The Bilge Pump

Vol. 13, No. 09 September, 2025

The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star

founded November, 1970

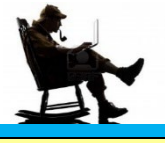
PLEASE NOTE: October 05, 2025 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on **October 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 **"A Scandal in Bohemia"**.

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story of **"A Scandal in Bohemia"**.

Our special guest speaker will be our own **Bill Mason, BSI.**

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

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

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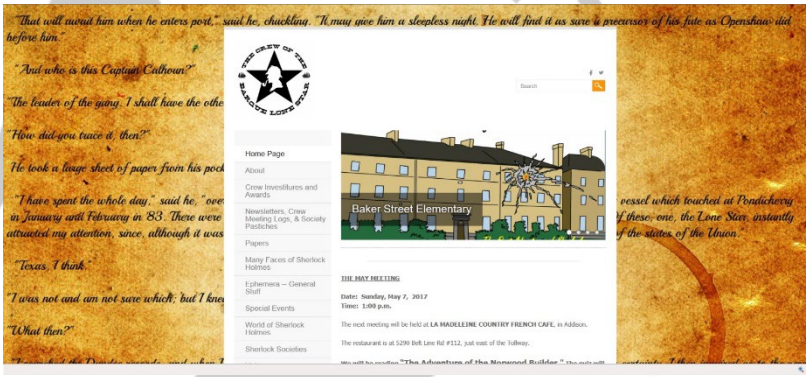


Our Facebook Page:

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

SEPTEMBER 07 SUMMARY

There were 69 in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The meeting was opened with Clara Hebért reading her award winning essay on Sherlock Holmes. Clara won the Joel Senter Essay Contest, sponsored by the Beacon Society (see page 4).

We then had the quiz from the story, *The Sign of Four*.

Bob Katz led the discussion on this month' story.

We had many announcements from other Crew Members and Societies, but for us…

The next book to be published by the Crew of the Barque Lone Star will be called *Rejected Holmes*. Submissions are due, October 1, 2025.

The Second Great Sherlockian Whimsical Tour took place on August 23-26. The video will be posted on our website in the near future.

Trust annual lecture series will be on September 20, 2025. The lecture to be given by Susan will be Marry Him or Murder Him.

David Foster gave a wonderful presentation on the Economic Perspective of Sherlock Holmes.

Bob Katz, BSI, then gave a great retrospective of his time in residency and how events then had a canonical connection.

Brad Keefauver, BSI, gave us his monthly Canonical Top 10.

Shana Carter then did a reading from the Baker Street Journal. (see page 5)

Rich Krisciunas closed the meeting with a toast to the Crew of the Barque Lone Star.

I am sure you can tell when I do the minutes, compared to the wonderful job Cindy does every month!

TRUTH OVER TREACHERY (PROMPT #3)

Clara Hebért

My dearest Alice,

I trust this letter finds you well. I must share with you my reflections on a recent fictional case that has left a profound impression on me—The Adventure of the Speckled Band. As a fellow practitioner of the detective arts, I have long held the intellect of Mr. Sherlock Holmes in the highest regard, and this particular case only served to deepen my admiration.

The manner in which he unraveled the mystery surrounding the tragic death of a young woman and exposed the vile machinations of her stepfather, Dr. Roylott, struck me as brilliant and amazing. Holmes' ability to pierce through layers of deception with such clarity never ceases to astound me. In this instance, his unrelenting pursuit of justice ensured that evil was defeated and order restored. As I followed his sharp deductions, I was once again reminded of the remarkable power of intelligence, integrity, and steadfast resolve in the face of darkness.

One prominent theme in this case—and indeed in many others Mr. Holmes has tackled—is that of good triumphing over evil. It is a trope that runs throughout his adventures, a testament to his unwavering belief in justice. In The Adventure of the Speckled Band, the malevolent forces at play seem insurmountable. With his brute strength, wealth, and guile, Dr. Roylott appears to be a figure who operates in the shadows, manipulating others for his personal gain without remorse.

The situation looks bleak for the vulnerable young woman, Helen Stoner, whose life is overshadowed by the menacing threats posed by her father. However, the forces of good, embodied by Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, are not so easily deterred. Despite the challenges he faces in this case, from the eerie atmosphere of Stoke Moran to the puzzling clues left behind by Helen's deceased sister, Julia, Holmes' rational mind does not falter.

He relentlessly pursues the truth, determined to bring justice to the victim, and to protect Helen from a similar fate.

Sherlock's attention to detail, his scientific approach, and his deductive reasoning ultimately uncover the truth hidden beneath layers of fear and mystery. Through his investigations, he reveals that Dr. Roylott's plan to use a deadly snake to kill his stepdaughters and inherit their money was a horrific effort to maintain control over his victims.

The "speckled band" was not merely a symbol of an unsolved mystery, but rather a literal and lethal weapon of Dr. Roylott's evil design. In the end, it is not merely his physical strength that overpowers the villain, but also his effectual cunning, morality, and unwavering determination.

Holmes' ability to navigate the most perplexing of cases, as well as his role in bringing the wicked to justice, highlights the broader theme of morality. It is not the force of might or fortune that secures victory in this story, but the integrity of Holmes' character and his belief in the conquest of right over wrong. While Dr. Roylott may have tried to intimidate and control those around him, Holmes' unyielding pursuit of justice ensures that his villainous actions are uncovered and brought to an end.

What I find particularly striking about this story is how this achievement serves not just as a personal triumph for Sherlock Holmes but also as a powerful reminder of the importance of holding onto moral conviction and thinking critically. In a world where power, wealth, and influence can often overshadow what is right, The Adventure of the Speckled Band stands as a clear reminder that intelligence and a strong moral compass can overcome even the darkest forces.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this case, Alice. Surely you too must appreciate the brilliance of Mr. Holmes and the indomitable spirit of good that courses through his work. What I find especially captivating is how, in a world full of darkness and deceit, Holmes remains unwavering in his pursuit of right. I'm curious to know your perspective on this particular case and how it aligns with your views on equity and virtue. I'm sure your insight will add another layer to the discussion, as it always does.

Yours very sincerely,
Sally Cromwell

THE ADVENTURES THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

Shana Carter, ASH

Baker Street Journal (Edgar W. Smith, Editor)
Volume 6, Number 2, April 1956

It is instructive to speculate upon the unhappier fate that might have attended a number of very bloody criminals if only Sherlock Holmes had been invited, or permitted, to put himself upon their trail. A wider and more intensive use of the remarkable powers the Great Detective possessed would, we must think, have made the air not only of London but of the whole wide world the sweeter for it.

There has, indeed, been speculation on this score. One whimsey has dealt with the great good fortune enjoyed by the murderer of Andrew J. Borden and Abby Durfee Borden in consequence of the Master's fettering. Another fantasy from the same source - for which the world is not yet prepared - is in the making, concerning that multiple offender against society in general and womankind in particular who came to be known as Jack the Ripper.

In both of those cases, it is reasonable to suppose that if Holmes had been given a free hand the outcome - or the lack of outcome - would have been different. He would surely have made more of the suggestive item of mutton soup for breakfast: he would have read the messages in the dust on the floor of the sweltering loft when those messages. as things were, remained inscrutable; and, by eliminating the impossible, he would probably have found the very axe with which the incredible deeds on Second Street were done.

And if the regular police force of London, in their inability to go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone, could not lay Jack the Ripper by the heels, it is pleasant to believe that Mr. Holmes's irregular police force could easily have done so.

