogs don't make mistakes."

- Holmes' Fee
  No fee is mentioned, but since Norburton got enough money to settle his debt, Holmes should have received a reasonable fee.

- Unrecorded Cases
  - The St. Pancreas Case
  - The coiner Holmes ran down by the zinc and copper filings in his cuff

- Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen
  - 1968 *Shoscombe Old Place* with Peter Cushing as an episode in his *Sherlock Holmes* series. This episode is lost.
  - 1991 *Shoscombe Old Place* with Jeremy Brett in his 43 episode *Sherlock Holmes* series.

- Annotated Sherlock
  - "barouche" A four-wheeled carriage with a seat in front for the driver, two double seats inside facing each other with a folding top over the back seat.
  - "epithelial scales" skin
  - "coiner" manufacturer of forged coins
  - "plunger" reckless bettor
  - "touts" agents of inside information on race horses
  - "spoon-bait" an artificial fishing lure, as per shape

- Weapons
  - Loaded revolver – In the gunroom at Shoscombe Old Place
  - Heavy stick – Which Sir Robert Norberton used to threaten Holmes and Watson after he had discovered them in his mysterious family crypt.
  - Whip – Of Sir Robert Norberton which he used to horsewhip Sam Brewer, the Curzon Street money lender.

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4. Case Inquiries (Alexander E. Braun)

"The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" was first published in Liberty Magazine on March 5, 1927. It first appeared in *The Strand Magazine*, on April 1927. It is part of *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*. It also was the last Sherlock Holmes story to appear in *The Strand Magazine*.

Unsurprisingly, our chronologists are not in full agreement to the year in which this adventure took place; however, as seen on the table, a majority leans towards 1902. If 1902 was the year in which this case took place, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 48 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 50.

- Main Characters:
  Sir Robert Norberton, the excitable resident of Shoscombe Old Place.
  Lady Beatrice Falder, Sir Robert's invalid sister.
  John Mason, Sir Robert's head trainer.
  Mrs. Norlett, Lady Beatrice's maid.
  Mr. Norlett, Mrs. Norlett's husband, an actor.
  Stephens: Sir Robert's butler.
  Josiah Barnes, landlord of the Green Dragon Inn.
  Sandy Bain, Sir Robert's jockey.

- Notable Quotes:
  "By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?"
  "I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension."
  "It is only the colourless, uneventful case which is hopeless."
  "You do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles."

- The Forensic Detective

Our case opens with Holmes, peering through his microscope, studying the "scattered objects in the field" to determine innocence or guilt in a crime. His carrying out this study at the request of Merivale of the Yard shows that he has attained success in making the official police realize the importance not only of the microscope, but of other scientific methods (such as the vaunted Holmes Test for hoemoglobin).

Although it came rather late, it is not surprising that in 2002 our sleuth was distinguished with an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Society of Chemistry, for his application of forensic science.

- Watson's Finances

When Watson admits to Holmes that he knows "something of racing" because he pays for it with about half of his wound pension, he unwittingly reveals to us much about his financial condition. We know that when he was invalidated after Afghanistan, the government provided a pension of 11s 6d per diem, which, in modern terms, came to a total of about $79,000 per year.

That amount was as insufficient to maintain a gentleman's lifestyle in a megalopolis like 1881 London, as it would be today were one to reside in, say, Manhattan or Washington DC. We know from his own pen, that Watson found himself in what very quickly threatened to become a penurious situation—hence 221B.

The fact that he now considered at least half of his pension (≈$39,500) as mere disposable income, would seem to argue for a much-improved financial situation.

An aside: One of the things that always puzzle me when we consider this case is why Holmes consults Watson regarding racing world information. In SILV, our sleuth appears to have been very well informed about the goings-on of the turf.

- The Horsy Doctor

Too much has been made about Watson's supposedly excessive gambling. His admission of paying for his supposed equine addiction with half of his wound pension was very likely a humorous exaggeration. Were he in reality habitually spend—and lose—almost $40,000 per year on the noses of various nags, he would have most certainly been a gambler with a serious addiction problem. And, had that addiction dominated him to such an extent, he would not have spent only half of his pension, but probably all of it and more.

Some Canon scholars have argued that Watson's remark proves that he was an inveterate gambler. To further support this somewhat outrageous contention, they point to DANC, where it seems as if Holmes was the custodian of Watson's checkbook, keeping it locked in his desk. The implication, of course, is that this shows that Watson could not control his gambling and our sleuth kept him from financial ruin by keeping the checkbook under lock and key.

However, this is open to a different interpretation. Holmes deduces that his friend has decided not to invest in South Africa securities because "Your cheque-book is locked in my drawer, and you have not asked for the key." From this it may be inferred, with no possibility of error, that Watson had access to his checks any time he wanted to, by simply asking Holmes to open up his desk.

Can anyone imagine this exchange between our two friends:

"Holmes, I need my cheque-book."

"What do you want it for, Doctor? Surely not the horses again, after all you asked me to keep it safely beyond your reach. You are spending far too much for your own good."

After a few episodes like this, it is doubtful that the Great Friendship would have been as great. Although the inference some have drawn about Watson being an inveterate gambler appear logical, it leads to the wrong conclusion.

No one denies that even an intelligent man of science and orderly habits, acquainted with military discipline can become a gambling addict. However, an addict ends by harming himself through the abuse of his addiction. With Watson now, it is patently obvious that by this time in his career the wound pension had become discretionary disposable income.

As is the case with mostly everything, the perceived good or bad of a situation can be just a matter of degree. Obviously, by this time in his life, Watson led a very comfortable existence. Medicine and his undoubted ability as a writer would have been more than sufficient to meet his needs. Although our medico would not be described as a man of Spartan habits, he certainly was no wastrel inclined to excess.

Also, it is highly unlikely that the Good Doctor's literary output would have been confined to solely chronicling the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Even a cursory look at The Strand Magazine shows that during this unexcelled time of growth for popular literature, magazine publishers kept a good stable of writers. It was also the case, particularly during the Golden Age of science-fiction of the 1930s and 1940s that the various s-f magazines were most willing to buy the often exceedingly abundant output of the too few good authors. Competition between publications was keen and many writers tended to write almost exclusively for one or the other. Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and others often wrote under pseudonyms—generally at the request of some of the editors—so it would not appear that their contents came from only a few authors. Frequently, some magazines would publish in the same issue two stories under different pen names written by the same person.

