The Bilge Pump

Vol. 13, No. 10 October, 2025

The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star

founded November, 1970

PLEASE NOTE: November 02, 2025 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on November 02 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 Red-Headed League"**.

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story of **"The Red-Headed League"**.

Our special guest speaker will be our own **Peggy MacFarlane, BSI.**

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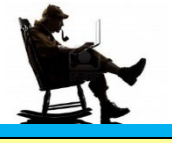

For more information concerning our society, visit: http://www.dfw-sherlock.org/

You can follow us on Twitter at: @barquelonestar

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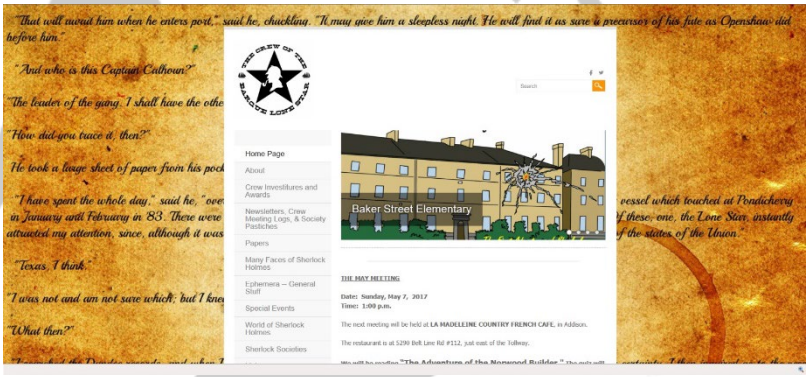

Our Facebook Page:

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

OCTOBER 05 SUMMARY

There were 68 in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The meeting of the Crew was opened with a toast by Barbara Brannon from Texas. Her toast regarded the pastiche writer of "The Woman Who Got the Best of the Man in Her Life", Dorothy Parker, the New York reviewer from the 1940's.

We then had a quiz on today's story, "A Scandal in Bohemia".

Bob Katz led us in a lively discussion of the differences between a Conan Doyle novel and a Conan Doyle short story. It revealed the idea of unity of time, and a faster pace vs more details, and Conan Doyle's economy of words. Bob then led us through a lightning round of memorable phrases from Scandal.

The announcements were as follows: The Crew is about to publish its next book called Holmes Rejected, regarding the stories Watson submitted to publishers which were rejected and not published.

Olivia Kirkendell announced the New Great Alkaline Plainsmen will be holding their next virtual meeting on October 28, and will discuss the Hound of the Baskervilles. Micah Cover told of the second rehearsal of the new play Dr. Watson. Kevin Beard from Houston said that in one year there will be a new Sherlock Holmes play at local theaters. The Parallel Case of St. Louis announced their next Zoom meeting will be Saturday, October 11.

Brain Wilson said the next meeting of the Afghanistan Perceivers will be by Zoom and be on October 23. Karen Ellery asked about the requirements of membership of the Crew, under the conditions that we might go to war. Madeline Quiniones mentioned the next meeting of the John H. Watson society is October 26. The Susan Rice mentorship award will be taking nominations until November 5. Jerry Kegley noted that the Lost in New York event will happen in January but it will be at a new venue, still to be decided.

Rick Kincuinas next did Sherlockian Law 101 regarding Scandal in Bohemia and the legalities or illegalities in the story.

The featured speaker for the month was Bill Mason, (White Mason) who did a presentation on Moriarty's Crime Family, an Underworld Empire in Victorian London.

The Canonical Top 10, usually given by Brad Keefauver was presented by Madalaine Quinones, in his absence.

Shana Carter did a reading from the Baker Street Journal, Vol. 6 number 4, October 1956, entitled Sherlock and Company.

Sandy Kozinn gave us a limerick from her thoughts on Scandal.

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

Thanks to Cindy for taking the minutes as always.

A TOAST TO "A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA"

Barbara Brannon

I had been inspired, during the process of crafting a pastiche that involved The Woman, to recall other women in art and history known for getting the best of the men who admired them—from, say, Cleopatra to Queen Elizabeth I to Bette Davis.

But one female literary figure known far and wide for her skewering wit is the Algonquian Dorothy Parker, whose many victims included none other than journalist and Sherlockian extraordinaire Christopher Morley.

Sloane Crosley's *New Yorke*r piece "Dorothy Parker and the Art of the Literary Takedown," describes Parker's reviews as "not contemptuous, a common pitfall for her imitators. They are simply unbridled in their dislike."

Of Morley's 1927 *I Know a Secret*, Parker quoted the blurb provided by the novel's publishers: 'This is the book that everybody hoped Christopher Morley would some day write'—but deftly added, "All that hoping must have gone on while I was away on the fishing-trip last summer, else there would have been not quite that unanimity of optimism concerning Mr. Morley's plans."

One of Parker's best-known verse quatrains happens to conclude with mention of a luminary from a central European nation—a four-syllable name that simply begs humble imitation as today's toast.

Comment

Oh, life is a glorious cycle of song,
a medley of extemporanea,
And love is a thing that can never go wrong,
and I am Marie of Romania.

— Dorothy Parker, from *Enough Rope*

A (Bohemian) Rhapsody

Oh, marry The Woman I never did,
despite my disguised schizophrenia;
I paid the detective one thousand quid,
for I am the King of Bohemia.

—Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel Felstein

SHERLOCK & CO.

Shana Carter, ASH

Baker Street Journal (Edgar W. Smith, Editor)
Volume 6, Number 4, October 1956

The exploits of Holmes afford a shining example of the high capacities for accomplishment inherent in the private enterprise system.

The private enterprise in which Holmes engaged in his chosen field came into competition, inevitably, with the enterprise of the British Government, as represented by the Home Office and its creature Scotland Yard. To point out that this state enterprise, reposing as it did in the hands of such exemplars as Tobias Gregson and G. Lestrade, consistently came off second best in the encounters, is not to argue that our society, then or now, could safely dispense with the comforting facilities the police have to offer. It is, rather, to indicate that even in the area of the public welfare a private enterpriser of the stature of Sherlock Holmes could put the state, with all its vaunted resources, rather shamefully in the shade.

Sometimes, we must admit, the Master's methods of competition were unfair. No minion of the state would have dared to do what he did in his persecution of Milverton, and he suggests in his own words, in "The Retired Colourman", what the secret was of many of his successes. Speaking to Inspector MacKinnon, his "hated rival upon the Surrey shore," he says: "His methods are irregular, no doubt, like my own. The irregulars are useful sometimes, you know. You, for example, with your compulsory warning about whatever he said being used against him, could never have bluffed this rascal into what is virtually a confession."

Yet for all that he was a private enterpriser par excellence, Holmes was not the lone operator private enterprisers are too often presumed to be. He was, instead, a collectivist in the sense all great organizers are collectivists - a delegator, and a looker-to-others for the doing of specialized tasks. His complete reliance upon Watson in so much he did is the most obvious mark of this propensity for partnership and coordinate action.

But there were other partners in his organization, too, who served to round it out and give it perfection: he had, as we know, a "general utility man" named Mercer; and there was also Shinwell when there was dirty work to be done, and, for all irregular occasions, young Wiggins. Holmes himself referred to the efficient little organization he had built up as "this agency": it may well be that his business card, if he had one, did not read simply SHERLOCK HOLMES, CONSULTING DETECTIVE, but HOLMES, WATSON, MERCER, JOHNSON, WIGGINS & CO. The "co." would, of course, be the Baker Street Irregulars en masse.

It is no wonder that this formidable private enterprise won the triumphs it did, not only over its criminal enemies but also over its state-sponsored rivals.