But these are only two cases out of the many that went unsolved and unrequited during the period of Holmes's active practice. Any student of the grisly and the macabre can name offhand a dozen instances in which the swift, sure strokes that only the Master could deal would have brought retribution and justice where these were due. Some of these cases, it is true, occurred when Holmes, with all of Europe ringing with his name, was very busy. But others came when the doldrums and the cocaine were upon him., or when he was trifling with such pedestrian events as those involving the Noble Bachelor, or Mary Sutherland, or the dual proclivities of Neville St. Clair.

It is hard to believe the man who had no more failures throughout his career than could be counted upon the fingers of a single hand should not have been summoned oftener by Scotland Yard to bring their own batting average up to a higher level! We are tempted, as we are on so many other occasions when things go amiss, to suspect the machinations of Moriarty. But more likely, where this particular recalcitrance is concerned, we should point the finger of accusation at G. Lestrade and Tobias Gregson.

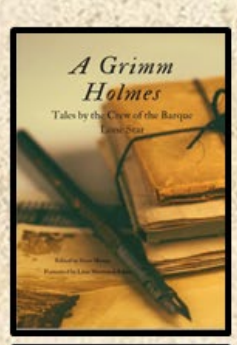
To subscribe to the Baker Street Journal, go to https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-baker-street-journal/

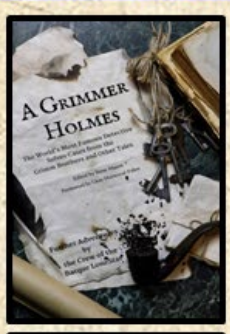
The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society has published 9 wonderful books. Each book is chocked full of wonderful essays and pastiches by our own Society members. You may download a free copy of the books (as .pdf files) on our website…

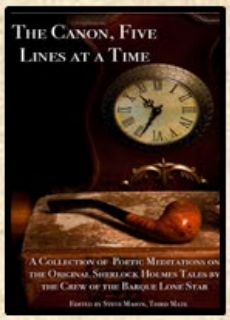
https://www.dfw-sherlock.org/society--crew-member-anthologies-pastiches.html

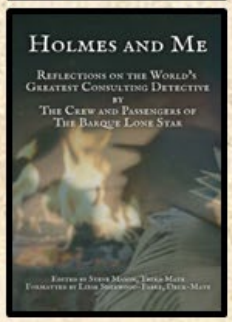
Or you may purchase a soft-back version of any of our books (at cost) at…

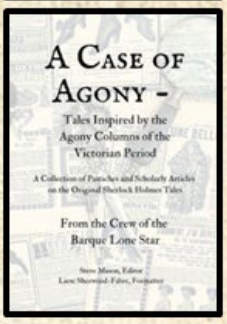
https://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/the%20crew%20of%20the%20barque%20lone%20star

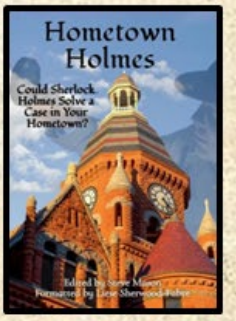


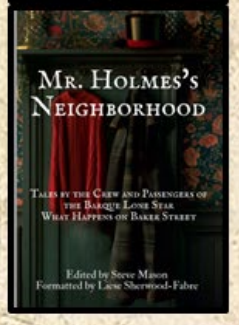












The Crew of the Barque Lone Star Society is producing our 10th book in our 55th year of existence.

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.

IN PRAISE OF THE PASTICHE

David Marcum

Recently, Steve Mason invited me to write a monthly column in praise of the Sherlockian pastiche. Steve pointed out that people sometimes say "There are no good pastiches" or "I don't know how to find the good ones with so many bad ones out there."

I am here to help you.

I've been a Sherlockian since age ten in 1975 – Fifty years! – and before I'd even read all of the Canon, I was also collecting and reading pastiches. To me, they are as important as the Canon and Sherlockian Scholarship – the other two-legs of the Sherlockian stool. In *The Great Holmes Tapestry*, the original pitifully few 60 stories of the original Canon makes up the main structural fibers, while pastiches serve to fill in all the spaces in between, answering questions, expanding on vague events or references, and providing nuance and color and completing the picture of the *Entire* Lives of Our Heroes, Holmes and Watson.

I'll only be recommending pastiches that are traditional and Canonical. No ghosts need apply – and no parodies or modern-day settings either. I only collect, read, write, edit, and support the types of stories about the Holmes and Watson that could have appeared in the original *Strand Magazine.* I've referred to myself as a Missionary for The Church of the Canonical Holmes, and I've been collecting Holmes materials for fifty years. I have around 5,000 volumes of both scholarship and pastiches, and I own (and have read and chronologicized) nearly all of the estimated 11,000 traditional Canonical pastiches in existence. And I've edited over 1,200 of those – over 10%, and I've written around 140 pastiches, around 1% of all of them. So that's partly why Steve asked me to write this column. Starting with some of the best pastiches and working down, and writing about one of them per month, right now there are enough traditional pastiches for me to produce over 900 years of columns.

So let's get started . . . .

When Steve wrote and asked me to contribute to the newsletter, I just happened to be reading a book that I can recommend, and it seemed like the logical Holmes adventure to discuss first: *A Man Called Baskerville* by Jim Nelson. It was originally published independently through Amazon in 2022, and I bought a copy then, although with various editing chores on my plate and lots of other plates spinning, I didn't have a chance to read it immediately. Earlier this year, a new hardcover version was published by MX – and I arbitrarily pulled it off the stack a few days ago as my next Holmes adventure to read. And it immediately captured my imagination.

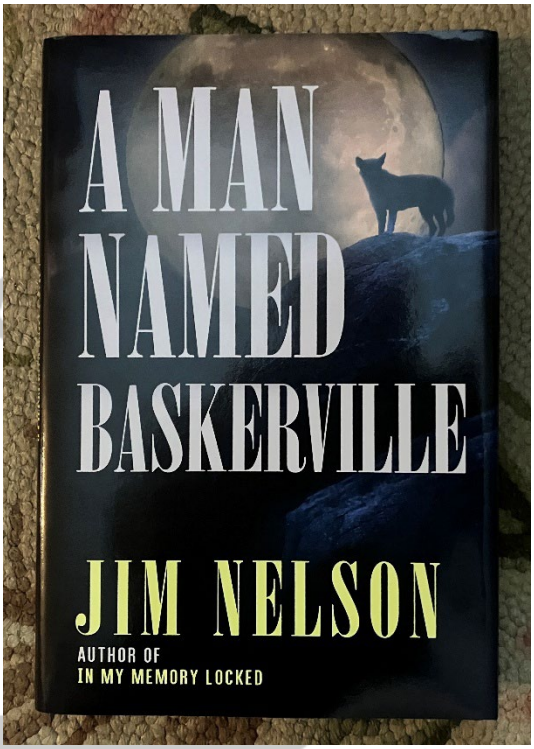
STOP – SPOILERS: Go No Further If For Some Unfathomable Reason You Have Not Yet Read *The Hound of the Baskervilles.*

The Hound of the Baskervilles is arguably the most famous Holmes adventure, and there have been many sequels to it – some brilliant, and others less so. This book serves to wonderfully shine a light on Rodger Baskerville's untold story, and to provide a few important threads to that obscure part of The Great Holmes Tapestry – threads we didn't even realize we were missing until this book was published.

