The Bilge Pump

Vol. 13, No. 11 November, 2025

The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star

founded November, 1970

PLEASE NOTE: December 07, 2025 Meeting NOTICE

We will be conducting our next monthly meeting virtually on December 07 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 Case of Identity".**

Bob Katz, BSI, ASH, will lead the discussion on the story.

Our special guest speaker will be our own **Linda Crohn and Jonathan Shimberg, who will discuss "The Forensics of Sherlock Holmes".**

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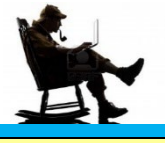

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Who dunnit: 	**Third Mate** **Helmsman** **Spiritual Advisors** **Secretary** **Historian** **Webmaster**	**Steve Mason, BSI** **Walter Pieper** **Don Hobbs, BSI** **Dr. Jim Webb, BSI** **Cindy Brown, BSI** **Pam Mason** **Rusty Mason**	**mason.steve8080@gmail.com**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

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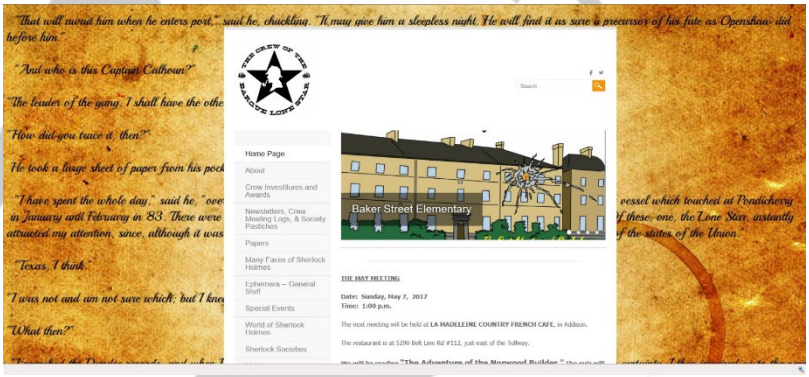

Our Facebook Page:

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

NOVEMBER 02 SUMMARY

There were **72** in attendance at this ZOOM meeting.

The meeting was opened with a toast by Lauren Cercone, to Dr. Watson's neglected teacup (see page 5).

We then had a quiz on this month's story, "The Red Headed League".

Our own Dr. Bob Katz next led us in a lively discussion of the story. He started by asking the question, why within and outside of the canon is "The Red Headed League" is the most influential story in the canon. It is influential because of a single moment in the story, the vigil.

This story set the stage for some of the great crime scenes in literature, and in real life. This was the set for many Sherlockian stories, as well as others, to follow.

We had a number of announcements this month, and they are as follows:

Liese Sherwood Fabre is working on the final formatting of *Holmes Rejected*, the most recent publication from the Crew of the Barque Lone Star. We will do another book next year and it will most likely cover 2 volumes and be a set especially for kids.

Micah Cover note that his play *The Last Case of Dr. Watson* is currently in the works.

The Crew of the Barque Lone Star will once again have the annual Sherlockian Christmas card exchange. The list of participants will be sent out on December 1.

Rob Nunn reminded people that the Holmes in the Heartland conference will take place in 2026.

Madalaine Quiniones noted that the John H. Watson Society will meet on Nov. 23, and the journal is about to go to print.

Naching Kassa announced that the Sound of the Baskervilles zoom call will be held on Nov. 16. They will be discussing "A Scandal in Bohemia".

Steve Doyle announced that the annotated Colonel Gerard will be available online soon, by Wessex Press. Wessex Press is also starting international sales again after resolving some difficult issues with international shipping.

Olivia Kirkendahl announced the Great Alkaline Plainsman will discuss *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, chapter 9-15. Be on the lookout for the official announcement.

Robin Rowles reminded people that Guy Fawkes night is Nov. 5, and lots of people celebrate with fireworks. He wants people to be mindful of animals and people with PTSD, and how disturbing fireworks can be to them.

Linda Cohn reminded us that the Sterrett conference is coming up in October of 2026. Mark your calendars.

Shana Carter told us that the monthly ASH dinner will be the first Wednesday of the month, Nov. 8. Also, the annual ASH luncheon will be held in New York City on Nov. 25.

Barbara Brannon from Texas noted that another Great Sherlockian tour was conducted with a trip to Moriarty, New Mexico, and the Utah Morman trail.

Lauren Cicone told us that the Transfixed Correspondents of Phoenix will be meeting Nov. 5 to discuss The Second Stain. This will be a zoom meeting.

Rich Krisciunas took us the Sherlockian Law Class 101, to discuss "The Red Headed League". Conan Doyle ranked this as one of his favorites in the canon. And it certainly inspired other similar crimes.

Peggy McFarland was this month's featured speaker, and her presentation was titled, "Did Jabez Wilson have a soul, and a brief look at gingers in fact and fiction."

Brad Keefauver gave us his top ten easiest jobs to earn money in the canon.

Shana did a reading from the BSJ, Volume 7, number 1, January 1957. The Softer Holmes (see page 6).

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

Thanks to Cindy for taking the minutes as always.