Because Watson's byline came to be associated with Holmes' cases, it is not farfetched to posit that there would be occasions when he would write under a different name or names whenever he did not have a fresh Holmes case. It was well-worth it; is good to remember that, by this time, the Literary Agent himself commanded £790 (≈$300,000) per story.

Unfortunately, we have no idea of what our medico's pseudonym (or pseudonyms!) might have been. Thus, his remark that just on the turf he paid "about half my wound pension" is more than likely a joking exaggeration.

- Why the Interest?

If one views this case's happenings from the context of the times, John Mason's tale would have been considered no more than kitchen gossip, a possibly disgruntled servant spreading unfounded rumors about his betters. At worse, his revelations of the actions of Sir Robert Norberton although making him appear eccentric can by no extent of the imagination be considered criminal. There certainly was nothing that might indicate that Lady Beatrice might have been in any kind of danger— least of all dead.

So one must wonder what prompted Holmes to investigate the matter; perhaps he had no cases at the moment and was bored. As already mentioned, while Mason's tale and concerns were mildly interesting, in no way could they have been considered as rising to a dangerous, criminal level. Watson's disbelief in the interpretation of Sir Robert's behavior, led to Holmes' famous consideration about carrion crows and eagles.

Mason's claim that there had been a bitter quarrel, and his revelation that Sir Robert was mucking about in the allegedly haunted old family crypt while considered peculiar by no extent of the imagination could it be interpreted as being life-threatening to anyone. Even digging up a 1000-year-old skeleton from that self-same family vault, which was on personal property, would have been very far from rising to the level of a crime.

Conversely, the unusual behavior could have been attributed as a reaction from a man burdened by intolerable debt who seems to be hurtling to what promises to be an irrecoverable financial catastrophe, the outcome of this horrid situation to be solely recued by a horse's speed.

Holmes, of all people, should have realized that stress can make people act peculiarly.

Why, some have even resorted to narcotics!

If Sir Robert was disturbing thousand-year-old ancestral bones, then by that same measure James Mortimer, in HOUN, and so many others should also have been considered criminal suspects.

The apparent change and ostensibly abusive behavior towards his sister could have had many explanations. She was of delicate health and perhaps she was not taking good care of herself and he wanted to limit activities he considered dangerous including, for example, her going out with an overly energetic dog. Also, regardless of her frail health, she seemed to have developed a sudden and unhealthy attachment to the bottle.

Everyone who knew them, were aware of their great love and esteem for one another; his grief at his sister's death proves this.

So why would Holmes been so interested? Had he been true to form, he probably would have waited to see if something truly sinister occurred, as he did in COPP, FIVE, or SOLI. Could it have been—as Dr. Roylott, of Stoke Moran once put it—a case of "Holmes, the busybody, the Scotland Yard Jack-in-office"?

Regardless, however, it was a good thing that he got involved. Things might have taken a different turn for Sir Robert, had our sleuth not been able to bring things to a successful conclusion.

- A Consideration of the Legalities

According to Watson, "Shoscombe Prince did win the Derby, the sporting owner did net eighty thousand pounds in bets, and the creditors did hold their hand until the race was over, when they were paid in full, and enough was left to reestablish Sir Robert in a fair position in life. Both police and coroner took a lenient view of the transaction, and beyond a mild censure for the delay in registering the lady's decease, the lucky owner got away scatheless from this strange incident in a career which has now outlived its shadows and promises to end in an honoured old age."

When one considers what should have been a massive avalanche of charges and lawsuits that could—should—have buried Sir Robert, it is surprising that he was able to get away with his plan.

True, he was of a noble family, important in the region, so perhaps it should not be surprising that the local authorities—in this case the police and the coroner—only mildly censured him for not reporting his sister's death and ignored that he kept an unembalmed four-week-old corpse above ground.

Even granting that the local authorities were that accommodating, his relations and debtors would have had several causes of action against him.

Although it is made clear that the only profit that Sir Robert derived from Shoscombe Prince winning the race came from personal bets, the law might not be so forgiving. Intent to defraud might be argued, because at the moment of Lady Beatrice's death, the horse legally became the property of her husband's brother.

When he did not immediately turn over the horse to its lawful owner, Sir Robert became guilty of Conversion. This is defined as "a distinct act of dominion wrongfully exerted over another's personal property in denial of or inconsistent with his title or rights therein, or in derogation, exclusion, or defiance of such title or rights, without the owner's consent and without lawful justification."

However, according to Watson, Sir Robert paid off all his debts. Also, the (non-legal) argument could be made that Shoscombe Prince became an even more valuable horse after winning such an important race, making it logical to assume that none of those affected by his actions might have preferred not to invoke the machinery of the law and grind him under.

In the end, Sir Robert received £80,000 in bets won; roughly about $30,000,000. No question he could have paid all his debts and retired well for the rest of his life!

- An Interesting, Different Case

Although this story easily qualifies as a mystery, no actual crime is committed. However, it bears the distinction of being one in which all the main players come out as being good, caring, and honorable people.

It also gives us the opportunity to mine another shiny little diamond to show how well the relationship between Holmes and Watson had developed by this time. Clearly, they have come to fully and comfortably depend upon each other during an investigation. We see the Master Sleuth soliciting information from his friend regarding the goings-on in the world of the turf, and he also provides him with important information about Sir Robert Norberton's background and situation.

What else happened in 1907:

Empire

- Joseph Chamberlain advocates return to Protection and Imperial Preference.
- First celebration of Empire Day (renamed "Commonwealth Day" in 1959).
- Anglo-German fleet seizes Venezuelan fleet to recover debts and reparations.
- Peace of Vereeniging, ends Boer War.

Britain

- Anglo-Japanese Treaty for mutual defense and to maintain status quo in Far East.
- Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designs Liverpool Cathedral.
- Institution of the Order of Merit for distinguished service to the state; limited to 24 holders at one time.
- Salisbury resigns, succeeded as PM by Arthur Balfour.
- British Academy granted Royal Charter.
- Education Act abolishes School Board system. Local control goes to town and county councils.
- Secondary Education authorized out of rates.
- Arthur Conan Doyle is knighted.
- Esperanto introduced to England.
- Establishment of Metropolitan Water Board, supplying London.