According to the provided author information, this is Mr. Nelson's only Holmes book, but he's written eight other books. Except for stating that he divides his time between San Francisco and Tokyo, the rest remains a mystery. Some pasticheurs have found a stack of Watson's old manuscripts, but Mr. Nelson appears to have discovered the journal of Rodger Baskerville – *i.e.* Jack Stapleton – and having presented that that, he has no other adventures to contribute . . . so far.

The book covers five days in October 1888, beginning with the end events of *The Hound of the Baskervilles.* (The chronological setting of 1888 fits with Baring-Gould's chronology, and mine. In *The Hound*, it is implied that the adventure occurs in 1889, based on deductions made from Dr. Mortimer's walking stick – the 1884 engraving being five years earlier – but by Fall 1889, Watson would have been married to Mary Morstan and back in practice, so there's no way he could have hied off to Dartmoor for multiple weeks. Thus, the shift back to 1888. These are the types of questions and maneuvers of the Sherlockian Chronologist.)

Each daily entry from the journal relates Rodger Baskerville's post-*Hound* activities, but he soon devolves into extended flashbacks of his past life: How he was raised in South America by Sir Charles Baskerville's younger brother, long excommunicated from the family. How he met Anthony – *Antonio* – his manservant at Merripit House, and Beryl Garcia, his wife. His escapades in the New World before coming to England, his attempt to run a Yorkshire school, and then his inevitable landing in Dartmoor. Then we see the events of *The Hound* from his perspective.



Mr. Nelson makes a few errors. For instance, in *The Hound*, Sir Charles is found dead in May, and Watson goes with Sir Henry to Dartmoor in the fall, where they discover that Selden has just escaped. In Rodger Baskerville's journal, Selden is already running around loose on the moor on the night that Sir Charles's death is arranged. Also just a few days after Sir Charles's death, Henry Baskerville is already due to arrive in London from Canada, instead of months later. It's also implied that Watson is already a well-known author, although at this point in time he's only published one book, *A Study in Scarlet.* (To be fair, this is a mistake that a lot of pasticheurs make.) All of this might be put down to Rodger Baskerville's jumbled and conflated memories in the days following the failure of his plot to murder his cousin.

None of these errors truly detract from the building suspense as we see Rodger Baskerville setting his steps, one after the other, stubbornly, foolishly, and inescapably on the path to his own doom.

METAPHOR CLUSTERS

Karen Murdock, August, 2025

One of the most familiar, and also one of the most common, figures of speech in the Sherlock Holmes Canon is the metaphor.

Metaphor is the comparison of two things of unlike nature, without the use of "like" or "as" ("like" and "as" are characteristic of a different figure of speech, the simile). Whereas simile asserts a *resemblance* between two things, metaphor asserts an *identity*.

> The Past is a bucket of ashes.
> (Carl Sandburg, "Prairie," in *Cornhuskers*, 1918)

> Life is a foreign language; all men mispronounce it.
> (Christopher Morley, *Thunder on the Left*, 1925)

> Time is a dressmaker specializing in alterations.
> (Faith Baldwin, *Face Toward the Spring*, 1956)

> Gossip is just news running ahead of itself in a red satin dress.
> (Liz Smith, in *Dallas Times-Herald*, 1978)

This is one of the only ancient classical figures of speech still taught in today's classrooms. You probably learned it in middle school.

Arthur Conan Doyle was a master of metaphor. He used hundreds in the Sherlockian Canon (1).

Some things can be used either literally or metaphorically. In "The Lion's Mane," for example, Sherlock Holmes writes:

> I was kneeling and Stackhurst standing by the body when **a shadow fell across us**, and we found that Ian Murdoch was by our side. (LION, 1084)

This "shadow" is a literal one. But when young Jack Bennett says, of Professor Presbury in CREE

> "**he was under some shadow** which had darkened his higher qualities" (CREE, 1073)

the shadow is metaphorical.

Several real hounds lope through the Canon, the most famous being that big black pooch running around that moor in southwestern England. When Sherlock Holmes says

> "Pompey is the **pride of the local draghounds**" (MISS, 633)

he is being literal. Pompey is a real dog.

But when Isadora Klein says, of her hired henchmen

> "They are **good hounds** who run silent" (3GAB, 1032)

she is speaking metaphorically.

In compiling lists of figures of speech in the Canon, I have included only instances in which something is used metaphorically.

Shadows and hounds were metaphors that Arthur Conan Doyle liked a lot.

When Doyle liked a metaphor, he used it over and over again in his stories of Sherlock Holmes. I have termed these repeated figures of speech **"metaphor clusters."**

The term "hound" is used metaphorically 13 times in the Canon (numbers are page numbers in "the Doubleday Canon").

"the old hound is the best" (STUD, 31)
"I am one of the hounds and not the wolf" (STUD, 35)
this amateur bloodhound carolled away (STUD, 36)
but still he wandered on, a human bloodhound (STUD, 76)
"You hound!" he cried (STUD, 80)
Holmes, the sleuth-hound (REDH, 185)
"I [Jack Crocker] was not such a selfish hound as that." (ABBE, 648)
"This drunken hound" (ABBE, 648)
"my chance to throw these hounds once for all off my track" (VALL, 812)
"I told the hounds [policemen] what I thought of them." (VALL, 822)
"the hounds will be on your trail" (VALL, 825)
"They are good hounds who run silent." (3GAB, 1032) [also alliteration]
"Such hounds have a way […] of biting the hand that feeds them" (3GAB, 1032)

Doyle used other favorite metaphors even more frequently.

Here is a table of the most common metaphor clusters in the Canon (2).

metaphor	uses in Canon	metaphor	uses in Canon	metaphor	uses in Canon
TRACK/TRAIL	52	PLAYING CARDS	26	HOUND	13
CHAIN	51	CLOUD	25	BLACK	12
LIGHT	38	SCENT	25	THEATRE	12
THREADS/TANGLES	37	TRAIN	25	KEY	5
DARK	34	NET	23	STORM	4
THROW LIGHT	33	SHADOW	23	WEB	4
LOST IN THOUGHT	27				

ENDNOTES

1. If you would like to see a list of all the more than 1500 metaphors used in the Canon, you can get it if you email me at murdock1212(at)gmail.com. I am working on a book on all the figures of speech used by Doyle in the Sherlockian Canon.
2. I would also be happy to send you a list of all the metaphor clusters in the Canon.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT "A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA"

1. Summary (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married and in civil practice. Holmes still uses cocaine.

The King of Bohemia is engaged to Clotilde Lothman, princess of Scandinavia. Formerly, the king was informally engaged to Irene. The king jilted Irene because he felt that she was greatly inferior to him socially and Irene felt much misused. She has letters which the king wrote to her including a photo of the two of them together, and threatens to send them to Clotilde on the day that her (Clotilde's) and the king's betrothal is announced publicly.

Holmes is hired to recover the photo and letters. The king tells him that several attempts have been made to do this but all have failed.

Holmes, disguised as a drunken groom, is casing Irene's house and is roped into being a witness at her and Godfrey's wedding. Irene gives Holmes a gold sovereign for his services which he plans to wear on his watch chain.

Holmes stages an elaborate con and determines that Irene keeps the photo and letters in a secret compartment beside her fireplace.

Returning to Baker Street in deep twilight, Holmes is unlocking his door when he hears a passing voice say, "Goodnight Mister Sherlock Holmes." He knows he has heard the voice before, but can't place it. The speaker is Irene, dressed in male costume.