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

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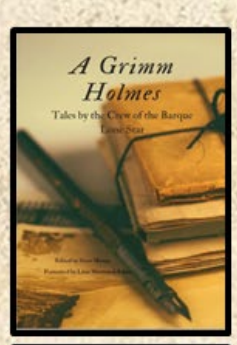

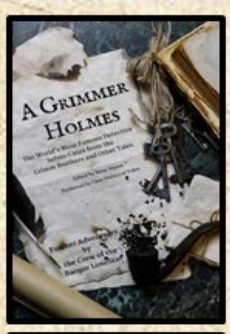

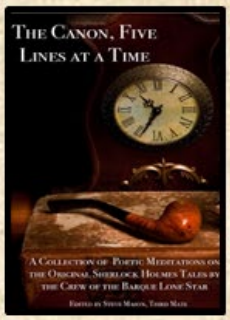

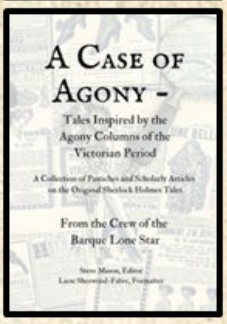

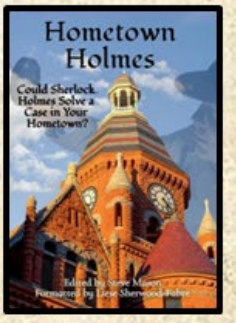

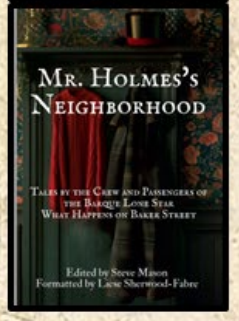

IN PRAISE OF THE PASTICHE

David Marcum

Sherlock Holmes and the Harvest of Death
by Barrie Roberts

October has always reminded me of Sherlock Holmes more than any other month. That may be one of the reasons that it's my favorite month. There's a mystery in the air as cool weather returns and the days get shorter. The wind rustling in the leaves sounds like restless spirits passing just out of sight to one side or another in the early evening shadows, and the Northern Hemisphere slowly growing cold feels like a tiny premonition of the approach of death, culminating on All Hallows' Eve, when the veil between worlds is thinnest.

A number of Canonical cases – 15% – are set in October: "The Musgrave Ritual" (October 2, 1879), "The Resident Patient" (October 6-7, 1881), "The Noble Bachelor" (October 8, 1888), "The Second Stain" (October 12-15, 1886), "A Case of Identity" (October 18-19, 1887), "The Red-Headed League" (October 25, 1890), "The Veiled Lodger" (Late October, 1896), "The Problem of Thor Bridge" (October 4-5, 1900), and perhaps the most famous of all, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, (September 25-October 20, 1888). There's just something about October that *feels* Sherlockian to me – so much so that I intentionally scheduled my first Holmes Pilgrimage in 2013 to England and Scotland in *October.*

With that in mind, I thought that I had the perfect book to review this month, because I remembered it as an ideal story for this mysterious season. Imagine my chagrin when I set out to review it and found that it was set – not in October as I recalled, but – in *August.*

Taking place from August 1-9, 1902, Barrie Roberts' *Sherlock Holmes and the Harvest of Death* (1999) occurs around the events of King Edward's Coronation – but Holmes and Watson aren't in London during the build-up. Rather, they travel to the small village of Weston Stacey, in the countryside west of the capital, to investigate a mysterious death.

There are some pasticheurs who are head-and-shoulders above the others. In the last ten years of editing over 1,200 Holmes pastiches in nearly 70 Holmes anthologies, it has regularly been suggested to me that I assemble a "*Best of*" volume, but I've always resisted. I would never edit and include a story that I didn't believe to be good, and to reflect the true traditional Canonical Holmes – but like everyone I have my favorite pastiche authors, and I don't want to pick my idea of "*The Best*" and slight other authors.

But I don't think anyone will disagree that two of the very best are Denis O. Smith and the late Barrie Roberts. (More about Denis in a future column . . . .)

Barrie Roberts (1939-2007) was a West Midlands lawyer who wrote a number of Holmes pastiches – nine novels from 1994 to his death in 2007, and eight short stories, along with one (as listed by Wikipedia) that was found in his papers and remains unpublished. (That, Dear Reader, makes me gnash my teeth.)

By the time I started editing books in 2015 and soliciting stories from every true Canonical pasticheur that I could identify, Mr. Roberts had already passed away – but I tried mightily to track down that unpublished story – "The Affair of the Weeping Child". I wrote to Mr. Roberts' former law office, and even to a former home address that I tracked down (using a series of special skills obtained when I was a former federal investigator) – asking about how to contact his heirs and locate the missing story, and also about whether I could assemble a collected volume of Mr. Roberts' Holmes short stories. Alas – there was never a response from any of them.

But luckily, Mr. Roberts' works are still available with a minimal search effort, and well worth it.

The Harvest of Death – which I mistakenly believed was an October story – is filled with atmosphere that invokes the end of a season. I won't provide spoilers. Suffice it to say, not that far west of civilized London, Holmes and Watson encounter what initially seems like a peaceful and distracting investigation in the countryside, but it quickly turns atmospherically deadly for Our Heroes and monstrously evil for everyone else.

It has been a few years since I've read this book, but certain scenes are still vividly and forever burned in my brain. As I walk around where I live, in nearby woods that have their own weird mysteries, and I hear the rustles just out of sight under the dark trees, I have the same ancient feelings of dread that I found when reading this book. And even though it's set in August, it's a perfect volume to enjoy during October, that most Sherlockian of months.

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THE MAX MAGEE CHRONOMETRY MINUTE: HALF-HOURS OF THE CANON

Brad Keefauver, Sherlockian Chronology Timeline, September, 2025

(A segment of the issue created specifically for the enjoyment of Max Magee, not created or writen by Max Magee, the world's first Sherlockian chronometrist.)

What can we learn from a single point of the long hand of the clock at the lowest point in its revolution? What patterns can be found from analysis of Watson's half-past writings? And can chonometry reach respectability within the greater body of Sherlockian chronology?

Review the evidence for yourself and decide!

2:30 A.M.

Half-past two had chimed, and it was the darkest hour which precedes the dawn, when we all started as a low but sharp click came from the direction of the gate. -- BLAC

3:30 A.M.

Abbey Grange, Marsham, Kent, 3.30 a.m. -- ABBE

7:30 A.M.

At half-past seven next morning, in the first glimmer of daylight, I found him standing by my bedside in his dressing-gown. -- RESI

9:30 A.M.

There is a train at half-past nine, -- COPP
He hailed me at half-past nine in Trafalgar Square. -- HOUN

10:30 A.M.

Then on Saturday, unless you hear to the contrary, we shall meet at the 10.30 train from Paddington. -- HOUN
I shall call at half-past ten to-morrow if I do not inconvenience you. -- COPP

11:30 A.M.

It is due at Winchester at 11.30. -- COPP
Now, look here, Mr.Holmes, it's half-past eleven now and I am going back right away to my hotel. -- HOUN

12:30 P.M.

At half-past twelve we found ourselves upon the steps of Mrs. Warren's house —a high, thin, yellow-brick edifice in Great Orme Street, a narrow thoroughfare at the northeast side of the British Museum. -- REDC

3:30 P.M.

We shall look out for you, then, at six. Pray allow me to keep the papers. I may look into the matter before then. It is only half-past three. -- SIGN

4:30 P.M.

Sir James Damery presents his compliments to Mr. Sherlock Holmes and will call upon him at 4.30 to-morrow. -- ILLU

It was about half-past four. That is Mr. Soames's tea time. -- 3STU

That would be nearer half-past four than six at this time of year. -- VALL

At four-thirty my task was not yet completed. -- 3STU

The man got into the house between four-thirty and six; that is to say, between dusk and the time when the bridge was raised. -- VALL

5:30 P.M.

It was half-past five before Holmes returned. -- SIGN

The General 'phoned that all was ready, and the fiery Miss W. turned up according to schedule, so that at half-past five a cab deposited us outside 104 Berkeley Square, where the old soldier resides—one of those awful gray London castles which would make a church seem frivolous. -- ILLU

6:30 P.M.

I see that the cab is at the door. I ordered it for half-past six. -- SIGN

Found at the corner of Goodge Street, a goose and a black felt hat. Mr. Henry Baker can have the same by applying at 6.30 this evening at 221b, Baker Street. -- BLUE

I had been delayed at a case, and it was a little after half-past six when I found myself in Baker Street once more. -- BLUE

Will call at 6.30—C.A.M. -- CHAS

It's been out three hours, started at half-past six, and here it is back again. --MISS

7:30 P.M.