World

- Franco-Italian secret treaty; Italy to remain neutral if France were attacked by a third power.
- Failure of second Belgian General Strike.
- Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, and Italy) renewed to 1914.
- Italian designs on Tripoli conditionally approved by France and Austria.
- F.A. Krupp takes over Germania shipbuilding yard at Kiel; great armaments firm develops.
- Russo-Japanese Convention, Russia agrees to evacuate Manchuria in 18 months.
- French work day reduced to 9½ hours.
- Public Health Act in France improves artisan living conditions.
- White settlement of Kenya begins.
- St. Pierre, Martinique, destroyed by earthquake.
- Abdul Hamid gives Germany concessions to build railway to Baghdad; rail system to stretch from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf.
- Tientsin Sanitary Police established; first Chinese public health measure.

Art

- Conan Doyle publishes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
- Kipling publishes *Just So Stories*.
- Arthur Edward Woodley Mason publishes *The Four Feathers*.
- Beatrix Potter publishes *Peter Rabbit*.
- Enrico Caruso makes his first gramophone record—154 recordings in all.
- Gauguin paints *The Call.*
- Debussy composes *Pelléas et Mélisandé*.
- Picasso paints *Nude, Back View*.
- Elgar composes *Coronation Ode*.

Science and Technology

- Wireless telegraphy applied to ships.
- Trans-Pacific Cable laid.
- Completion of Aswan Dam in Egypt.

5. Selected Chronologies

a.	The Original Story by Arthur Conan Doyle	May, 1902
b.	William Baring-Gould	Tuesday, May 06, 1902
c.	H.W. Bell	May, 1897
d.	Roger Butters	Summer, 1898
e.	Jay Finley Christ	Wednesday, May 09, 1883
f.	Jean-Pierre Crauser	Tuesday, May 19, 1898
g.	D. Martin Dakin	Tuesday, May 06, 1902
h.	Bill Dorn	Wednesday, April 30, 1902
i.	Henry Folsom	Tuesday, May 06, 1902
j.	John Hall	May, 1888
k.	Craig Janasek	Tuesday, May 06, 1902
l.	Brad Keefauver	Tuesday, May 26, 1903
m.	Toshio Suzuki	Tuesday, May 06, 1902
n.	June Thomson	Tuesday, May 06, 1902
o.	Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler	Tuesday, May 06, 1902

6. Canonical Queeries (Ralph Edwards, BSI)

- Was it a coat or a cap?
- Do all farmers get glue on their hair or their clothes?
- Was Watson in need of Gamblers Anonymous?
- Was "Handy Guide…" an actual publication?
- Didn't Holmes know of Watson's summer places?
- Why does Watson consider a horsewhipping case to be in Holmes' province?
- What gave Watson a knowledge of dog shows?
- Is "only horses and boys" overly restrictive?
- Were two lengths in a furlong enough to reduce the odds to 40-1?
- Did Lady Beatrice have love affairs?
- What was in the glass or bottle?
- Why did Sir Robert and Mr. Norlett part at the crypt?
- Wouldn't a full bottle impair one's running ability?
- Did shuffling confirm "cold self-possession"?
- Was the choice of pipes of any significance?
- What does the quote "trout in the mill-stream" suggest?
- Did Holmes and Watson bet on the Derby?
- If not caught, would Holmes have notified the police?
- Why did Holmes conjecture murder and not natural death?
- Is horsewhipping a man characteristic of honorable stock?

- Why did the spaniel return to Holmes?
- How had the coffin been fastened?
- Why did Sir Robert return to the crypt that final evening?
- Does a vertical corpse hold its shape for a week?
- Did Holmes serve the interest of his client, Mr. Mason?
- Did Holmes condone deceit as to which horse was run?
- Why did the creditors hold their hand?
- In LADY, Holmes was in a hurry, so he used screwdrivers to open a coffin; why, here, with plenty of time, did he use a jemmy?
- What did Mason really want of Holmes?

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7. 17 Steps (Brad Keefauver, BSI)

1. The Scotland Yard Forensics Department

"Is it one of your cases?" Watson asks Holmes of his microscope study.
"No; my friend, Merivale, of the Yard, asked me to look into the case."
If the matter of the dead policeman wasn't Holmes's case, it would seem Merivale only brought the cap to Holmes for forensic work. Was he the only outlet Scotland Yard had for the scientific study of evidence at the time? Or was this a sign of his friendship for Merivale?

2. A Man And His Cuffs With A Parting Of The WAYS

"Since I ran down that coiner by the zinc and copper filings in the seam of his cuff they have begun to realize the importance of the microscope."
Wouldn't Holmes have had the culprit if he had his cuff? Could Scotland Yard search a suspect's home and take his shirt?

3. Watson Won't Be The Jury On This One

Did Holmes purposely stay "forensics only" with the picture-frame maker case because it involved a cop-killing and he wanted to allow the police to deal with the murder of one of their own? Would the men of the Yard have worried too much about corroborating evidence once they had someone they thought had killed a fellow cop? Or was Merivale trying to make sure his fellow officers didn't come down with a vengeance on an innocent man?

4. Government Racetrack Betting Relief

"By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?"
"I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension."
Obviously, Watson's not hurting for cash if he fritters his pension money away at the track. So what were his sources of income at the time of this case? Did he have any responsibilities to worry about saving money for? What age would he have had to have been to be collecting a wound pension?

5. Watson's Summer Home

"He lives at Shoscombe Old Place, and I know it well, for my summer quarters were down there once."
Is Watson referring to a place he stayed for a single vacation, or a place he owned and returned to for several seasons? If the latter, when in his life could this have occurred?

6. The Spaniel Herds Of Shoscombe

"There are the Shoscombe spaniels. You hear of them at every dog show. The most exclusive breed in England. They are the special pride of the lady of Shoscombe Old Place."
Were the Shoscombe spaniels a breed unto themselves? What qualities would make one set of spaniels more desirable than another, and how exclusive would they have been? How long could a particular breed be expected to breed true?

7. Forty Lashes And Then Some

"It was when he horsewhipped Sam Brewer, the well-known Curzon Street money-lender, on Newmarket Heath. He nearly killed the man."
Would the horsewhip referred to be a stiff buggy-whip type or more of the bullwhip variety? What manner of abuse would it take to nearly kill a man with a such a whip? Wouldn't it have taken a lot of time? Why wouldn't someone intervene in that time?