Early next morning, Holmes, Watson and the King call on Irene, planning to take the photo. But Irene and Godfrey have fled to the continent, taking the photo with them. She leaves another photo of herself for the king and a letter for Holmes, in which she says that she was cleverly tricked into betraying the photo's hiding place but instantly realized what she had done and followed Holmes back to Baker Street to confirm her suspicions.

Since she is now married, sending the photograph to Clotilde would involve Irene and Godfrey in the ensuing scandal so Irene plans to keep it as a souvenir.

Holmes refuses a heavy emerald encrusted ring but accepts Irene's photograph as payment for his services – plus the remainder of the £1,000 the King advanced him for expenses.

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2. Story Info Sheet (McMurdo's Camp)

- First published in:
  The Strand Magazine, July 1891

- Time frame of story (known/surmised):
  "it was on the twentieth of March, 1888" Note: It is not unusual for there to be internal contradictions in Holmes chronology. The 3-20-88 date given by Watson does not agree with his marital status in other stories.

- Holmes & Watson living arrangements:
  Holmes alone at 221B. Watson's marriage had drifted Holmes & Watson away from each other.

- Opening scene:
  Watson on a call, passed 221B on his return, and stopped in to see Holmes. Holmes had received a note and was expecting a client. Client arrived, and gave a false name, but Holmes saw through it and knew the client was really the King.

- Client:
  Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia, who was six feet six inches in height, with the chest and limbs of a Hercules and had an air of barbaric opulence.

- Crime or concern:
  Some 5 years previously the King was mad – insane, and committed an indiscretion with the opera singer and well known adventuress, Irene Adler. Letters and a photograph of this showing the two of them were retained by Adler. She threatened to send photo to King's new fiancée, Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, second daughter of the King of Scandinavia, whose family had strict principles. The photo would ruin the King.

- Villain:
  Irene Adler, or maybe Holmes himself who takes the case and agrees to recover the photo.

- Motive:
  To avoid a ruinous scandal in Bohemia.

- Logic / clues used to solve:
  Holmes stages an odd scene designed to create panic and trick Irene Adler into showing where the photo and letters are hidden.

Policemen:
  None mentioned

- Holmes' fees:
  Holmes: "Then, as to money?"
  King: "You have carte blanche."
  King also gives Holmes £1000 in gold and notes up front for expenses.

- Transport:
  Client shows up for appointment in the Royal Brougham, pulled by a pair of beauties, worth a hundred and fifty guineas apiece.
  From Adler's residence, the groom took a cab, Irene took a neat little landau, and Holmes took a cab to the church.

- Food:
  Some cold beef

- Drink:
  A glass of beer were Holmes lunch/dinner in the late afternoon.

- Vices:
  Holmes taking cocaine on and off.
  Holmes sent up a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette.

- Other cases mentioned:
  Holmes' summons to Odessa in the case of the Trepoff murder, his cleaning up of the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers at Tricomalee, and a delicate mission he had accomplished for the reigning family of Holland. STUD. The Darlington substitution scandal, and also the Arnsworth Castle business.

- Notable Quotables:
  "You see, but you do not observe." – Holmes
  "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. " – Holmes
  "Women are naturally secretive, and they like to do their own secreting." – Holmes
  She stood at the top with her superb figure outlined against the lights of the hall. – Watson, describing Adler.
  "It seemed safer to wait. A little over-precipitance may ruin all." – Holmes

- Other interestings:
  The woman who brings Holmes' supper and is referred to by Watson as "our landlady" is named Mrs. Turner. This is puzzling because ordinarily it is Mrs. Hudson, and with Watson not residing there, she is not "our landlady", but Holmes'.

- When all was said and done:
  Holmes' plan does not work. Irene sees thru it at the last minute and retains the photo. But she had lost interest in the King and married someone else. Promised to keep the photo and not give it to King's fiancée.

3. Selected Chronologies

a.	The Original Story by Arthur Conan Doyle	Tuesday, March 20, 1888
b.	William Baring-Gould	Wednesday, March 20, 1889
c.	H.W. Bell	Thursday, March 22, 1888
d.	Roger Butters	March, 1888
e.	Jay Finley Christ	Wednesday, March 20, 1889
f.	Jean-Pierre Crauser	Tuesday, March 20, 1888
g.	D. Martin Dakin	March, 1889
h.	Bill Dorn	Friday, March 22, 1889
i.	Henry Folsom	Thursday, March 21, 1889
j.	John Hall	Tuesday, March 20, 1888
k.	Craig Janasek	Friday, May 20, 1887
l.	Brad Keefauver	Tuesday, March 20, 1888
m.	Toshio Suzuki	Tuesday, March 20, 1888
n.	June Thomson	March, 1889
o.	Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler	Friday, March 22, 1889

4. Canonical Queeries (Ralph Edwards, BSI)

- How does Holmes refer to the woman in later adventures?
- Are “dubious and questionable memory” and “adventuress” justified?
- At this time what might have been Holmes’ “old books”?
- Was Watson riding or walking in Baker Street on March 20th?
- Would brilliant lighting of 1888 produce desired silhouette?
- Having only a few facts, why was Holmes pacing the floor?
- How did Holmes expect Watson to support himself and Mary if not in practice?
- Is German handwriting distinctive?
- Was the brougham rented?
- Does a King of such size remain incognito in such dress?
- Did the King’s subjects wonder where he was three days before his wedding?
- Does a Prima Donna usually retire by age 30?
- Why didn’t the King send his agents to Holmes earlier?
- Was Irene Adler within her legal or moral rights to threaten the King?
- How recent was the promise to use the photograph?
- Did Holmes really have matters of importance to look into?
- What were English window-fasteners and weighing scales like in 1888?
- Was a two-hour ride a general custom in 1888?
- Wasn’t Irene, in disguise, a second male visitor?
- Would it be practical to “run for it” if 20 minutes away by cab?
- Wasn’t Holmes’ arrival likely to alert John’s curiosity?

- Why was Holmes (an unknown groom) used as a witness instead of John?
- Did scissors grinders still go around at 7 p.m.?
- Why is Irene "the lady" to Watson and "the woman" or "young person" to Holmes?
- Where would a watch have been worn to be a target for robbing?
- Did Watson often walk with, as he says, "my friend's arm in mine"?
- What reaction did Holmes expect of Irene after her initial scare?
- How did Holmes know Irene's usual rising hour?
- Was it practical for Norton to leave, never to return?
- Who warned Irene Adler about Sherlock Holmes?

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5. 17 Steps (Brad Keefauver, BSI)

1. The Return Of Doctor Watson

After two novels worth of nursing his wounds, Watson suddenly has a home, a wife, AND a job, all his own. But the doctor's exact words are "I had now returned to civil practice." In the opening of "A Study in Scarlet," he seems to have gone straight from medical school into the military. He doesn't seem to have a civil practice in either of the first two books . . . so when was he working as a civilian doctor before this? Some time between the shoulder wound and the leg wound, perhaps? Back when he had to support his *first* wife?

2. The Woo Door

The front door at 221 Baker Street is one Watson says he will always associate with his "wooing." Now, the Smash did a little wooing once upon a time himself, and he will always associate a certain front door on Polk Street with that period of time. It's the place one awaits the divine presence one is utterly smitten with. So why is Watson associating the front door to 221 with his dating? One almost imagines Mary Morstan dropping him off, and the two spending a parting moment there, but that would never have been done in Victorian England, would it? Or was did the door just happen to be the same style that Mrs. Cecil Forrester had on the front of her house?