Was last seen by his fiancee, Miss Violet Westbury, whom he left abruptly in the fog about 7.30 that evening. -- BRUC

A reference to the timetable showed that the 8.15 was the first train which it was possible for West to take after he had left the lady about 7.30. -- BRUC

Now, Watson, if you will pack your bag I will cable to Mrs. Hudson to make one of her best efforts for two hungry travellers at 7.30 to-morrow. -- LADY

It is quite certain that when Mrs. Barclay left the house at half-past seven she was on good terms with her husband. -- CROO

Half-past seven. -- SECO

By Jove! my dear fellow, it is nearly nine, and the landlady babbled of green peas at seven-thirty. -- 3STU

8:30 P.M.

They had been seen together at Euston Station about half-past eight on the evening of the third. -- STUD

The question which confronted me was to find out how Stangerson had been employed between 8.30 and the time of the crime, and what had become of him afterwards. -- STUD

There is a train to London at 8.30. The trap will be at the door at eight. -- BLAN

Dinner was over at 8.30 and all was normal up to then. -- THOR

I know some- thing of his habits, and at half-past eight he would probably be disengaged. -- ILLU

9:30 P.M.

Let that suffice until half-past nine, when we start upon the notable adventure of the empty house. -- EMPT

Mr. Oldacre had told me that he would like me to have supper with him at nine, as he might not be home before that hour. I had some difficulty in finding his house, however, and it was nearly half-past before I reached it. -- NORW

Yes, she had let Mr. McFarlane in at half-past nine. -- NORW

10:30 P.M.

She had gone to bed at half-past ten. – NORW

It was just half-past ten by the hall clock. -- MISS

Sir Eustace retired about half-past ten. -- ABBE

Up to half-past ten the servants were moving about the house; so it was certainly not before that time. -- VALL

11:30 P.M.

I*t was just half-past eleven.* -- VALL

It is inconceivable that it was taken after eleven-thirty at night, since I understand that Mr. Hope and his wife were both in the room from that hour until the loss was found out. It was taken, then, yesterday evening between seven-thirty and eleven-thirty, probably near the earlier hour, since whoever took it evidently knew that it was there and would naturally secure it as early as possible. -- SECO

It was half-past eleven before we went to our room. -- SECO

Train times, visiting times, dinner times, bedtimes . . . the half hours make the data so much more . . . *personal* . . . than the calendar dates, don't they? Is Sherlockian chronometry a field that polite society should even indulge in? Again, we leave that to you, good reader.

LIONS IN ALGERIA

Karen Murdock & Alexander Braun

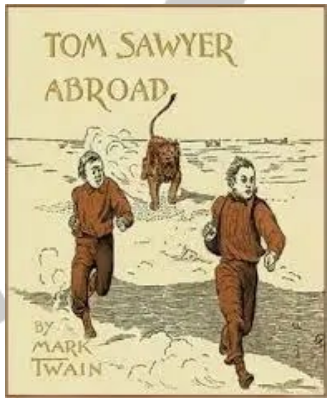
"Come now, Count. You used to shoot lions in Algeria." Holmes addresses this remark to Count Sylvius in MAZA (Doubleday 1016).

Would lion-hunting in Algeria really have been possible?

"The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" was originally published in England in *The Strand Magazine* in October 1921, and in the United States in *Hearst's International* in November 1921.
The story must have been set earlier than this, however.

At the story's beginning we are told that it was the "evening of a lovely summer's day," but no year is given. However, we know that Watson is no longer living at Baker Street and is practicing his profession. This would mean that the year in question must be *after* June 1902 when he was still living with the Great Detective, but *before* Holmes retired in autumn of 1903 (if CREE is accurate). Considering the fact that Watson had built up a busy practice it could not have been in the late summer of 1902 but, possibly, in June of 1903.

The major canonical chronologists are almost unanimous in assigning the case to the summer of 1903.



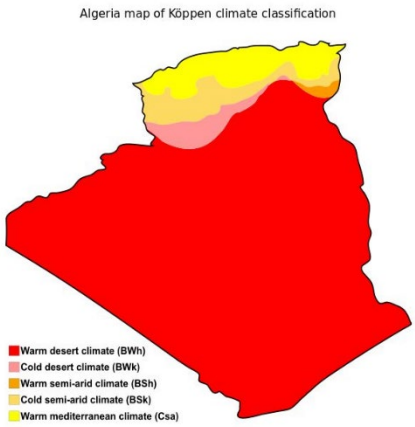
Holmes uses the past tense ("You used to shoot lions"), so the Count's lion-shooting expeditions occurred before 1903. It is therefore probable that those hunting trips occurred between 1870 and 1890.

Would there have been lions in Algeria during this time period?

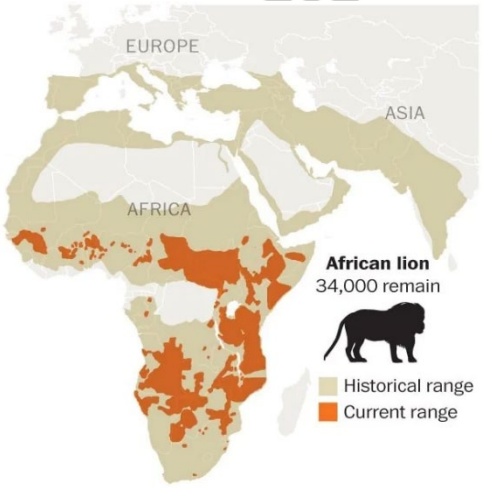
Algeria is a very large country (the largest on the continent in 2025) and is generally associated with the Sahara Desert. In *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894) by Mark Twain, the boys (Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn) are harried by lions in the Sahara.

The animal that mauled "The Veiled Lodger," Eugenia Ronder, was "a very fine North African lion" named Sahara King. Lions can live in desert environments, although they are not typically associated with such habitats. Like other members of the cat family, they are adaptable and can survive in various biomes.

According to the Köppen climate classification system (by far the most common climate classification used by geographers) the northern coastal region of Algeria is characterized by a mild "Mediterranean climate." This climate is one of the pleasantest on the planet, with dry sunny summers and mild, rainy winters. It exists around the rim of the Mediterranean Sea in such countries as Italy, Spain, and southern France as well as in wine-grape-growing regions such as southern California. Lions, as well as humans, would have found this climate zone most compatible.



Lions once ranged widely over most of Africa, and even parts of Asia and Europe. They are now confined to small pockets of protected areas throughout Africa. This is just 20% of their historical range.



Lions were once relatively abundant in the Mediterranean scrublands of North Africa.

The Barbary lion—*Panthera leo leo*—a now-extinct subspecies, was native to North Africa, including Algeria. By the early 20th century, their population had significantly declined due to habitat loss, human encroachment, and hunting.

Historical records indicate that Barbary lions were still present in Algeria in the late 19th century, particularly in the Atlas Mountains and remote areas, but they were rare and nearing extinction. Hunting of these lions was reported in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with the last confirmed sightings in Algeria occurring around the 1920s. So, while it would have been possible for Count Sylvius to hunt lions in Algeria when the story suggests he was doing so, it would have been a challenging and uncommon endeavor due to their dwindling numbers.

To a hunter like the Count, the very challenge would have been the greatest attraction of the hunt.

Cat-hunting, in the Canon, is sometimes a sign of a villain. In "The Empty House," Sherlock Holmes says of Colonel Sebastian Moran ("the best heavy-game shot that our Eastern Empire has ever produced") :

> "I believe I am correct, Colonel, in saying that your bag of tigers still remains unrivalled?"

In "The Norwood Builder" Josiah Amberly once "had turned a cat loose in an aviary," an action which caused his fiancée to call the whole thing off. Dr. Leon Sterndale, the "great lion-hunter and explorer" of DEVI, does commit murder, and he admits that, "I have lived so long among savages and beyond the law, that I have got into the way of being a law to myself." However, Sherlock Holmes concludes that the killing was justified and he allows the "lawless lion-hunter" to return to his work in Africa.

Although lion hunting is not a central canonical theme, its occasional presence enriches the stories' exotic and adventurous undertones. From Colonel Moran's big-game exploits in "The Adventure of the Empty House" to the symbolic resonance of "The Lion's Mane," these references evoke the Victorian fascination with the wild and the untamed. Though lions themselves rarely roar within the pages, their fleeting mentions—whether literal or metaphorical—add a layer of intrigue to Holmes's world, reminding readers of the broader imperial and cultural contexts that shape these timeless tales.