8. Those Horses Are Quite A Handful, Aren't They?

Watson writes, "The door had opened and the page had shown in a tall, clean-shaven man with the firm, austere expression which is only seen upon those who have to control horses or boys."

Riding herd on a family of wound-up boys can take the humor out of a person surely enough, but horses? Are they that hard to get along with, that one would expect a horse trainer to be so austere?

9. The Adventure Of The Flaming Skeleton

"It was burned to a black cinder, but there could be no question as to its anatomical significance."

"'It's the upper condyle of a human femur,' said I."

Can one burn an entire skeleton in the standard heating furnace? Would we have expect more than a femur to be left?

10. Definition Quiz For The Week

"A highly coloured young woman with flaxen hair and impudent eyes sat on the left."

Okay, we know by the "flaxen" hair that Carrie Evans is a blonde. But what does Watson mean by "highly coloured"? Lots of make-up or lots of freckles? Rosy red cheeks or flashy outfits?

11. The Fishing Detective

"My companion seemed to have no further plans for the day, and we did actually use our fishing tackle in the mill-stream, with the result that we had a dish of trout for our supper."

When Holmes shows a skill not related to the field of detection, one can't help but wonder if it relates to his childhood. Does trout-fishing give us a clue as to where Sherlock Holmes grew up? When might he have learned to fish, if not as a child, and why would he have taken it up during his crime-obsessed years?

12. The Fishing Detective, Part Two

"The rack above us was covered with a formidable litter of rods, reels, and baskets. On reaching our destination a short drive took us to an old-fashioned tavern, where a sporting host, Josiah Barnes, entered eagerly into our plans for the extirpation of the fish of the neighbourhood."

While Holmes and Watson wind up going after trout, there is much talk of pike, jack, eels, and dace. How much different equipment would they need for all these different types of fish?

13. The Lantern That Shined Yellow

"Holmes had lit his lantern, which shot a tiny tunnel of vivid yellow light upon the mournful scene."

From the fact it has a directed beam, one would guess Holmes is using a dark lantern. But would such a lamp put out a yellow-colored beam? Isn't firelight basically white?

14. Was This A Crypt Or The Catacombs Of Rome?

"Holmes set to work making a very careful examination of the graves, ranging from a very ancient one, which appeared to be Saxon, in the centre, through a long line of Norman Hugos and Odos, until we reached the Sir William and Sir Denis Falder of the eighteenth century."

Considering the hundreds and hundreds of years represented in this crypt, wouldn't it have had to be pretty large? Whose remains would have been allowed in it, and whose wouldn't?

15. And He Did It Without An Actor As Mycroft

Sir Robert explains, "I am running a dark horse for the Derby and that everything depends upon my success. If I win, all is easy. If I lose--well, I dare not think of that!"

"I understand the position," Holmes replies.

What does this statement say, if anything, about Holmes's actions in "Silver Blaze"? Had Holmes invested a large share of his worldly possessions at that time on his inside knowledge about Silver Blaze, just as Sir Robert was doing this time?

16. Payoffs For Everyone!

"Shoscombe Prince did win the Derby, the sporting owner did net eighty thousand pounds in bets, and the creditors did hold their hand until the race was over, when they were paid in full, and enough was left to reestablish Sir Robert in a fair position in life."

Earlier, we were told the odds were "forties now, but it was nearer the hundred when he began to back him." So how much did Sir Robert have to bet to get his net profits, allowing for the fact he probably borrowed most, if not all of it? How much of the profits would have to be left for him to be in "a fair position for life"?

17. So Maybe It Wasn't A Bribe, But ...

"Both police and coroner took a lenient view of the transaction, and beyond a mild censure for the delay in registering the lady's decease, the lucky owner got away scatheless from this strange incident in a career which has now outlived its shadows and promises to end in an honoured old age."

Did the leniency of all involved have anything to do with inside info on Sir Robert's "dark horse"? Would he have to have told them the full situation, or could he have kept the money-making part of his scheme quiet?

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8. View Halloas (Rosemary Michaud)

This week's story had two other possible titles: "The Adventure of Shoscombe Abbey" and "The Adventure of the Black Spaniel." The former suggests the many religious references and symbols (including Holmes's facetious reference to the "sacred domain" of Sir Robert's home) and the latter gives star billing to the spaniel in the works who proved Holmes's theory that "Lady Beatrice" was an imposter. But whatever we call the story, it's classic Casebook, where the atmosphere is dark and the clues are sensational. I trust that all good Hounds will cease their howling outside the old well-house and join us in the creepy crypt at "Shoscombe Old Place." In a moment, the Comments and Questions to put us on the path to the Shoscombe park gates.

Horses and dogs: Watson said that the story ended on a happy note because Shoscombe Prince won the Derby and the creditors waited until after the race to descend on Sir Robert. But why did the creditors wait? Did Sir Robert go groveling to the Falder in-laws who inherited his sister's estate? If they were sympathetic towards him, why didn't he turn to them in the first place when his sister died?

Watson seemed to have a lot of information about Shoscombe Old Place, which came from his formerly having "summer quarters" nearby, presumably in his army days. However, that would have been more than twenty years prior to the events of this story. Was Holmes content with such aged information? Or was Watson using the military term of "summer quarters" in a humorous way, meaning (as Holmes would have known if it were so) that he had spent time there more recently?

But if Watson had been in the area recently, didn't he run the risk of being recognized by some of the locals?

Is it believable that Sir Robert Norberton could have finished second in the Grand National? A steeplechase is a slightly different sort of horse race from the Derby, but would it be possible for a man "huge in stature," as Watson describes Sir Robert, to have done so well in an event where the other riders were almost certain to be small and wiry men? This is not to say that a larger man cannot hold his own in equestrian events, but second place in the Grand National? Did he cheat?

Speaking of believable events, is it truly possible that Sir Robert reformed to an "honoured old age?"

Did Watson go to dog shows? Did he follow their results closely in the papers? Maybe he was looking for news of his bull pup's descendents? Were dog shows more popular in those days, so that it was common for even those who did not own dogs to follow the results of the shows?