3. The Shoulder Wound? Healed!

Holmes casually tosses a case of cigars at Watson when he comes in the door, perhaps a gesture of celebration at Watson's return. Would Holmes be tossing it at the doctor if Watson was still holding that left arm in an unnatural manner? And this cigar case . . . am I right in assuming this would be a small, pocket sized case? Or was Holmes tossing a wooden box at his friend, which would definitely require a two-handed catch?

4. Where The Heck?

Holmes's Continental Gazetteer has convenient listings for Eglow and Eglonitz. In Jack Tracy's "Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana," the late Mr. Tracy has put an asterisk next to each of these references, denoting them as "fictitious." In die-hard Sherlockian terms, this means Mr. Tracy couldn't find them in his researches and simply gave up looking. But the key to all research is knowing where to look. As we know they're on "the Continent" (Europe), we at least have a starting place, but past that where would the Hounds look for these places based on the makeup of their names? My first thought is Eglow, Scotland and Eglonitz, Transylvania, but I'm sure there are better ideas out there.

5. A Pair Of Beauties

While Watson goes on about how loveless Holmes is, and how immune Holmes is to the charms of women, we do find Sherlock talking about a pair of beauties in this tale. Later, we even find that Holmes was out rubbing down some other specimens of that charming type. Now that I have the Lascar's attention, I would ask the Hounds if they find that Holmes has a special fondness for horses, or that he was just another citizen of a horse-powered world?

6. The Richness Of This Writing!

In one fabulous sentence, Watson tells us:

"My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb all my attention, while Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature."

The mind whirls! “Home-centred interests” -- Was Watson buying or renting? If he bought, was he doing home improvements? Or were these interests simply the setting up of a household, complete with boot-slitting servants? Was he helping Mary decorate? Or is “home-centred interests” just Watson’s way of saying he was spending every night romancing his new wife? (And we won’t even get into the Seinfeld-reminiscent “master of his own establishment.”)

And Holmes! “Buried in old books.” Buried! While we’re treated to a lot of books by name in the Canon, what we wouldn’t give to know what those burial piles consisted of. Criminal histories? Old law books? Music? He “loathed every form of society” -- does this mean he hated gatherings of every sort, or is Watson saying he actually hated people? “The drowsiness of the drug” -- don’t know much about cocaine, but my impression was that it was a stimulant. Was Watson mixing up the drowsiness of Holmes’s ambition (“I am the most incurably lazy devil that ever stood in shoe leather ....”) with the fierce energy of the drug?

7. King Of His Bohemian Soul

In the that quote from the last section, we saw how Holmes had a “Bohemian soul.” And here’s the King of Bohemia appearing and offering Holmes unlimited funds to do his bidding, producing a king’s ransom in gold and currency as temptation. The Hounds have discussed the foulness of this tale’s doings before, but taking from a step back, this tale begins to look like “The Devil of All Bachelors and Sherlock Holmes.” Symbolism a-plenty in this tale.

Watson, the tale’s patron saint of marital bliss, begins by telling us how Holmes had no special fondness for women. Mr. Bachelor and Mr. Married seem to have fallen out of touch, leaving Holmes easy prey for the Bachelor King’s offer to pay Holmes to betray an Angel of a Woman. (Irene the adventuress, an angel? Well, she leads Holmes to a church, and later, will only let him in her house if he comes as a holy man.) In the end, Holmes must decide between taking the snake (ring) or the angel(‘s photograph). Holmes chooses the angel, no doubt thanks to the recent return of the saintly Watson.

(It must be noted that Holmes later took the King’s “reward,” as we find in “A Case of Identity,” and offered its contents to Watson, symbolically tempting him back into the he-man woman-hater’s club.)

My question: Am I imagining all this in a fit of late-night desperation? Or is there an allegorical aspect to this tale?

8. The Serpentine Avenue Irregulars

We’ve seen Holmes using his gang of street urchins in the previous two tales, but now Holmes has gone a step further and come up with a gang of full grown adults. Shabbily dressed loafers, a scissors-grinder, two guardsmen, a nurse-girl, well-dressed young cigar-smokers, stablehands, serving maids, and ...oh, yes... a certain doctor. Where did Holmes find this bunch, and how much was he paying per person? Did the stablehands come from the ranks he’d been socializing with earlier in the tale?

Apparently they were men and women Holmes trusted, as all it would have taken was one traitor to go up to Briony Lodge and say “I’ll tell you who was behind that mess for a sovereign” to spoil his whole plan. Yet Holmes is confident enough in this bunch that he doesn’t come back until morning. Or was he betrayed?

9. The Limits Of An Index

“For many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information.”

One would suspect these paragraphs came out of the London papers. But the sheer scope of performing one’s own extract service from every daily paper in London seems immense. While his system must have had certain built-in efficiencies, Holmes had to set some criteria for his data gathering. What sort of criteria might that have been? Were the people limited to citizens of London? Were the subjects limited to those he perceived had some point of contact with crime?

10. Stop That Brougham!

Time moves strangely in the Canon. In “Copper Beeches,” Violet Hunter arrives at 10:15 in the morning and bids Holmes “goodnight” as she leaves, when nothing seems to have occurred that took all day to take place. And in SCAN, we find this odd passage:

“’Then, good-night, your Majesty, and I trust that we shall soon have some good news for you. And good-night, Watson,’ he added, as the wheels of the royal brougham rolled down the street.”

The coachman obviously has as little respect for the King as we do, and decided to take off when his shift was over, king or no king. Of course, we see no indication that the king used the door and the seventeen steps on his way out, perhaps he leapt from the window in that pause between sentences. (What a sight that would have made with his mask and that deep blue cloak flying behind him!)

Do these strange time tricks of the Canon hide moments and conversations that Watson would rather not tell us about? In this tale, might it not be the place where Holmes and Watson reconciled after some disagreement that had kept them apart since Watson’s wedding?

11. It's Hard To Say Good-Bye

Speaking of Holmes's goodnights, has anybody noticed that when Holmes says "good-bye" or "goodnight" in the Canon, it's never the end of the sentence? It's always "Good-night, and I trust that we shall have good news for you," or "Good-night, and I'll call upon you tomorrow." It's a great little technique, but the Smash has to wonder: Does he do it on purpose? Or were there hard goodbyes in his past, and he can't let that be the last thing out of his mouth? The added line always makes it seem like he and the listener will have some future contact, and this could be a sign of Holmes's softer side.

12. The Mysterious Mrs. Turner

One of the most popular bits of Sherlockian trivia originates in SCAN. In the tale previous to this one, and in every tale mentioning Holmes's landlady after this one, her name is "Mrs. Hudson." In "A Scandal in Bohemia," however, it would seem her name is "Mrs. Turner." But is it really? What the story truly contains are two separate statements taken in close succession:

"When Mrs. Turner has brought in the tray I will make it clear to you."

"He turned hungrily on the simple fare that our landlady had provided."

Mrs. Turner brought in the tray. The landlady provided the food. Need they be one in the same? And if they're not one in the same, who's the lady bringing in the food? The cook at 221? Another servant? Or the "Wiggins" of Holmes's Serpentine Avenue Irregulars, hanging around Baker Street to await last minute instructions?

13. Cigars, Cigarettes, Peccadillo?

Upon looking again at the cigar case incident, the Smash notices that Holmes then lights a cigarette. Does this indicate that Watson was a regular cigar smoker, as opposed to Holmes being the cigarette man? These fellows never seem to be too picky in their self-poisonings where tobacco are concerned ... pipes, cigars, cigarettes, snuff (at least they seem to avoid the chaw and spit routine), but do more tobacco-conscious Hounds perceive patterns in their tobacco consumption?