THE GRAMOPHONE & SHERLOCK HOLMES

Franklin Saksena, M.D.

Summary of Mazarin stone story:

Holmes is asked by the British government in 1903 to retrieve the crown diamond that has been stolen by Count Sylvius. Count Sylvius is aware that Holmes has him under observation and comes to his flat to find out how much he really knows. His bodyguard Sam Merton later joins him in the sitting room. Holmes tells them to discuss whether they want to give up the diamond or be imprisoned for past crimes.SH then goes into his bedroom to play his violin. Count Sylvius and Merton talk about having the stone cut in Holland but will put Holmes on the wrong track and say the diamond is in Liverpool. During this time, they are pestered by the violin music coming from the bedroom. There was a 2nd door from Holmes's bedroom that leads behind the curtain in the sitting room that enabled him to hear their conversation and seize the diamond when the Count was showing it to Merton. Holmes used a gramophone recording of Offenbach's Barcarolle to fool the villains that he was still in the bedroom while they seemingly conversed in private.

It is believed that Holmes probably recorded the violin section of the Barcarolle himself and that it was on a 12-inch record that could last several minutes. (1) The type of gramophone available in 1903 was a Berliner-Gramophone and typewriter disc machine. (2)

A brief history of the gramophone follows:

In 1807 Thomas Young (1773-1829) a physician and polymath (he helped decipher the inscriptions on the Rosetta stone) described a way of recording sound waves using what he called a Vibrograph. He attached a stylus or small pin to a tuning fork, set the tuning fork in motion, and recorded the vibrations on a rotating smoked drum. This showed that sound would travel in waves. His device did not record the sound in the modern sense as it could not reproduce the sound it traced.

This led to the invention of the Phonautograph in 1857 by Edoard-Leon Scott de Martinville (1817-79) who visually recorded the vibrations of the voice on a disc so that they could be evaluated by those studying human speech. He only intended people to read back the tracing and overlooked the possibility of reproducing these sounds. However, it was in 1877 that Thomas Edison (1847-1931) was not only able to record the sound, but he could play it back (see Fig 1). The legend explains how this was achieved. Initially the records were on a tinfoil drum or cylinder and later on a waxed drum. A diagram of a later model of Edison's is shown in Fig 2. (3-7)

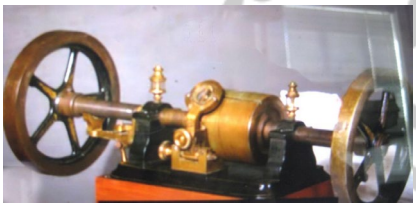


Figure 1. Edison phonograph 1877 (Smithsonian).

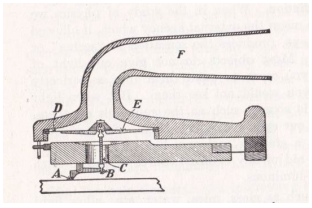


Figure 2. Section of Edison reproducer for records of hill and dale type. Merchant and Chant 1944 Elements of Physics

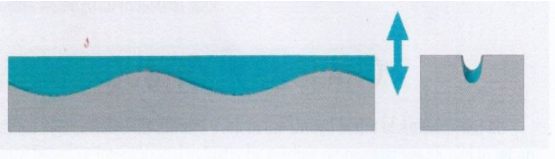


Figure 3. Hill and dale type of vertical recording groove used by Edison (8) The stylus would often skip out of the groove whenever it created a "hill".

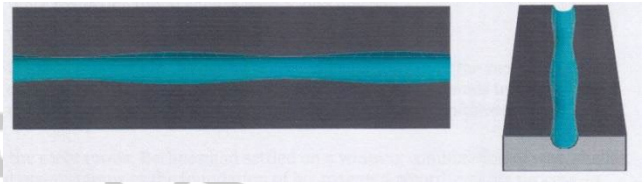


Figure 4 Lateral cut recording groove. These uniformly deep lateral grooves kept the stylus from jumping. It reproduced sound with a greater dynamic range. (8)

In 1888 Emile Berliner, a German-American (1851-1929), decided to use a disc format rather than the cylinder method used by Edison and others. He also used a lateral vibration for the recording groove as used by Scott in his phonautograph (Fig4).

Berliner traced a wavy line as a spiral on a flat disc. After many experiments he decided to use a zinc disc coated with beeswax and cold gasoline Then, he cleared away the coating with fine lines made by a stylus attached to a mica diaphragm so that it would vibrate from side to side. Then after coating the blank reverse side of the disc with varnish, he would dip the disc in an acid bath. The acid then etched these fine lines into grooves on the disc, leaving the rest of the disc untouched. The disc could then be placed on a turntable and the sounds reproduced with a steel stylus. The master etched disc could then be used as a template to make other discs, using electroplating to create a metal reverse or negative. This negative could then be used to stamp positive copies that would hold the impression exactly (Fig 5). Vulcanite or hard rubber discs proved to be the best material for manufacturing these copied discs. (3-7)

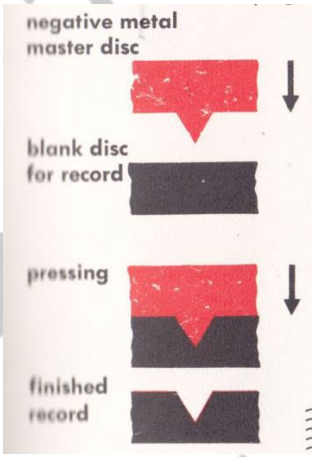


Figure 5 How a record is (4) made from a master disc groove (5)

Initially the recording had to be hand cranked, which proved cumbersome. In 1896 Johnson added a spring driven motor with a friction governor that could control the speed of the recording.

In 1898 a London branch of Berliner's business called the Gramophone company opened in Covent Gardens. The company purchased the trademark His Master's voice in 1898 (Fig 6b).(3) In 1901 the company made recordings of 4 stars of the Russian imperial Opera and of the great young tenor Enrico Caruso. (7) In 1903 SH made use of the improved clockwork gramophone (Fig 6a).

Records were often recorded at 78rpm. In 1925 the electric recording process was developed (3). In 1932 stereophonic recordings were invented. Long playing records were invented in 1948 by Goldmark (33.33 rpm). In the 1950s the records were made of polyvinyl chloride and were considered "unbreakable." (7) In 1982 the manufacture of the gramophone declined with the advent of the compact disc (CD).

Figure 6a Berliner gramophone 1900

Figure 6b His master's voice trademark

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A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT "THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE"

1. Summary (Diogenes Club)

Watson is not living at Baker Street.

Wilson's pawn brokerage is struggling. Clay offers to work with him at half wages in order to learn the business. He alerts Wilson to an opening in the Red-headed league which is a fictional society, created by Clay and Ross, supposedly to provide assistance to red haired men. Ross also has red hair.

Wilson is hired by Ross to sit in a specific office for 4 hours a day and copy the Encyclopedia Britannica.

The real reason for founding the league is to get Wilson away from the pawn shop for 4 hours a day in order that the criminals may dig a tunnel from its basement into the basement of a bank located next door, where 30,000 gold French Napoleons are being stored.

When the tunnel is completed and Wilson's absence from the shop is no longer required, the fake league is dissolved and he is deprived of his extra income.

He contacts Holmes because he wants the money which the League paid him. Holmes solves the mystery and catches the criminals as they emerge from their tunnel into the bank vault.

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2. Story Info Sheet (McMurdo's Camp)

- First published in:
  The Strand Magazine, August 1891

- Time frame of story (known/surmised):
  October, 1890. Note: there are inconsistencies among dates stated by characters in this story that make it impossible to pin down an exact date, or even year.

- Holmes & Watson living arrangements:
  Watson not living with Holmes at 221B, instead residing at his house in Kensington.

- Opening scene:
  Watson calls upon Holmes and finds Holmes with a client, Jabez Wilson. Holmes invites Watson's involvement. Client interview in Baker St. takes up the first half of the story.

- Client:
  Jabez Wilson, a red-haired pawn broker.

- Crime or concern:
  Loss of well-paying job doing clerical make-work leads Wilson to contact Holmes. Real crime was attempt by Wilson's employee to break into a bank vault.