Mason and Stephens did not recognize Norlett. Apparently they had never seen him before, which was peculiar enough, but is it possible that they did not even know that Carrie Evans was married? Did Norlett live anywhere near his wife? Sir Robert said, "It came into our heads – it came into my head – that he could for that short period personate my sister." This sentence intrigues me. Does his quickly corrected statement indicate that the scheme was Carrie's as much as his own – or perhaps more so? Did Sir Robert know that Carrie's husband was an actor, prior to her volunteering Mr. Norlett for the role of Lady Beatrice? Did Sir Robert even know that Carrie was married before she produced her rat-faced, thespian spouse?

Holmes took an hour in the crypt to find Lady Beatrice in a "leaden coffin standing on end before the entrance to the vault." Why did it take so long to locate the right coffin? Were there a lot of coffins standing on end? Wouldn't the dust of the ages have been a bit disturbed around the coffin which had so recently changed tenants? When Watson says "before the entrance to the vault," did he mean the crypt itself, or another chamber within the crypt? Is this further evidence of Holmes's failing eyesight?

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9. Delicate Questions (Chris Redmond, BSI)

A number of late Canonical tales seem to be dark reflections of earlier ones.

Could this tale possibly have been written by an author who had not previously — some 35 years, half a lifetime, previously — written "Silver Blaze"?

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10. Additional Thoughts (Steve Clarkson)

John Mason, the head trainer for Sir Robert Norberton's stable of racehorses, was a hard-bitten man with "a firm, austere expression which is only seen upon those who have to control horses or boys." One would surmise correctly that it would take a good deal to perturb Mr. Mason. And yet, the recent goings-on at Shoscombe Old Place had upset him to the point where he decided to call in Sherlock Holmes.

Watson said of the enigmatic Sir Robert Norberton that he should have been "a buck of the Regency." Politically, the Regency was the period from 1811 to 1820. These were the times when, due to illness, George III was considered incapable of fulfilling his role as monarch. In 1811, the Regency Act was passed and George III's eldest son, George, Prince of Wales, became Prince Regent and ruled in the King's place. The era of the Regency was notable for many things– among them, the tendency of the landed gentry to live their lives to the fullest. The spirit of Squire Western (Fielding, "Tom Jones") lived on in those times. But under the tranquil veneer of the countryside lay a penchant for sudden and ferocious violence. It is in that context that the reader is expected to view Sir Robert. I am bemused by Holmes's deductions as he peered through the low-power microscope. How would a scientist visually identify glue, even microscopically, as compared to other brown, globular matter? In the same vein, how could the observer identify "hairs" as being from a tweed coat as opposed to cashmere, astrachan, or, in the case of a cap, the wearer's head?

Wouldn't other, more definitive tests be required for positive identification — or did such tests exist at the time?

If Sir Robert Norberton exercised and trained the Shoscombe Prince's half-brother for the benefit of the touts, when and where did he exercise and train the Shoscombe Prince without the touts' knowledge? Can two horses be so alike in appearance and gait as to be indistinguishable one from the other? And wouldn't the oddsmakers be even a little suspicious when Sir Robert was wagering everything he could raise on a horse that was rated at 100-to-1? As Holmes remarked under similar circumstances in SILV, "Hum! Somebody knows something, that is clear."

Holmes and Watson left their spoon-bait for jack at the inn, and Watson writes, "That absolved us from fishing for the day." Yet later that same day, without returning to the inn, Holmes and Watson managed to catch enough trout for supper that evening. What did they use for bait, and if they had lures of some kind, why did Watson feel "absolved" from having to fish? Could it be that he was no admirer of Izaak Walton?

There was another hint of adultery in this story; it would appear that Doyle had a fascination for the subject. Or was he aware of the power of titillation upon the minds of potential readers? In any case, did Sir Robert really carry on an affair with Carrie Evans Norlett, as was widely bruited about? Why would her husband connive with Sir Robert to carry on the pretense that Lady Beatrice was still alive if he was being cuckolded by Sir Robert?

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11. Questions & Comments (Sonia Fetherston, BSI)

Smoke curls from Sherlock Holmes' oldest and foulest pipe…as well as from a furnace that hasn't been lit for some time! We move on to one of the canon's more macabre tales, The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place. My questions and comments:

Besides picture frame makers, what are some other jobs that involve the use of glue?

It's Applause-o-Meter time! Who's the greater hero of this story: the dog or the horse?

Do you believe that Sir Robert did or didn't "wrong" the dead?

Good, bad, or ugly? Just what sort of light does this story cast on gambling and gamblers?

Holmes and Watson tantalize us with the unchronicled "St. Pancras Case," a likely reference to a murder in the London railway station of that name. Pancras was a Turkish lad martyred by the Romans. He was a patron saint of children, oath-takers, and treaty-makers, and he can be invoked by those seeking relief from cramps (I don't make this up). St. Pancras is the only saint singled out by name in SHOS, but many of the activities and occupations mentioned in the story actually have saints to call their own. Servants are the province of Sts. Zita, Notburga, and Adelem. Publicans and innkeepers look to Sts. Armand, Gentian, Julian the Hospitaler, and Martha for intercession. Dogs have St. Hubert of Liege, while horses have Sts. Hippolytus and Martin of Tours. Actors look to Sts. Vitus and Genesius. Jockeys have St. Eloy. Anglers pray for lots of help from St. Zeno. Police rely on the intercession of Sts. Michael, Sebastian, and Christopher. The recently dead, like Lady Beatrice Falder, can count on St. Gertrude of Nivelles. And so on. Getting back to St. Pancras, though, it's noteworthy that one of the very first Christian churches dedicated in England bore his name, and from the 7th century onward St. Pancras was the focus of a huge cult following there. Ultimately, a number of churches and chapels were called after him (including the one which once stood on the site now occupied by the London station). The ancient nave and crypt in Shoscombe Park might even have been one such "St. Pancras' Chapel." Though I'm not much good at Sherlockian chronologies, I know that St. Pancras Day falls on May 12— a perfectly acceptable candidate for that "bright May evening" prior to Derby day, when Holmes and Watson left London with their rods and reels. If so, we can say that the events at Shoscombe represent the second of two St. Pancras Cases in the canon.

12. 56 Stories in 56 Days (Charlotte Anne Walters)

This is a great little tale, dark and gothic, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

In this story we have crypts, dead bodies, the burning of bones in a furnace, rumours of ghosts, it's all great fun and a wonderful macabre story. There's even a bit of horse racing thrown in which made my husband sit up and pay attention (as I have mentioned before, he is an ex-racing journalist).