14. Grossin' Hankies?

Godfrey Norton's call to the cabbie, "Drive like the devil, first to Gross & Hankey's in Regent Street, and then to the Church of St. Monica in the Edgeware Road," perplexes a bit, as we don't really know what Gross & Hankey's is at all. It's presumed by some to be a jeweler, where Godfrey quickly bought a ring for the wedding that was his next stop. If Godfrey and Irene had gone to the trouble of getting a license, wouldn't they have picked up the ring already as well? Do you see any other possibilities for what Godfrey was doing at the mysterious Gross & Hankey's?

15. That "Good For Norton" Irene

Sherlock Holmes holds Irene Adler in high regard. Irene Adler holds Godfrey Norton in high regard. Sherlock must watch Irene marry Godfrey, and even aid in creating that union, because his client's welfare is best served by the marriage. It's his job to make sure his ideal woman marries another man -- is this a great plot for a romance, or what? (And not the kind with knights and dragons, either!)

For a man who stole Holmes's perfect woman, Godfrey Norton is still someone we know darn little about. Was he Irene's true love or just a convenient hireling willing to take on the role of husband for a time? Why does he pace and wave his arms in that half hour before they head for the church? Is the marriage up for debate, or is he just impatiently waiting for Irene to get dressed?

16. Bombs Away!

Holmes has a very simple little task for Watson in this story: "When I raise my hand--so--you will throw into the room what I give you to throw." And what does Holmes give Watson to throw?

"It is an ordinary plumber's smoke-rocket, fitted with a cap at either end to make it self-lighting." Caps are something that seem to be moving further and further away from common usage. Toy cap-guns aren't in the hands of boys everywhere anymore and blasting caps are for professionals. What kind of caps was Holmes using on his smoke-rocket, and what would use would these have normally been put to? Were such caps sensitive enough to trigger upon hitting a couch or some other object they might encounter, flying through a window?

17. Stubborn About Single Women

"Irene Adler, as I will still call her . . ." Watson writes after the part of the narrative where he learns of Irene's marriage. An interesting choice, as I would think a writer's natural inclination would be to refer to her by her married name from that point onward. Why would Watson make such a choice? Did he think his readers couldn't keep up? Or is this his way of passing judgement on the validity of the Norton nuptials.

6. View Halloas (Rosemary Michaud)

It is the first story in the Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, and it is also the first of what we might call the stories of legend: those Canonical tales that have inspired our imaginations far beyond the events that Watson wrote down. It's those larger-than-life characters who seem to do the trick for us. We already have Holmes and Watson, legends enough for anyone, but just as "The Greek Interpreter" reveals brother Mycroft Holmes, and "The Final Problem" outlines the evil figure of Moriarty, "A Scandal in Bohemia" introduces a character so compelling that she pervades our image of Sherlock Holmes forever after. Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory – to us, she is always "the woman!"

A Legend is Born: There's no doubt that Irene Adler fascinates us, but was she, after all, such a very big deal to Sherlock Holmes? Shouldn't we be just a bit skeptical of a woman who apparently enjoyed the company of a bounder like the King of Bohemia? Was Irene anything more to Sherlock Holmes than a valuable lesson in the perils of underestimating an opponent – a living, breathing "Norbury," whose picture he kept in a handy place for those times when he felt that his swelling ego needed an ice-pack?

Is it possible that Irene's aura is little more than the reflected glow from Watson's own happiness with Mary, and his well-meaning wish that Holmes should experience the joys of love? If so, Watson picked an odd love object for his friend: a woman who was newly married to someone else. Or was Watson really the one more seriously smitten with Irene, whom he described as a "beautiful creature" with a "superb figure?" Either way, was Watson trying to transfer his feelings to Holmes? And are most of us just romantic enough to be taken in by it all?

"You don't mind breaking the law?": Nobody in this story seems to mind breaking the law, but the really amazing aspect of the whole thing is just how ineffectual these lawbreakers are. Consider the useless bunch that the King of Bohemia originally hired to waylay and search Irene Adler. Who were these people? Were they the King's own underlings, or were they members of some criminal band? If the latter, were they hired directly by the "Count Von Kramm?" Did the King enjoy forays into "life's other side?"

Why didn't the King come to Holmes first? He had heard of Holmes's "recent" service to one of royal houses of Europe, and there were others from whom the King had received good reports of Holmes. So why not start with the best? Irene Adler had been warned that Holmes would be called in. How did all these people know about Holmes? Unless they had read Watson's publications, few would have known of his exploits in STUD or SIGN, since Scotland Yard had grabbed most of the credit in the newspaper accounts. Can we infer that Holmes was actually better known in those days for his handling of delicate personal matters rather than criminal cases?

Still, Holmes didn't fare much better than the King's original hirelings, though he had better luck than he deserved. How would Holmes's elaborate "fire" scheme have worked if the photograph had been hidden in Irene's bedroom? As it was, he discovered Irene's hiding place, but he failed to recover the item. I know the question has been asked many times before, but I'm going to ask it again: Why did Holmes wait until morning to return to Irene's villa? Why not burgle the place overnight, gaining entry through those windows "which a child could open?" Was his delay solely due to his arrogance? Or did he have plans to go back, but was thwarted by some event that Watson either did not know or would not tell?

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7. Delicate Questions (Chris Redmond, BSI)

Like "The Illustrious Client", this tale deals essentially not with the aftermath of a crime or other incident, but with attempts to prevent something — in this case the "scandal" to which the title refers.

If such cases were a significant part of Holmes's work, is "detective" really the right word to describe him?

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8. Additional Thoughts (Steve Clarkson)

During the next week, we will raise our stirrup-cups in homage to a story which features the only woman ever to "beat" Sherlock Holmes at his own game. But the cast of characters contains another interesting individual: Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, and hereditary King of Bohemia. This is a classic matchup of the Beauty and the Beast, and we all know whom Holmes favored, for all his vaunted misogyny.

A Scandal in Bohemia features money, power, royal intrigue, and a cast of…well, if not thousands, dozens. In a few minutes, the Questions and Comments will be posted. Let the Hunt begin!

"To The Woman!" So she is toasted at Sherlockian gatherings everywhere and with good cause. Irene Norton, née Adler: beautiful; talented; clever; determined; courageous; "with a figure a man might die for;" who first fooled and then foiled the great Sherlock Holmes, who even then was gaining an international reputation as the person to see about delicate interpersonal and international problems.

This time it is no common criminal being pursued by Holmes. This is a person to whom Watson alluded as being "of dubious and questionable memory." That remark alone has stirred up more hornets' nests and window-breaking Furies in Sherlockian circles than the good Doctor could have envisioned. "Dubious?" "Questionable?" "Memory?" Egad! But then, perhaps it is only that Sherlockians themselves are rogues and scoundrels themselves, who relish association with someone like Irene Adler Norton.

Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, hereditary King of Bohemia, assured Holmes that the photograph he desired to obtain was "as safe is if it were in the fire." But should the King have felt safe? Was Irene's assurance — the word of an "adventuress" — "inviolate?" Might it not have better for Irene to have left the incriminating photograph for Holmes to recover, thereby removing all reason for the King to continue his pursuit?

In her note, Irene told Holmes, "But, you know, I have been trained as an actress myself." Given that training, which was certainly adequate to permit Irene to dress herself in male attire and walk the streets incognito, why did she not see through Holmes' disguise when he first presented to her attention, or at least when she had the opportunity to look more closely at him once he had been brought inside Briony Lodge? As anyone knows who has worn a costume, the darned thing is certain to come "unglued" at the most inopportune times. The melée outside her house certainly had the potential to disarrange Holmes' disguise, to the undoing of his scheme.