- Villain:
  Wilson's recently-hired and low-paid helper, Vincent Spaulding, and his confederate, Duncan Ross. Spaulding's true identity was John Clay, a brilliant criminal, who had attended Eaton and Oxford and whose grandfather was a Royal Duke. The red-headed Ross posed as director of the Red-Headed League, and was a murderer, thief, smasher, and forger.

- Motive:
  Burgle a bank vault. Trick pawn-broker into vacating his shop so tunnel can be dug from basement into neighbouring bank vault.

- Logic / clues used to solve:
  Holmes saw through the ploy, and determined Wilson's pawn-shop backed up against bank on a main thoroughfare. Description of pierced ears and acid-scar on employee's forehead suggested Clay's involvement to Holmes. Dirty trouser-knees verified tunneling operation.

- Policemen:

Peter Jones, the official police agent, who was brave as a bulldog and as tenacious as a lobster, but an absolute imbecile in his profession.

- Holmes' fees:

Remarkably, Holmes prevented the loss of £30,000, but when the bank-director offered to pay Holmes, the reply was, "I have been at some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to refund, but beyond that I am amply repaid by having had an experience which is in many ways unique, and by hearing the very remarkable narrative of the Red-headed League."

- Transport:

Holmes & Watson travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; then took a short walk to Saxe-Coburg Square.

Holmes & Watson, the policeman, and the bank-director took two hansoms and rattled through an endless labyrinth of gas-lit streets, finally emerging into Farrington Street near the scene of the anticipated crime.

- Food:

Mention of an orange coster's barrow. A coster is a street vendor of fruits and vegetables, often selling goods from a cart or barrow.

Holmes & Watson went through the city on a Saturday afternoon to hear Sarasate, a violinist, play at the St. James's Hall, and stopped for lunch of a sandwich and a cup of coffee, on the way.

Near the bank for which the burglary was planned, was the Vegetarian Restaurant.

- Drink:

Following the midnight capture of the criminals, Holmes & Watson sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker Street.

- Vices:

Holmes smoked three (black clay) pipes of tobacco in 50 minutes, pondering the case.

- Other cases mentioned:

IDEN and SIGN

- Notable Quotables:

"Omne ignotum pro magnifico" (everything unknown is grand) – Holmes

"There may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket. If they fire, Watson, have no compunction about shooting them down." – Holmes

"I miss my rubber. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber." – Bank Director Merryweather

- Other interestings:

This story shares a plot element with 3GAR and STOC, which is tricking someone to go elsewhere whist the criminal takes advantage of the absence to commit the crime.

- When all was said and done:

"The man is nothing, the work is everything. (L'homme c'est rien — l'oeuvre c'est tout) It saved me from ennui." This was Holmes' modest reply to Watson's praise for solving the mystery. That explains the low fees charged in this case.

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3. Selected Chronologies

a.	The Original Story by Arthur Conan Doyle	Thursday, October 9, 1890
b.	William Baring-Gould	Saturday, October 4, 1890
c.	H.W. Bell	Saturday, October 4, 1890
d.	Roger Butters	October, 1890
e.	Jay Finley Christ	Saturday, October 18, 1890
f.	Jean-Pierre Crauser	Saturday, June 28, 1890
g.	D. Martin Dakin	Saturday, October 11, 1890
h.	Bill Dorn	Saturday, October 11, 1890
i.	Henry Folsom	Saturday, October 19, 1889
j.	John Hall	Saturday, October 11, 1890
k.	Craig Janasek	Saturday, October 29, 1887
l.	Brad Keefauver	Saturday, October 11, 1890
m.	Toshio Suzuki	Saturday, October 11, 1890
n.	June Thomson	Saturday, October 11, 1890
o.	Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler	Saturday, October 19, 1889

4. Canonical Queeries (Ralph Edwards, BSI)

- What indicates this to be an early or not so early a case?
- Why does this case precede A Case of Identity?
- What sources confirm “thousands of cases”?
- What are possible snuff clues?
- What inferences can be drawn from the wear on the frock coat?
- How many coats was Jabez Wilson wearing?
- Why was the advertisement so long and addressed to the League?
- How should Spaulding have improved his mind?
- Are there any hints why Wilson’s business fell off?
- Is age fourteen of any significance?
- Why was Wilson asked about his marital status?
- What may be the reason for the short hours?
- Why was the Encyclopedia used?
- Didn’t the crowd draw the accountant’s interest?
- When would an artificial knee-cap be worn?
- Why is the corner occupied by a shop and not the bank?
- Did Vincent Spaulding own more than one pair of trousers?
- Why did Saturday complicate matters?
- Wouldn’t a building like the pawn shop have a back entrance?
- Was the girl in on the plot?
- Would the League be legal today?

5. 17 Steps (Brad Keefauver, BSI)

1. Who Gets The Settee?

As Holmes interviews Jabez Wilson, Dr. Watson wanders in. The courteous pawnbroker, Wilson, half-rises. He looks at somebody with a question in his "fat-encircled eyes." Next Holmes utters the words, "Try the settee."

In every previous reading of this tale, I assumed Holmes was speaking to Watson. This run-through, however, I found myself wondering if the question in Wilson's "fat-encircled" eyes was "Can I take a roomier seat?"

Who do the Hounds think wound up in the settee? Watson or Wilson?

2. The Ship's Carpenter's Second Career

Sherlock Holmes makes some great deductions about Jabez Wilson, and as a result we learn that Jabez Wilson worked as a ship's carpenter long enough to actually build his right hand up larger than his left. (And remarkably, those built-up hand muscles stayed with him while the rest of his physique seems to have gone to fat.) His travels took him to China, which he was impressed enough with to get a tattoo and a watch-chain coin as mementos. He appears to have had quite a good career as a ship's carpenter, but now he's a pawnbroker.

Would it be possible for a ship's carpenter in that day and age to save enough money to buy a pawnbroker's shop when he retired from the sea? Or did Wilson's shop come to him through some other route, like inheritance or gambling winnings?

3. That Elderly Redhead

Jabez Wilson is "elderly" according to Dr. Watson. Jabez Wilson also has a prize head of fiery red hair, that, if we are to believe what follows, must be completely natural. Not a trace of gray is mentioned, and as the Smash himself is finding an amazing number of grays among the brown these days, he wonders what old Jabez's secret is. Had Wilson retained his hair color to an elderly age, or is Watson, still fairly young at this point, over-exaggerating Wilson's elderliness? Or was "elderly" younger back then than it is now?

4. Photo Study Of A Pawn Shop

Vincent Spaulding, Jabez Wilson's half-pay assistant, loves photography.

"Never was such a fellow for photography," Wilson reports. "Snapping away with a camera when he ought to be improving his mind, and then diving down into the cellar like a rabbit into its hole to develop his pictures."

From Wilson's description, Spaulding seems to have been taking pictures in the place where he should have been studying his trade: the pawn shop. And one would think he had some developed pictures to show for all his "developing" efforts. So what was he taking pictures of? Pawned watches? Obese pawnbrokers? That fourteen-year-old servant girl? With all the time that Spaulding spent developing, you'd think he'd have been very, very bored of every person, cubbyhole, and inanimate object in Wilson's pawn shop. And if he left the premises to take his pictures, Wilson surely would have complained of that more than the developing. So what were all the pictures of?

5. In A League Of His Own

Now, if you were scheming to convince a red-headed man that you were going to induct him into a "League" of red-headed men, don't you think you'd find more than one other red-headed man to fill out your faux league for a bit? Sure, there was a crowd of them on Fleet Street and Pope's Court the day of the applications, but those were the rejects. During the boredom of his daily copying routine, wouldn't you expect Wilson to wonder about the rest of the league, spread across London in individual offices, copying away? An enterprising fellow like Wilson, looking to move up in the League to a Duncan Ross level position, might suggest that the League save massive amounts of rent money by consolidating all its little offices into one building. All these red-headed men are Londoners, after all, aren't they? How would you get around these questions, were they to come up?

6. The Snuff Memories Are Made Of

Jabez Wilson "paused and refreshed his memory with a huge pinch of snuff." Okay, was this Watson taking literary license, or was snuff actually held to have memory-refreshing abilities in those days?