A TOAST TO DR. WATSON'S NEGLECTED TEACUP

Lauren Cercone

"Tea is an answer to most of the problems." – Author unknown

"There is no problem on earth that can't be ameliorated by a hot bath and a cup of tea." – Jasper Fforde

So why does tea play second fiddle to coffee at 221b?

In the Canon, Holmes (that iconoclast) drinks tea only four times. Yet we would expect that Watson, the embodiment of the English everyman, would uphold the tradition of "the cup that cheers but not inebriates". But it ain't necessarily so.

When Watson refers to tea, he usually means the evening meal, as in The Beryl Coronet when he notes, "I had just finished my tea when he returned", or in The Greek Interpreter, "It was after tea on a summer evening". Now, in The Abbey Grange, Watson notes that they consumed some hot tea at the train station on a frosty morning.

Nay, Watson is a coffee drinker! We learn early in A Study in Scarlet that "The landlady had become so accustomed to my late habits that my place had not been laid nor my coffee prepared."

In A Scandal in Bohemia he notes, "I slept at Baker Street that night, and we were engaged upon our toast and coffee when the King of Bohemia rushed into the room."

Holmes knows his flatmate's habit well enough that in The Five Orange Pips, he says, "Just ring the bell, and the maid will bring up your coffee." Likewise in The Six Napoleons he points out that "There's coffee on the table, Watson, and I have a cab at the door.'"

In The Sign of Four, Watson comes downstairs to find the breakfast laid and Holmes pouring out the coffee.

And in The Golden Pince-Nez we find Holmes, not the most domesticated of men, making Watson coffee over the spirit lamp.

Nowhere is a teapot mentioned, though in Hound, Watson accuses Holmes of having eyes in the back of his head, only to be told that his movements were observed in the reflection on a well-polished silver coffee pot on the table.

The presence of guests may cause the teapot to be dusted off. Mrs. Hudson does bring up both tea and coffee when Percy Phelps is breakfasting at Baker Street, as she assumes that as a proper Englishman he would want tea. Yet let us not forget that it was Phelps' yearning for coffee (that evil brew!) that precipitated the theft in The Naval Treaty.

I would like to think that Watson would have at least indulged in those tea-time stalwarts, scones, but we have no mention of them. No seed cake, nor slab cake, nor buns.

But the most egregious instance of coffee's usurping pride of place comes in Wisteria Lodge, when the drugged, half-fainting Miss Burnet is carried upstairs and laid upon the sofa. Good Dr. Watson abandons even his trusted cure-all, brandy, and instead tells us that "a couple of cups of the strongest coffee soon cleared her brain from the mists of the drug."

I hang my head, abject in sorrow, and am moved to share some very bad poetry with you.

Pray lift your glasses, mugs, or teacups to our beloved doctor, though our hearts are sore when we acknowledge his apostasy of tea.

THE SOFTER HOLMES.

Shana Carter, ASH

Baker Street Journal (Edgar W. Smith, Editor)
Volume 7, Number 1, January 1957

It was the Master's conceit to hold himself before the world as a thinking-machine; a hard, detached intellect admitting of no other impulse or purpose than the analysis of crime and the catalysis of criminology.

"I am a brain, Watson, " he said. "The rest of me is a mere appendix."

All emotions, his friend testified, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind, and he never spoke of the softer passions save with a gibe and a sneer. Nor could he tolerate the taint of sentiment in others: he disparaged the efforts to give a tinge of romanticism to the chronicles of his adventures as producing much the same effect that would follow from the injection of n love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid. And once, in an outburst that reveals by its very crudity the Freudian repressions that motivated it, he cried, "Cut out the poetry, Watson!"

Sherlock Holmes was, underneath, a soft and poetic man. The mask did not slip often, but when it did, it showed a real worth that even Watson could not conceal. He spoke feelingly, in an unguarded moment, of a rose's beauty, and of all we have to hope for from the flowers; he meditated on the meaning of life, and on the tricks that fate plays upon poor mortals. He suffered vicariously for the poor and the downtrodden. and he dwelt with sympathetic understanding upon the frailties of womankind.

His mercy strained the bonds of the law: it was not only at the season of forgiveness that he was ready to forgive the culprits he had caught. Most significant of all, perhaps, for the evidence it gives of the inner sentiments that moved him, he voiced the wistful hope that the air of London had been made sweeter for his presence.

It is good for a man to be hard without and soft within -- better, we may think, than when, the other way about, a core of steel is hidden beneath a flaccid exterior. For a shield of toughness, or even of cynical austerity, is protection against the world for which the man possessing it feels so deeply – a world which might, perversely, turn upon him if he lacked that shield and frustrate the doing of his benefactions toward it.

There is, undoubtedly, an optimum result to be attained in resolving the conflict between these two apparently opposite characteristics. It lies, we may venture, in being hard where decision and action are requisite, and in being soft in our responses to those deeper motivating realities of life by which the pattern for decision and action is set in achieving,

if you will, a hardness of the mind and a softness of the heart.

It was of such a philosophy as this that Sherlock Holmes was an exponent and a practitioner, and in it, as in so many other things, he set an example we might follow and be the better for it.