The Masonic order is mentioned in NORW, REDH, RETI, STUD, and VALL. Is this the same order that Holmes mentions in his allusion to "freemasonry among horsey men?" Would ostlers and their ilk be similarly secretive about their shared trade or other matters?

SCAN is mentioned in one fashion or another in four other Adventures: BLUE, COPP, IDEN, and LAST. Only two other Adventures are mentioned more frequently in other stories: SIGN (6) and STUD (9). Thus, SCAN is one of the three Adventures most often referred to by either Holmes or Watson. What element(s) of SCAN so captured the pair's attention? Surely, it was something more than The Woman, who is mentioned only in three of the four named above. Was it the manner of solving the case or the monetary reward for that solution, or perhaps something else?

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9. Questions & Comments (Sonia Fetherston, BSI)

As we start in on the short stories, I'm proposing a continuing thread: Change the variable. If we could change just one variable in a story, would that story still work? Or would the outcome change? How? And does changing one variable inevitably lead to changes in other variables? Just a few of the variables in a detective story:

- the client
- the motive
- the weapon
- the victim
- the perpetrator

SCAN gives us an excellent window on how changing a variable might affect the storyline and outcome when Holmes seizes on the damning evidential variable. Quizzing the king, he actually asks about possible variables, then either dismisses or suggests excuses for them — legal papers or certificates (none, but presumably could be forged), compromising letters in the king's handwriting (forged), private note paper (stolen), the king's personal seal (imitated), a photograph of the king (bought). The piece of evidence that propels the story to the conclusion is that photo of the king with Irene.

So I offer a variable from SCAN for the group to discuss this week. It's the hiding place. The story tells us where Irene hid the photo — but would the story change if she'd chosen another hiding place for it? How important is the hiding place she selected? What alternative hiding places might she consider, and do they change the story's outcome? How?

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10. 56 Stories in 56 Days (Charlotte Anne Walters)

I just don't think Irene Adler did anywhere near enough to be the woman, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

I've always had a problem with this story for that very reason. All she did was have a liaison with the king of Bohemia (well ok, I suppose that's not exactly an everyday sort of occurrence), keep a photo of the two of them and threaten to expose him when he dumps her for someone of more suitable birth.

Then, when Holmes gains entry into her house disguised as an injured clergyman, she realises that his sudden cries of "Fire!" are false just as she is about to retrieve the photo revealing it's hiding place. When Holmes returns the following day to get the photo, she has taken it and fled. Well, surely that's just common sense, not really outwitting him?

And besides, Watson makes it perfectly clear that, 'It was not that (Holmes) felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler'.

The story is interesting in that Watson then goes on to explain that 'All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind.' This does indeed suggest that Holmes has never felt love, though certainly doesn't rule out sexual experience in my opinion. It does also add weight to the argument that Holmes may have had autistic tendencies, or possibly Asperger's syndrome, as I believe a lack of emotion can be a symptom. This is further reinforced by the line – 'While Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul'. Surely for a woman to capture his heart, she too must be emotionally complex and on the outskirts of society?

For a writer, the opening paragraph of A Scandal gives much inspiration and I certainly have examined such issues in Barefoot. There is also mention in the second paragraph of Holmes' use of cocaine, the drowsiness this gives him and the fierce energy of his own nature. This supports the explanation I present in Barefoot that Holmes' drug use is not to stimulate his mind but rather to quieten it, to subdue the compulsions to observe and the constant rush of mental process which is as much a blessing as a curse to him.

So much from just two paragraphs. To be honest, for me, it all goes a bit downhill from there.

A Scandal in Bohemia scores – 5 out of 10.

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11. Observance of Trifles (Brian Keith Snell)

A Scandal In Bohemia--The Case Of You Call THAT A Scandal?!?

To me, one of the most enjoyable parts of the canon is the look into the social mores of a long-passed era. Even when, sometimes, those mores seemed plenty nuts.

But first, let's note one very important thing about the first of the **Sherlock Holmes** short stories: it doesn't involve a murder!

A century-plus of crime fiction, detective novels, and television shows have conditioned us to expect there to be at least one murder at the core of any genre story. We've come to expect corpses in our mysteries!!

But it wasn't always thus. Even though the first two Holmes novels involved murders, Holmes was mostly concerned with other matters. Of the 60 canonical stories, only **8** involved Holmes investigating murders! Heck, **15** of them had Holmes using his deductions in cases where there was no crime whatsoever! (Depending upon your interpretation of the relevant laws of the period, of course. Were these episodes of **Law & Order**, I have little doubt that **Jack McCoy** could stretch the law enough to find someone to charge with something after an argument in front of a judge with lots of motions and whatnot)

So we have the murder-less **A Scandal In Bohemia**...which by our lights doesn't seem all that *scandalous*. Oh, the **King of Bohemia** is mightily worried, claiming that it is with matter "of an importance which can hardly be exaggerated," and that it could permanently alter European politics.

And that terrifying earthquake of a scandal? When he was 25, the King had a girlfriend.

Yawn. I thought you said there was a scandal in this story.

Really, *that's it*? I mean, seriously?

As I noted in my James Bond blog, to modern audiences "the idea that it would somehow be being amazingly damaging for a British agent to be found having sex is rather...*quaint*, let us say." Multiply that umpteen times for the quaintness of a young man who became involved with an exotic and beautiful foreign woman for a brief period (the Granada adaptation changes his age at the time to 20, an age even more appropriate for an excusable bit of youthful indiscretion).

To cause such fear, to threaten such dire consequences, well, that must have been some photograph **Irene Adler** had of them.

Oh. Yawn.

What, did you expect, *sexting*?

Of course, many people forget that true problem the picture presented was that it corroborated Adler's story that the "**compromising**" letters from King Wilhelm were real. Remember, Holmes tries to provide the king with four different ways to dispute the letters' authenticity, until the King reveals the existence of the picture. That was why they needed the photograph--it wasn't salacious in and of itself, but it proved that she did indeed know the king, and lent authenticity to the letters.

So *how* indiscreet and scandalous could those letters have been, for heaven's sake? Of course, here in modern times we are jaded. We're used to crown princes and their spouses both having affairs and soldiering on; we've seen that the president of the U.S. can have *sordid peccadilloes* and leave office with a higher approval rating than before the revelation of the affair, we've lived through a governor sneaking away to another continent for a tryst and yet still manage to get himself elected to federal office in a socially conservative state; and we've also seen how another governor can dally with prostitutes and somehow be considered an acceptable mainstream political pundit.

Scandals, at least personal scandals (as opposed to criminal wrongdoing or abuse of office), are no longer a big deal to us, it seems. Are we more tolerant? Forgiving? Understanding? Far more corrupt ourselves? Better at understanding the personal/political divide? Has technology made the revelation of "indiscretions" so much easier and more commonplace that we're inured to any shock?

Whatever the reason(s), from a modern perspective, it is a bit *baffling* to see a powerful monarch reduced to quivering jelly by something so seemingly tame as the threat of his betrothed finding out that he once dated (*bedded?*) a commoner. **Princess Clotilde** and her Scandinavian family must indeed have been the "*very souls of delicacy*" to expect her future husband to be a virgin.

Then again, maybe you'd just assume that *this* guy wasn't experienced with the ladies...