7. Professional Or Amateur?

Wilson holds up his "THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE IS DISSOLVED" card and makes a sad face, and *both* Holmes and Watson start roaring with laughter. It would seem distinctly unprofessional, but then, is Wilson really a paying client?

"I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it," Wilson says to Holmes, and the detective tells the pawnbroker that an opinion will be given in a couple of days. Shouldn't Wilson be seeing a lawyer? How many of these odd little matters of urban curiosity came Holmes's way? By the time of "Copper Beeches," he's complaining of advising boarding school girls about lost pencils, so you have to wonder how many neighborhood walk-ins he actually had?

"It saved me from ennui," Holmes says of the matter at the tale's end. "Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence." And while the U.S. Army got much mileage out of the slogan, "It's not just a job -- it's an adventure" in recent decades, it would seem Holmes was operating under something much the same, long before. It's not just a job. It's entertainment.

8. The Speed Of Smoke

The classic "three pipe problem" occurs in this, the fourth published case of Sherlock Holmes. "It is quite a three pipe problem," Holmes tells Watson, "and I beg that you won't speak to me for fifty minutes."

Okay, smoking Hounds, three pipes in fifty minutes . . . about right? Too fast? Too slow? An added note: he never actually seems to make it through all three pipes. (And for you mathematicians in the group, how does the REDH rate figure in the upcoming tale TWIS and its all-night smoke?)

9. Hanging Out With Holmes

One of the friendlier moments of REDH sounds a lot like this:

"Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon," he remarked. "What do you think, Watson?"

Watson decides his practice can spare him, and the two friends go out to lunch and a concert. Not off to a murder scene. Not to listen to some client. Just out to have a good time. They're much closer now than when Holmes went to see Norman Neruda alone in STUD, and this is a nice glimpse of the pair when they're not on the clock. Any other ideas what Holmes and Watson might have done when they were just taking a day and enjoying each others' company?

10. Vacation, Or Tuning The Racing Engine?

Watson tells us of Holmes, "He was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his armchair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions." Did improvising on his violin or reading antiquarian books hone Holmes's skills, preparing him for detective battle in some way?

Or was it just the vacation from the detective routine, using his brain in a completely different manner for a time, that improved Holmes's abilities when he had to turn and focus on a criminal investigation?

11. Jones's Napoleon Of Crime

"John Clay, the murderer, thief, smasher, and forger . . . he is at the head of his profession . . . His brain is as cunning as his fingers, and though we meet signs of him at every turn, we never know where to find the man himself. He'll crack a crib in Scotland one week, and be raising money to build an orphanage in Cornwall the next. I've been on his track for years and have never set eyes on him yet."

Now, that's a pretty impressive testimonial from Inspector Peter Jones . . . at least until we hear Holmes tell Watson that Jones is "an absolute imbecile in his profession." If Jones is that stupid, can Clay be quite so clever? And as we'll learn in a future story, a certain mathematics professor is operating behind the scenes in London's criminal world, helping the common criminal look much brighter than he was. So what is the Hounds' verdict on Clay? Criminal genius or candidate for a COPS episode with Moriarty's help?

12. What The Finer Criminals Are Wearing

We all know John Clay claims royal blood in his veins, and demands appropriate treatment from the police. But what sort of things did "His Highness" demand from his accomplice? When Archie, Jones's partner in crime, tries to make his escape, Peter Jones grabs his coat-tails and actually rips them off. Now, all cheap tailoring aside (and it must have been pretty poor to actually have pull-off coat-tails), did Clay make Archie wear a tail-coat on a bank job?

13. Paper Or Plastic?

While we're considering Clay's genius, or lack of it, why does he wait until he actually emerges in the bank vault to ask Archie, "Have you the chisel and the bags?" Might that not have been a better question on the other end of the tunnel? And just what sort of bags would one use to transport large amounts of gold, anyway? 30,000 Napoleons kept in 15 crates . . . that's quite a few carpet-bags. Do the Hounds have any ideas how the bags might practically fit into this scheme?

14. Gypsy Ear-Piercers Strike!

When Vincent Spaulding's new boss asks him how his ears came to be pierced, Spaulding tells him that "a gypsy had done it for him when he was a lad."

Was this a valid Victorian excuse for having pierced ears? Did lads often run off to see the gypsies and get their ears pierced? Was there any truth to it, or was it a fanciful tale covering some darker ear-piercing secret . . . and what would that be, anyway?

15. The Red-Headed Stats

One of the memorable moments of this tale is the great mass of red-headed men filling the streets around Pope's Court, and rightly so! How often does one see a dozen red-heads in one place, much less packed streets of them? In fact, what kind of numbers would we expect for the red-headed population of London at that time? And of that number, how many would have been otherwise unoccupied and able to come downtown to check out some bizarre ad? My point here is this . . . was Wilson's description of the crowds statistically believable?

16. Peanut Butter And Jelly Sandwiches?

Jabez Wilson has one servant in his house, a girl of fourteen who cleans and does "simple cooking." Like many statements in the Canon, it sounds good enough, but what does it really mean? What sort of meals would "simple cooking" encompass? And how did Wilson make do with such faire? Did he eat out a lot? Supplement it with things like bakery bread, cheese, and sausages?

Hungry Hounds want to know!

17. The League Rules And The Men Who Obey Them (Barely)

While the League of Red-Headed Men was said to have been set up to help out red-headed men, one has to wonder about that little fact after listening to the rules of the position:

1) You have to be in the office, or at least in the building, the whole time.
2) No excuse will avail. Neither sickness nor business nor anything else.
3) Copy out the Encyclopaedia Britannica. You must find your own ink, pens, and blotting-paper, but we provide this table and chair.

And while it's not the model position, neither is Jabez Wilson the model employee. He is told to come copy the encyclopedia for four hours. And how many sheets of paper does he think he'll need in that four hours time? Seven.

Okay, Hounds, be honest. Your business, like Wilson's, can spare you from ten to two each day, without affecting your income. You get offered $500 American per week and a berth in the Red-headed League, with all the League's rules. Do you take it? And if you do, how many sheets of paper do you show up with on the first day?

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6. View Halloas (Rosemary Michaud)

"As a rule," said Sherlock Holmes, "the more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be." Holmes was right: he seems to have solved much of this mystery the instant he heard the description of Jabez Wilson's assistant, and nearly all the rest of it while smoking those now-famous three pipes. But mystery isn't everything, and we, like Watson, share Holmes's "love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and the humdrum routine of everyday life." You've got to hand it to John Clay and his friend for coming up with so bizarre, so ingenious — and so hilarious — a scheme as "The Red-Headed League!"

I have picked two characters in this story to help us get the ball rolling, but if I know the Hounds, it won't be long before we find ourselves discussing dates and tunnels, French gold and German music, earrings and rubbers. And why not? Though we may begin with generalities and suppositions, it is in the details that our theories will be verified or disproved.

Jabez Wilson: Was there anything the matter with Jabez Wilson's eyes? He seemed to have some difficulty locating the newspaper advertisement to show to Holmes. Was this merely "old sight," or does Watson's description of Wilson's eyes as "small, fat-encircled," hint at some particular ailment? (Any eye doctors or eye experts out there?) How old was Wilson at the time of the story? And how did John Clay get so lucky as to find so perfect a "mark" as Wilson, in just the right place at the right time? Or was it luck?

Wilson said to Holmes, "I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it." Did Wilson think of himself as poor/impecunious as well as poor/unfortunate? Did Clay overdo it by paying Wilson so grand a sum as four pounds a week for his services? Holmes explained that the amount was "a lure which must draw him," but was it the loss of so rich a prize that sent Wilson running for help when the money stopped coming? Had the amount been smaller, or Wilson better off, do you think that he might have been more inclined to let the matter drop without a fuss once the Red-Headed League disbanded?

Mr. Merryweather: It seems to me that Watson took an instant dislike to the bank director Mr. Merryweather and his "oppressively respectable" frock coat. Is one frock coat any more oppressive than another? Did Watson have some special reason to hate bankers in general? What might have made Merryweather miss his rubber twenty-seven years earlier?