This story is such a good example of what a great story-teller Doyle was – not just clever and responsible for creating one of the best-loved characters in English fiction, but really good at spinning an imaginative yarn which is entertaining and a real page-turner.

This is the dilemma isn't it for so many writers? Do you create a work of great intellectual significance which might change the world? Do you use your writing as a vehicle show-off your intellectual prowess, or do you just try to create an entertaining page-turner that people can't put down? With my book, I went for the latter and aimed for something in-between low-brow and high-brow, an entertaining middle-ground with a mix of literary clout and fast-paced story-telling. I think Doyle made the same choice with Holmes, a choice which he perhaps came to regret when he struggled to get his more serious work recognised – though not when counting his money of course!

The story begins with Holmes bent over a microscope analysing threads from a coat and finding traces of glue amongst the fibres of fabric. He also tells Watson about brining a coiner to justice by finding the zinc and copper filings in the seam of his cuff. In this way Holmes was such a pioneer – using the science of deduction and forensic analysis rather than old-fashion methods of following a hunch to find the bad guys.

Watson reveals his love of betting on the horses when Holmes asks if he knows anything of the sport – "I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension." Here again we see how Watson is rather carefree when it comes to money, just as with previous examples of him getting Holmes to keep his cheque book locked away and the general lack of business acumen shown towards his medical practice. This side of Watson gave me great creative opportunities in my own novel and I have used his human deficiencies to their full potential.

The story itself is all about Sir Robert Norberton from the estate of Shoscombe Old Place and his money troubles. The estate is actually owned by his sister who inherited it on the death of her husband. He is in debt and has bet all he has on his horse, Shoscombe Prince, to win the Derby. His sister dies of natural causes a week before the race and Sir Robert is so afraid that creditors will descend upon him and claim the horse, that he conceals the death in the hope of stalling things until after the race. He hides her body in a used coffin in the family crypt and burns the bones of the original occupant in a furnace.

Despite his questionable actions, all ends well when Shoscombe Prince wins the Derby and Sir Robert is able to settle his depts. For once, Doyle doesn't really come down on one side or the other with regard to how wrong the protagonist has been and leaves it up to the reader to decide whether the happy ending is deserved or not. For me, I think it ties things up neatly and rounds off an excellent story which shows Holmes and his methods in all their glory.

A well deserved 9 out of 10.

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13. Observance of Trifles (Brian Keith Snell)

Is this the way **Holmes** ends--not with a bang but a whimper?

Perhaps that is overstating things. And perhaps we modern readers have been conditioned by modern fiction series to expect not merely a final story, but ***AN ENDING***. And when we don't get that, that sense of closure, we feel cheated.

Which brings us to **The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place**.

It's not as if the "*series finale*" is a new concept. **The Fugitive**, **The Mary Tyler Moore Show**, and **M*A*S*H** are just a few examples of how the concept has been around for awhile.

But these days, it is *ubiquitous*. It's no longer satisfactory, it seems, to simply leave it to the viewers' imaginations what might have happened to their favorite characters--the producers are obligated to *spell it out for them*, and tie off every plot line, and answer every question. Genre press and blogs will update their annual "*What are the best and worst series' finales ever*" lists.

So to modern sensibilities, it's a little bit jarring to see Sherlock Holmes just...*end*. No big wrap-up. No final statement. Just another story, with nothing too special about it.

Of course, it's not as if **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** hadn't already tried to do a "series finale" for his own creation--*twice*. He killed the detective off in **The Final Problem**...but it didn't take. And he gave us the "*story set in the (series') future that show our heroes' last adventure*" in **His Last Bow**. That, too, turned out not to be particularly final.

So perhaps there's no surprise to be had that Doyle didn't go to that well for a third time--what was left to do in that mode, show Sherlock's funeral? (Or better yet, a diminished Holmes solving his last mystery at **Watson's** funeral? Say...Someone get me a

pen, I gotta start writing this down...).

It's pretty clear that Sir Arthur knew that this was the last story in **Case-Book**. It was the 12th story since Last Bow, and the collections tended to gather in dozens. Case-Book was published within a few weeks of the publication of Shoscombe.

But did he *know* that this was to be the last Holmes story of all? There's certainly not any indication of that. It is, not to damn it with faint praise, just another mystery. Watson doesn't even give us the usual "*this tale was so fascinating I had to relay it*" shtick as an introduction. There's no real villain, certainly not Holmes' ultimate foe or dastardly enemy agents. There's no *real* crime, which while not necessarily a story defect, doesn't seem to be the note you'd want to retire the world's greatest detective on. The deductions are not particularly brilliant.

Perhaps we'll never know what was in Sir Arthur's mind. Was this just another story, and he planned to pick up Sherlock again later? Or was this his last word, and Doyle just decided not to make a big deal of it, the better to have Holmes fade quietly away?

Whichever, the end of the series hasn't the *closure* modern genre consumers have come to expect. And really, that's just fine. Now we can just use our imaginations for ourselves. And just like we had to imagine **Dick Van Dyke** still toiling away on writing for that show, or **Napoleon** and **Ilya** still **U.N.C.L.E.**ing away without us, we can close our eyes and see Sherlock and Watson still in the Victorian fog, solving the thousands of mysteries which Watson has alluded to. Perhaps for these heroes, it's better not to have a definitive ending.

Thanks for reading this humble effort at a blog!

OTHER TRIFLES AND OBSERVATIONS:

**Shoscombe may be a mid-level Holmes affair, but *literarily* it works quite nicely. We have a nice theme of impostors and doubles running throughout--Sir Robert uses an identical horse to fake out touts, and uses a fake sister to forestall his creditors, while Holmes and Watson pose as city-slickers out for some bucolic fishing. And the bones in the furnace are meant to fake us out into thinking that they are Lady Beatrice's.

The whole tale, while ultimately rather slight, is well put together, teasing us with red herrings and surprising plot twists.

Doyle bringing Holmes into the **CSI-future: "*Sherlock Holmes had been bending for a long time over a low-power microscope..."'they have begun to realize the importance of the microscope.'"*

Little did Doyle know that 80 years later, the airwaves would be filled with nothing *but* "regular" police using such scientific methods to solve crimes.

**The last two apocryphal cases mentioned:

In the St. Pancras case you may remember that a cap was found beside the dead policeman. The accused man denies that it is his. But he is a picture-frame maker who habitually handles glue.

and

Since I ran down that coiner by the zinc and copper filings in the seam of his cuff they have begun to realize the importance of the microscope.