That being said, there are some things about King Wilhelm's story that don't seem to add up. Irene Adler doesn't seem like the type to spitefully jeopardize the King's future marriage--she especially doesn't seem the type to be pining away for a long-past affair with, well, *a swaggering buffoon*. And when we meet her, she's marrying someone else--hardly the act of a woman obsessed with regaining an old lover.

But remember, *we only have the King's version of events here*--we never hear anything from Adler herself on the matter, except that the King "cruelly wronged" her. Given the ego and pomposity of Wilhelm, it's certainly possible that his version events is highly *distorted*, even if he sees it as "the truth." So what *is* the truth? Did Adler ever actually threaten to send the photograph? Did she just say something like that in heated moment, and the King took it as a serious threat? What was the "*cruel wrong*" he committed against her--breaking off the relationship, or the repeated attempts to rob and detain her?

Another question is the o'erhasty marriage. Why, exactly, was there a *sudden rush* for **Irene** and **Godfrey Norton** to marry? It wasn't a matter of the law saying there could be no weddings after noon--that edict had been changed years earlier. And even if that were still the law, why not wait until the next day? Why the last-minute rush, when they hadn't even obtained the license yet? Why take separate carts to the church? Why no honeymoon? Why keep the wedding a secret (as Holmes observed, the wedding likely meant the King would be safe, and would thus remove the reason for his harassment--so why hide it?)?

It remains a puzzlement, although the **Granada** version invents a few lines of dialogue to smooth over these points (the King and Irene had "*spoken of marriage*," which apparently made her feel extra spurned; she and Norton married secretly so "*they could leave the country swiftly*" if need be. No, I still don't get it).

Still, it might be odder if we *did* understand everything. The social and cultural customs from 125 years ago probably shouldn't immediately make sense to us. Times change, *mores* change, the center does not hold. And that's one reason the canon is so valuable--it gives us a clear, unjaundiced look at another time, another era.

Sherlock Holmes mingled with *all* classes, from the impoverished to royalty. He was involved with all facets of his culture, even though he didn't necessarily approve or understand all of them. And **Doyle's** works bring us into contact with everyone from the Victorian era--foreign kings and soldiers and servants and the gentry and street urchins and groomsmen and adventuresses...and yes, criminals. It's an extended, 60-unit study of a time we never lived in, customs and a social code alien to us, but which we can experience vicariously through the works of the detective and the doctor.

MORE TRIFLES AND OBSERVATIONS:

** The most pressing issue from this story--can we please come to an agreement on the **pronunciation** of "*Irene*"?

She's from America, so the pronunciation most Americans use--"*eye-reen*"--would seem to be preferable (to me, at least).

More than one adaptation--Granada, to name one--chooses to go with "*eh-ray-ne*h," turning it into a three syllable, more European sounding pronunciation (interestingly, the closed captioning on the Granada version identifies the name as "**Irena**," despite the credits clearly saying "**Irene**").

Of course, they *both* could be right. Adler would not be the first performer to adopt an unusual pronunciation/spelling of a name for notoriety/coolness/pretentiousness.

** Forgotten in all the hubbub and ballyhoo? There are *still* compromising letters to Irene from Wilhelm.

Remember, the photo was only important to confirm the letters' authenticity. Even if the photo is out of play (in the Granada version, she tosses it overboard while at sea), the letters still exist somewhere, right...?

** I have one word for you, King Wilhelm: **Snapchat**.

More seriously, this is one of those stories where the technology has so changed, that there 100 ways you could spin the tale off if you wanted a topical update. Mail the photo? How about posting it on **Pinterest** or **Tumblr**? Can Holmes hack the server before the texts goes live and the Scandinavian royal family see it? (OK, I didn't say it would be a better story!)

** So, this is one of the Holmes cases where what he was investigating wasn't even a crime, right?

That depends on your interpretation, I guess. Since *we're* not privy to exactly what Irene said to the King (if, indeed, she did say anything at all), it's difficult to judge whether any particular threat she made might have reached the level of extortion.

Again, **Jack McCoy** would have pulled down a law book, and found a creative way to interpret a statute so that threatening to break up a betrothal would fit under definition...

** For the *third consecutive time*, a dispute that started in a foreign land has come to England to be settled. Great Britain obviously needed greater border control. A standard customs question should be, "Are you coming to our fair nation to settle a quarrel that started elsewhere?"

** Afraid of the **NSA's** data-gathering? What about Holmes'?

Upon first hearing **Irene Adler's** name, he has **Watson** look her up in his "index." It turns out that "*(f)or many years he had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information.*" That's ***all*** paragraphs. He's keeping files on everyone in England, whether they've committed a crime or not!?! I mean, he has information on "*a Hebrew rabbi and...a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon the deep-sea fishes*." And we're still in the A's!!

Sherlock Holmes was maintaining files on everyone. It makes one look at his work in a bit of a darker light, if you dwell upon it...

** We've had mentions of "*off-screen*" cases before (for example, how he had helped **Mrs. Cecil Forrester** years before, as mentioned in **The Sign Of The Four**). But with the advent of the short stories, Doyle started placing specific references into almost every adventure--cases with specific names, that Watson had knowledge of.

I suppose we should start keeping track of them.

-- The Case Of The Trepoff Murder (in Odessa)

-- The Tragedy Of The Atkinson Brothers (at Trincomalee)

-- The Case Of The Darlington Substitution Scandal

-- The Arnsworth Castle Business

Of course, many a writer would use these "*apocryphal*" cases as the basis for their own Holmes stories. How could you resist?

But it is interesting that Sir Arthur essentially invented a technique that genre writers would still be using a century later--putting little Easter eggs into the story, making Holmes' universe seem more "*lived in*" by intimating that that was plenty of intrigue going on even when we weren't there to see. Holmes and Watson weren't just "there" only when we were watching--and we only got to see some fraction of their careers.

** Watson sure lays on the "*Sherlock Holmes is a Vulcan*" riff pretty thick here. Cold, precise, perfect reasoning machine, *etc*. Obviously, Doyle wanted to set this up as an effective contrast for what Holmes' reaction to Adler would be.

Doyle is effective in his attempt to make Sherlock into Spock. Sorry. So, yes, I'm weird.

** At the beginning of the story, Watson refers to her as "The *late* Irene Adler." Wait, *what*? She's dead?

Probably not. Later Watson writes, "*Irene Adler, as I will still call her...*," which is obviously a reference to her now being married. This reluctance to use her married name probably explains the "*late*" reference, as Watson was just clumsily saying her name was changed, but he would still call her Adler.

I'm not sure why he had such an aversion to using "*née,*" or calling here **Irene Norton**--Irene uses those for herself, so why shouldn't the good doctor?

Perhaps it's because **Godfrey Norton** is such a blank, a non-entity, that Watson has difficulty believing that Irene would marry him. After building up Adler so well, after making her THE woman, it must be said that Doyle does a poor job of presenting her groom as a man worthy of her. I understand Watson's cognitive dissonance.

** Sherlock Holmes is great at disguises...but he sure is terrible at *recognizing* them. Twice so far in the canon he has been completely taken in people in disguise--both of them cross-dressing, even!

** **Granada** continues to elide and finesse and ignore Watson's marriage(s). In the story, Watson hasn't seem Holmes for awhile because, well, he has a life now--a wife and a job. But in the television adaptation, there still is no Mrs. Watson. The good doctor has been gone for awhile because "*his practice took him to the country for a week*." Maybe he's a veterinarian? **All Creatures Great And Small** starring Watson?!?

**Just to reemphasize--the King of Bohemia was not a nice person !!