What did Holmes mean when he said that Merryweather was "personally interested" in the matter? Wouldn't Merryweather's position as chairman of the bank directors make his interest in the robbery a professional interest, rather than a personal one? How would a person get to be on the board of directors of a bank? I note that Holmes's comments about Merryweather were made when Holmes and Watson were alone in the second hansom, out of earshot of the other two men. Was there something else going on here? Ever wonder how Clay knew about the French gold? An inside tip, perhaps, from a very reliable source? And why did

Merryweather strike his stick upon the flagstones in the vault? Was he trying to warn Clay? Do you think Holmes may have added Merryweather to his bag later on?

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7. Delicate Questions (Chris Redmond, BSI)

The remarkable sight of London streets choked with red-headed men should have led to mentions in the daily newspapers, which scholars have unfortunately been unable to find.

What kinds of explanations are most satisfactory for the absence of newspaper references to the events in Sherlock Holmes's cases?

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8. Additional Thoughts (Steve Clarkson)

For the coming week, the Hounds will draw the cover of "the fourth smartest man in London," John Clay, as he schemes to deprive a bank of its 30,000 gold napoleons. He dupes an unwitting accomplice, his employer Jabez Wilson, into leaving him free to undertake what can only be called "skuldiggery" as he tunnels from Wilson's pawn shop basement to the subterranean vault of the adjoining Coburg branch of the City and Suburban Bank.

In a few minutes, the Mâitre de Chasse will post the Comments and Questions for this Adventure. As always, a pack of eager and supremely capable Hounds waits to swing to the line.

This Adventure is one of two which involve both a forger and a fraudulent will. In both stories, forgery has nothing to do per se with the will. The forger in REDH is John Clay, alias Vincent Spaulding, who is described as being a "murderer, thief, smasher and forger." Clay is the well-educated grandson of a royal duke. He is about 30 years old, small, stout-built and clean-shaven, with a white acid splash on his forehead and pierced ears. It is a tribute of sorts to his intellect and cunning that police all over the British Isles knew his description minutely but were unable to apprehend him. Even Holmes "had one or two turns with him" but had never laid eyes upon John Clay until this story. Which gives rise to my first question: If Holmes crossed swords with Clay on one or two occasions and had yet to lay eyes on Clay; and Clay is still at liberty, could one or both of these occasions have been included among those in which Holmes admitted to having "been beaten"?

What also puzzles me is why Clay and his agile accomplice Archie saw fit to dissolve the Red-Headed League? By October 9, 1890, they had finished their tunnel, or very nearly so, and were ready to "crack the crib." Why should they risk that Jabez Wilson would go looking for answers when his billet was lost so abruptly? Wouldn't it have been preferable to just continue playing out the charade, give Wilson his four sovereigns on the Saturday on which the heist was planned, and be long gone on the Monday when he arrived at Pope's Court to continue his copying of the Britannica?

This leads me to another question: Why didn't Clay change his trousers when the digging was finished? He wasn't digging when Holmes came calling because Clay opened the door "instantly" when Holmes knocked. And so far as Clay knew, Wilson might well have come storming back to the shop from Pope's Court without following the red herring that was intended to lure him to King Edward Street. Speaking of King Edward Street, was there such a crying need for artificial kneecaps in Victorian England that they had to be mass-produced?

There were fifteen crates containing 2,000 gold napoleons apiece, packed between layers of lead foil. Why the lead foil? Gold doesn't tarnish or rust like many other metals.

At an estimated half-ounce per napoleon, the boodle would have weighed nearly a half-ton in the aggregate. How did Clay and his accomplice plan to make off with 469 pounds of gold coins apiece? It would have taken a weary length of time to drag (the tunnel surely was crawl-space only) all of that weight back through the tunnel and out of the pawn shop — without disturbing Wilson or the live-in teenage housekeeper. Even in hundred-pound loads (and Clay and Archie both are described as small men), it would have taken five trips per man to make off with the loot.

What did the dastardly duo do with the dirt from digging the tunnel? Just leave it in Wilson's pawn shop basement? Did Jabez Wilson never descend to his cellar? And are we to believe that a major bank branch would have a storage vault with a floor composed of paving-blocks laid on bare earth? If they had been set properly in cement, it would have taken a lot longer to break through the floor of the vault and a great deal more noise would be made in breaking through it.

Finally, what did Clay mean when he shouted to Archie, "Jump, Archie, jump, and I'll swing for it?" Bank robbery is not a capital crime in itself. Was Clay just using underworld argot for "take the rap?" Or did he believe that he would pay the ultimate price for having been, in another time and place, a murderer?

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9. Questions & Comments (Sonia Fetherston, BSI)

"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?"

The vigil in the vault climaxes with a seam of light on the floor. "A gash seemed to open and a hand appeared; a white, almost womanly hand, which felt about in the centre of the little area of light." This week's variable is John Clay's gender. To what degree would The Red-headed League change if Holmes' opponent was the fourth smartest person in London, a woman working for half-wages in a pawn shop? Do you still like the story if the bad "guy" is a woman with mud stains on her skirt?

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

On a personal level, re-reading this story brings me some relief on two particular points involving my own novel, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Firstly, I decided to write that Watson lived in Kensington as I remembered this to be so in the original stories but couldn't for the life of me remember in which story I had read it. I looked though my well-thumbed Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes many times but could not find the Kensington reference. Eventually I simply decided to take a risk and stuck with it regardless. So I was very pleased to see that it is in the Red Headed League that Watson makes reference to his house in Kensington, meaning that I did get it right after all.

Another point of detail which caused me angst was the furniture issue – what did people sit on in Victorian England? I couldn't keep putting everyone in arm chairs and fireside chairs but obviously no-one would sit on the sofa. I therefore took a risk that settee would be an acceptable alternative, even though my husband thought this was still too modern a name. So when Watson uses the word settee himself on the opening page of The League, I couldn't help but raise a satisfied smile.

At the beginning of the narrative, Holmes rather touchingly refers to Watson as his partner and helper when describing him to Mr Wilson, which is a big improvement on simply biographer. It acknowledges the active role Watson plays in the adventures and the word partner even infers an equal status to Holmes which is very interesting.

Watson lives up to this description by bravely accompanying Holmes, Jones and the bank director into the cellar of the bank despite Holmes making it clear danger will be involved and an army revolver required.

In the Granada series, the RHL is one of my favourite episodes containing a great performance from Richard Wilson (pre Victor Meldrew) as Duncan Ross and Tim McInnerny as John Clay. I seem to recall that the TV dramatisation makes more of the bank director's scepticism at Holmes' suggestion the gold is to be stolen and it is, of course, always most enjoyable when Holmes proves his doubters wrong.

The story contains much humour and is very clever in its conception. Also, more light is shed upon the workings of Holmes' mind when Watson states – 'The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy,' further suggesting, arguably, a mental instability.

Finally, there is mention of a vegetarian restaurant and I had no idea such a concept existed in Victorian England. There I was fretting about settees being too modern but the folk of late nineteenth century London were actually popping out for hummus and falafel on a regular basis. Great stuff!

The Red Headed League scores 7 out of 10.

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11. Observance of Trifles (Brian Keith Snell)

The Problem of "Again With The Moriarty?"

There is, in much genre movie writing, an obsession with **The Big Bad**.

Whomever is known as the hero's greatest foe will invariably be trotted out early and often as the villain of the piece, even to the extent of seriously altering the origins of both hero and villain. It's as if there is an ingrained fear that the public will reject the version if, somehow, they're not immediately facing their most famous foe.

But that's still not enough; the creators then feel the need to make the villain not only the hero's greatest foe, but also responsible for every adventure the hero has. Which is why, for example, you get the **Kingpin** as the gangster who killed **Daredevil's** father. Or **Doctor Doom** has to receive his powers from the same accident which mutated the

Fantastic Four. Or why the Joker turned out to be the one who murdered **Bruce Wayne's** parents. Or why every villain in the **Spider**-verse is a result of **Norman Osborn's** work.

Which brings us to **Moriarty**.

There is, apparently, some massive, literary gravitational field that *irresistibly* requires modern creators to use Moriarty in *every* **Sherlock Holmes** story they try to tell. Even worse, so great is the compulsion that authors seem to need to go back and retcon every single Holmes story so that, ultimately, Moriarty is the true villain. The **Napoleon of Crime**, it seems, is responsible for *every* bit of illegal activity in Victorian England.