Interesting that these both come from Holmes, and not Watson.

**Perhaps the most-remembered part of this story: Watson's gambling "*problem*":

By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?"

"I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension."

I think this was pretty clearly sarcastic exaggeration, not meant to be taken literally. Still, perhaps we now know why, upon his return, Holmes kept Watson's checkbook for him...

****Sir Robert Norberton** was clearly a violent, dangerous man:

"Norberton nearly came within your province once.

"How was that?"

"It was when he horsewhipped Sam Brewer, the well-known Curzon Street money-lender, on Newmarket Heath. He nearly killed the man."

And we're told that "*[h]e's a terrible man with his fists if he gets started, and no respecter of persons*."

And still another person who knows him warns, "*But mind what I have told you about Sir Robert. He's the sort that strikes first and speaks afterwards*"

So it's hard to understand why, exactly, Sir Robert hasn't done jail time, or at least been sued out of his holdings even before the creditors got to him. He *"nearly killed"* a man by whipping him--could even a noble get away with that? Maybe Norberton paid to hush it up. Or perhaps Watson (or the press) exaggerated the incident.

Still, despite the fact that he was so violent, Watson cannot believe that *a noble* would actually commit premeditated murder:

And yet...Let us suppose, Watson -- it is merely a scandalous supposition, a hypothesis put forward for argument's sake -- that Sir Robert has done away with his sister."

"My dear Holmes, it is out of the question."

"Very possibly, Watson. Sir Robert is a man of an honourable stock. But you do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles.

A presumption of innocence because of class. Oh, Victorian/Edwardian era, I shall *miss* you...

**Watson's description of Sir Robert as better suited to a different era is classic:

Well, he has the name of being a dangerous man. He is about the most daredevil rider in England -- second in the Grand National a few years back. He is one of those men who have overshot their true generation. He should have been a buck in the days of the Regency -- a boxer, an athlete, a plunger on the turf, a lover of fair ladies, and, by all account, so far down Queer Street that he may never find his way back again.

**Yes, I know it's *picking at low-hanging fruit* to mock older slang that has picked up altogether different, risque meanings over the decades. And yes, I know that the phrase merely means that Sir Robert was deeply in debit.

Still, I can't help but emphasize this utterly perfect phrase: "*so far down Queer Street that he may never find his way back again.*" Priceless.

It's also not the *only* time the queer-word is used for Sir Robert: "*Well, sir, when a man does one queer thing, or two queer things, there may be a meaning to it, but when everything he does is queer, then you begin to wonder."*

I know, I know. Still, all of that perhaps puts another meaning on "*Sir Robert has never married. Just as well, I think, considering his prospects*." Maybe it wasn't the *prospects* that kept him from marrying...

**Sir Robert's living arrangements are considered odd:

He lives with his widowed sister, Lady Beatrice Falder."

"You mean that she lives with him?"

"No, no. The place belonged to her late husband, Sir James. Norberton has no claim on it at all. It is only a life interest and reverts to her husband's brother.

It's another, final look at some of the *sexism* of the era. If unmarried sibling are living together, even Sherlock assumes that the sister "*lives with*" the brother--that is, that he is the property holder and source of income, and she the "*freeloader*." To suggest otherwise? Holmes takes that as an obvious mistake!!

Here, as well, we have yet *another* case of a woman being used for her inheritance. Perhaps even more egregiously, she's not allowed to *keep* the estate to pass on--when she passes on, it reverts to the **Falder** clan.!!

Of course, that's a good way for declining aristocracy to make sure that's what's left of their wealth stays in their family, and isn't redistributed by weddings.

I can only imagine (hope) the will would have been different had **Beatrice** and her husband had children to pass the estate to. Also, surely her husband recognized Sir Robert's spendthrift nature (and Beatrice's willingness to let it happen), and this was just a means to protect the family wealth from being squandered by a jerk...

****John Mason**, head trainer of Sir Robert's horses, is probably the *worst* client/witness ever!

You'd think that, if you're trying to interest Sherlock Holmes in taking your case, you'd start with the worst evidence first--*bones in the furnace!*

But no, Mason tries the soft sell: "*First of all, Mr. Holmes, I think that my employer, Sir Robert, has gone mad*."

Well, Holmes notes that this really isn't his department. But rather than go on to potentially great evils, Mason just embellishes on the madness theory: "*Well, first of all, you have only to look at him. I don't believe he sleeps at night. He is down at the stables at all hours. His eyes are wild. It has all been too much for his nerves."*

Then Mason moves on...but not to any evidence of foul play! He just segues to the fact that Beatrice is behaving oddly:

Then there is his conduct to Lady Beatrice! They have always been the best of friends. They had the same tastes, the two of them, and she loved the horses as much as he did. Every day at the same hour she would drive down to see them -- and, above all, she loved the Prince. He would prick up his ears when he heard the wheels on the gravel, and he would trot out each morning to the carriage to get his lump of sugar. But that's all over now." "Why?" "Well, she seems to have lost all interest in the horses. For a week now she has driven past the stables with never so much as 'Good-morning'!

So far Mason has only laid out that he thinks Mason mad, and that Beatrice is behaving oddly. Not much call to involve a private detective is there?

Oh, yeah, there's the dog:

"You think there has been a quarrel?"

"And a bitter, savage, spiteful quarrel at that. Why else would he give away her pet spaniel that she loved as if he were her child?"

Still not a lot of interest here, is there? Oh, well then, she's drinking more than she used to!

She is brooding and sulky and drinking, Mr. Holmes -- drinking like a fish."

"Did she drink before this estrangement?"

"Well, she took her glass, but now it is often a whole bottle of an evening. So Stephens, the butler, told me.

Again, Mason has wasted Holmes time (and pages!) without anything particularly dastardly. At best, it looks like a sibling fight. What does he expect Holmes to do about that?

Only *then* does Mason begin to bring in the Gothic and sinister: "*But then, again, what is master doing down at the old church crypt at night? And who is the man that meets him there?*"

OK, you now have Holmes' interest. Still, Mason waits to casually drop in the fact that there's grave robbery (or worse) going on: "*No, sir, and there is something more that I can't fit in. Why should Sir Robert want to dig up a dead body?*" Heavens, talk about burying your lede!