Such speculation can be fun, of course. **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** created Moriarty out of whole cloth, as a way to kill of Sherlock Holmes with a bang. The back story he gave the man meant that he had to have been active in crime for many years. So, yes, it can be fun, if albeit ultimately silly, to try and go backwards and figure out which crimes Moriarty was really the true instigator in. In virtually every Holmes story, some theorist can stretch to find a way Moriarty is involved. The never identified "*friend*" who posed as a woman to recover the ring in **A Study In Scarlet**? Moriarty, some say (in fairness, some also suggest it must be Irene Adler...). How could **Jonathan Small** afford to finance his activities before he stole the treasure in **The Sign Of The Four**? Moriarty fronted him the money!

Well, that's all harmless fun. But when you begin to *actually* retell the stories so that Moriarty is explicitly involved, you go past whimsical into, perhaps, doing damage to the story.

Which brings us to **The Red-Headed League**, and more specifically, the **Granada** adaptation of it.

In the original story as told by Doyle, **John Clay** is "*the fourth smartest man in London*," a "*murderer, thief, smasher and forger*" who is the grandson of a royal duke. He's attended Oxford and Eton, and Holmes describes him as "the head of his profession." He's running a real long game con and robbery, an **Ocean's Eleven** of the **1880s**. It's a clever plan, just fantastical enough to work, without drawing attention from the authorities. Clay buries himself in his role, proving himself an adept actor, as well. Truly, he is a formidable opponent.

And yet the Granada series decided that Moriarty was behind the *whole scheme*. They wanted a Big Bad for the series, which they planned to end with their adaptation of **The Final Problem**. And to that end, they portrayed Moriarty as the true mastermind behind several of this and other cases, so they could have the thread of his villainy throughout the season.

However, this does have the effect of *robbing* **John Clay** of his agency. He goes from being a great villain to a mere *lacky*. It wasn't even Clay's plan anymore! The Granada Holmes describes Clay as just "*just a pawn*," a pretty large comedown from how the character was described earlier. Furthermore, because of some of the plan's flaws, this has the unintentional effect of making Moriarty himself look less intelligent. Some mistakes we could accept from an arrogant con man and thief working on his own; the same mistakes, if they're made by Moriarty, make him look rather less like the near-invincible mastermind. The tale works much better, and Clay is a better character, if he is a *free agent*, rather than if he's just doing his master's bidding.

So, by insisting on making Moriarty a part of more stories, we diminish the villain, we diminish the story, and we diminish Moriarty himself. I suppose it doesn't make a huge difference in the end; it's just *me being me*, obsessing on trifles. Still, I think there should be a lesson here for future creators: every story doesn't *have* to be about The Big Bad. It's all right to have Holmes stories without Moriarty looming in the background. **Superman** doesn't have to fight Luthor every time, right?

FURTHER TRIFLES AND OBSERVATIONS:

** It must be said aloud--the Granada DVDs (at least the editions I own) have *the worst subtitling in the history of the universe*. No, that is *not* hyperbole.

Clearly, whoever did the actual subtitling did *not* consult a script, or the original stories. They just wrote down what they (*thought* they) heard. And perhaps it's the British accents, or they just weren't terribly perceptive, but man, it creates some *astonishingly* inept results.

For example, when discussing the bequest of mysterious millionaire **Ezekiah Hopkins**:

We could give them a pass...after all, "*Ezekiah*" is hardly an everyday name. Although surely someone in charge should have done the *tiniest* bit of proofreading and questioned, "Hey, does the story really have a **Mr. Ethic Guya Hopkins** in it?"

But when meeting the client, **Jabez Wilson**, for the first time:

Seriously. "**Jay Beards Wilson**." *Every. Single. Time.* Which is quite a number of times. Even though his name is spelled out on the outside of his shoppe several times.

Simply amateurish and embarrassing and unforgivable.

** Speaking of the name Jabez...If we are to believe this website, there are *341* men named Jabez in the United States right now. And Vermont has the most Jabezes per capita. And there are apparently 3 men in New York state named **Jabez Fu**, which is possibly *the coolest thing ever*. The things you learn in this job...

** **Watson** defaming an entire class of people: "*Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow*." Given that many versions of Watson have portrayed him as obese, pompous and slow, that's fairly ironic. Just sayin.'

** So *how*, exactly, did Clay know about the French Napoleons being stored in the bank vault? Or was it just going to be a standard bank robbery, and the presence of the gold a happy coincidence for the thieves?

The **1965 BBC** version had Clay, during one of his burglaries, steal from the home safe of bank director, **Mr. Merryweather**, where he found papers that revealed the gold's presence. (He also left a calling card, a clay pipe with a clown face, at every crime he committed!!) The Granada edition had a corrupt bank guard leave a message for a shady character, who ran the information straight to Moriarty.

** One question to contemplate is this: what if Jabez Wilson *weren't* a red head? What scheme would Clay had to have come up with then? The Obese Pompous And Slow league? Was there a whole plethora of League options he had come up with that might work? Would they have just had to find another business to infiltrate?

And one *serious* question--what if Jabez Wilson *hadn't advertised for a clerk*? Then how would Clay have been able to infiltrate the establishment? Did he (or Moriarty) do something to make sure the previous clerk was out of the way?

** "*You must find your own ink, pens, and blotting-paper...*" Seriously? You can't go *cheap* on a long grift like this one. If Wilson had been a tiny bit sharper, he might have questioned why a millionaire can afford to pay 4 pounds a week for busy-work, but can't provide the basic necessities for that job. That's what we detectives call a clue...

** The most damaging, *fatal* mistake Clay made was closing the Red-Headed League office prematurely. If you don't close it, if you show up just one more time to pay Jabez, he has no reason to go to Sherlock Holmes, and you get away with the gold unscathed.

Why such a clumsy, careless error? Impatience, because they were so close to their goal? Trying to avoid paying an extra week's or month's rent on the office? Underestimating Jabez Wilson, by assuming he was so hopeless he would never investigate, or seek help?

This is a very good reason to assume that this was *NOT* Moriarty's plan. Certainly he would not have overlooked such a *crucial*, all-important detail.

** No past apocryphal cases brought up this time. You're set-up to believe that "the very simple problem presented by **Miss Mary Sutherland**" is an untold story, but it is actually the next published case. Foreshadowing by Doyle? Or Was **A Case Of Identity** written first, but published later for unknown reasons, and the reference intended to refer to a story we had already read?

** Make sure you explain to your children the concept of copying something my hand, and hard-bound multi-volume encyclopedias, or they may not understand this story. "*You must cut and paste the entirety of Wikipedia...oh, what, done already?*"

** What is the state of Watson's practice? Why, he can take the entire day off, as "*I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing*." Doesn't sound like you're making a very good living there, John. Thanks, Obamacare. Then again, it was a Saturday...

** One of the businesses around the corner from Wilson's shoppe was "*the Vegetarian restaurant*." Another reason to love the Canon. Silly me kind of assumed that vegetarian restaurants were a more modern invention. Reading Doyle reminds us of how wrong some of our preconceptions about our own era are, with his looks at his era.

However, I'm fairly sure that we won't see an **In-N-Out Burger** in Victorian London...

** **Inspector Peter Jones**? Many commentators declare that he must really be **Altheny Jones** returned.

Based on his references to **The Sign Of The Four** and Holmes' "*theorizing*," they argue it's the same character and Doyle (or Watson) just erred. There's really not much to go on, and Jones is hardly an uncommon surname. And he seems much more affable and friendly here. But Granada bought the theory, and just renamed him Altheny. He is played

by a different actor than the one who played Athelny Jones in their TSOTF production 2 years later...

** Holmes tells the bank director, "*I have been at some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to refund...*"

As far as I can tell, Holmes didn't spend a single bloody penny on the entire case, aside from attending a violin performance in his spare time. Was this just a subtle, "*polite*" way of asking for a reward?

** As written, the entire case has *no closure at all* for poor Mr. Jabez Wilson. After his initial meeting with Holmes, we never see or hear from him again. We never even know for sure if anyone told him that his shoppe was being used for bank robbery. Or that his wonderful half-wages clerk had completely used him.

The TV adaptations correct this oversight. The 1965 version has Wilson join them Holmes and the police in the wait in vault; Granada has his shoppe wrecked in **Artie's** struggles to get away, but Holmes sends part of his reward to recompense the man.