And only *after* all of that, with Holmes still expressing skepticism about getting involved, does Mason finally reveal the burned skeleton: *He took a paper from his pocket, and, unwrapping it carefully, he exposed a charred fragment of bone.*

It just seems to me that if you want to convince Sherlock Holmes to get involved, you *start* with the potential evidence of a potential crime, and then add in the soap opera aspects. But maybe that's just me.

**Sir Robert's plan to keep the odds high in the race:

You can get forties now, but it was nearer the hundred when he began to back him."

"But how is that if the horse is so good?"

"The public don't know how good he is. Sir Robert has been too clever for the touts. He has the Prince's half-brother out for spins. You can't tell 'em apart. But there are two lengths in a furlong between them when it comes to a gallop.

Admit it--when you read that, you were *sure* that the story was going to be some kind of **Silver Blaze** reprise, with a horse-switching happening somewhere along the line. That's what I thought...

I must confess to *confusion* about the maid, **Carrie Evans, and her alleged affair with Sir Robert.

Mason, despite his claims to discretion, quite clearly implies that the affair is well-known and long-lived:

"There is her maid, Carrie Evans. She has been with her this five years."

"And is, no doubt, devoted?"

Mr. Mason shuffled uncomfortably. "She's devoted enough," he answered at last. "But I won't say to whom." "Ah!" said Holmes. "I can't tell tales out of school.

...

"Well, the scandal has been pretty clear for a long time."

It would have been hard for Mason to confirm the affair more *firmly*, uncomfortable shuffling or not.

And yet...Norberton hires **Carrie's husband** to carry out the impersonation of Beatrice!!

Carrie, for whatever reason, *has been living under her maiden name!!* So maybe Mason didn't even realize she was married!!

So *was* there an affair? If there was, perhaps **Mr. Norlett** didn't know about it? But Mason sure seems to imply that it was common knowledge.

Or perhaps there *was* an affair, and Norlett did know, and cooperated anyway. Maybe Sir Robert promised him a handsome payday for his cooperation, and all he had to do was turn his head. The rich really are different, you see.

So was Mason completely wrong about the affair? Or was there, and Mr. Norlett behaved in a fairly unbelievable way? And why even introduce this into the story? Just to give Sir Robert a (*far-fetched* at best) motive for murder?

The **Granada adaptation changes things around a bit, so stable boy played by a very young **Jude Law** impersonates Lady Beatrice

Oh, Jude....

**Another reason Mason should have started with crypt robbing and mysterious bones, as Holmes says, "*It is only the colourless, uneventful case which is hopeless*."

**Sherlock declares that "*Dogs don't make mistakes*."

Well, I've known some pretty damn dumb dogs in my day. And even the smartest ones aren't that hard to fool...

**Our first actual view of Sir Robert: *He was a terrible figure, huge in stature and fierce in manner. A large stable-lantern which he held in front of him shone upward upon a strong, heavily moustached face and angry eyes...*

**Apparently, death did not *flatter* lady Beatrice:

He turned and tore open the coffin-lid behind him. In the glare of the lantern I saw a body swathed in a sheet from head to foot with dreadful, witch-like features, all nose and chin, projecting at one end, the dim, glazed eyes staring from a discoloured and crumbling face.

**Holmes: "*In any case, my business is that of every other good citizen -- to uphold the law."*

Hahahaha!! How many thieves and murderers have you let walk away, Sherlock?!? And that's just in the stories we know

about!!

**OK, I have to admit that I'm confused by some of the finances here.

We're told that Sir Robert has hocked everything in a desperate attempt to win the race and save his financial situation from ruin. And we're told that when Beatrice dies, the estate reverts back to her husband's family.

But Sir Robert says, "*I have always known that if my sister were to die my creditors would be on to my estate like a flock of vultures. Everything would be seized -- my stables, my horses -- everything*."

Wait...wouldn't that property revert to *the Falders*? It's not "*his*" estate, right? If the stables and the horses were part of the estate, wouldn't they go to the Falders, as well?

I'll confess freely that I'm no financial expert, and have no idea whether the creditors would be able to step in *before* probate or have to wait until *after*. But since *none* of the estate belonged to Sir Robert, it seems to my untrained mind that the estate would revert to the Falders, and the creditors would have to go after them to seize the horses, etc.

Again, we have incomplete information, but if Sir Robert had invested "*everything*" on the horse race, his only asset the creditors could go after would be his actual bets.

Holmes disagrees. "*Your bets on the race, and therefore your hopes for the future, would hold good even if your creditors seized your estate*."

Well, wait. If I borrowed thousand of dollars, and put it all into lottery tickets, and then when bankrupt before the drawing...wouldn't the creditors be *entitled* to those tickets, as an asset with potential value? It seems wrong to say that I could default on my debts, but walk away with the tickets and become a millionaire, and the creditors couldn't touch me.

**So, no *real* crime was committed here (putting aside whatever minor laws about notifying authorities or properly treating dead bodies might have existed). So, no harm, no foul, right, Sherlock?

Hardly. Holmes gets mighty *judgy* here:

"There was no indignity or irreverence, Mr. Holmes. I do not feel that I have wronged the dead."

"Your conduct seems to me inexcusable, Sir Robert."

Wow. Worse than the murderers and adulterers and thieves you've let off the hook?

"Well, Sir Robert," said Holmes, rising, "this matter must, of course, be referred to the police. It was my duty to bring the facts to light, and there I must leave it. As to the morality or decency of your conduct, it is not for me to express an opinion."

I think you have expressed you opinion adequately, Holmes...

**Watson tells us that thee was a happy ending:

It is generally known now that this singular episode ended upon a happier note than Sir Robert's actions deserved. Shoscombe Prince did win the Derby, the sporting owner did net eighty thousand pounds in bets, and the creditors did hold their hand until the race was over, when they were paid in full, and enough was left to reestablish Sir Robert in a fair position in life.

Watson neglects to tell us whether or not he bet any of his wound pension on the race...

**Apparently, the authorities were not *nearly* so morally outraged as Holmes:

Both police and coroner took a lenient view of the transaction, and beyond a mild censure for the delay in registering the lady's decease, the lucky owner got away scatheless from this strange incident in a career which has now outlived its shadows and promises to end in an honoured old age.

It seems that, over time, Sir Robert mended his violent ways, and his spendthrift ways, and...Money really *does* change everything!