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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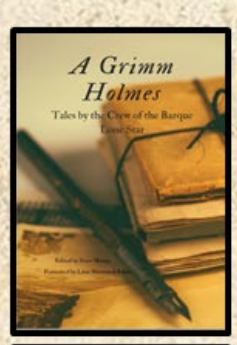
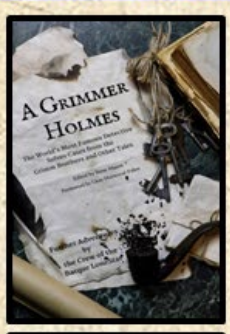
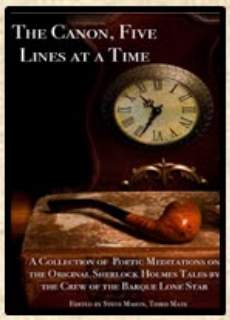
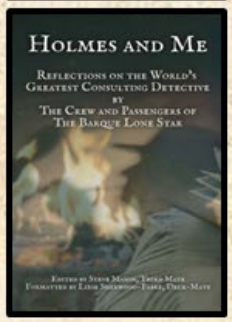
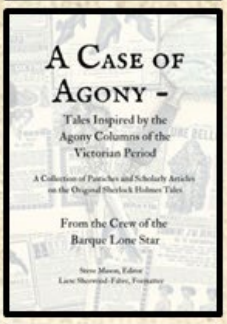
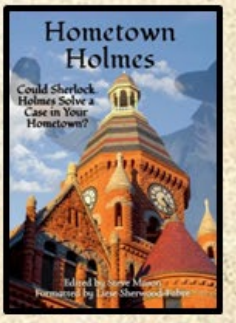


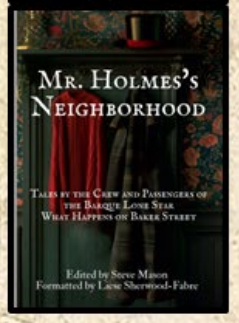












IN PRAISE OF THE PASTICHE

David Marcum

"The Last Battle"
by L.B. Greenwood

I play *The Game.*

For those who don't know what that is, it simply means that Holmes and Watson were historical figures – that they were born, lived, and died. There was no magical immortality. They were not "characters" reluctantly scraped out by a chap who was unhappy with his chosen career path as a physician and hoped instead to be a writer.

As historical figures, Holmes and Watson lived in a fixed historical period, the Victorian and early Edwardian Ages, and as such, The Canon contains mentions of their contemporary historical figures, such as General Gordon and Henry Ward Beecher (in "The Resident Patient") and Charles Blondin (in *The Sign of Four*). They were affected by historical events, such as when Watson was fatefully wounded at the Battle of Maiwand on 27 July, 1880. Other historical events were mentioned, such as the American Civil War ("The Five Orange Pips"), the Second Boer War ("The Blanched Soldier"), and World War I ("His Last Bow"). British policies of the time were discussed, such as when Holmes quotes from *The Times* in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, reading: "*You may be cajoled into imagining that your own special trade or your own industry will be encouraged by a protective tariff, but it stands to reason that such legislation must in the long run keep away wealth from the country, diminish the value of our imports, and lower the general conditions of life in this island*."

Some actively labor to see Holmes and Watson erroneously and deliberately shifted into the present day, but that is not who they were. Holmes and Watson weren't magical regenerating Time Lords, popping into whatever inaccurate year someone needs to place them. While the people who need them portrayed this way have no qualms about flinging Holmes anywhere in time, there are others who agree that they belong in their correct decades – but they otherwise bristle when historical figures intrude in the story – forgetting that Holmes met historical Queen Victoria in late 1895 ("The Bruce-Partington Plans".)

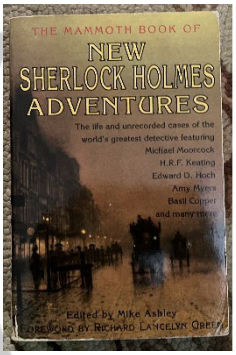
In 1974, the modern Sherlockian Golden Age was ignited by Nicholas Meyer's *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution* and, while some of the book is thoroughly incorrect – *Moriarty wasn't the Napolean of Crime, but rather a poor mistreated adulterer? The Great Hiatus didn't actually happen, but was instead an invention to explain Holmes's cocaine recovery? Pfui! All nonsense grafted onto Watson's manuscript by Moriarty heirs trying to rehabilitate the Professor's reputation!* – one foundational segment of the book that is acceptable is Holmes's meeting with Sigmund Freud – a friendship that shows up in other Holmes and Freud pastiches as well.

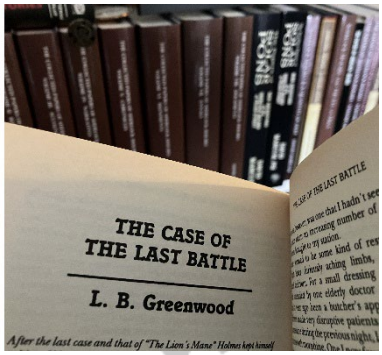
Even Sherlockians who huff and puff about Holmes and Watson interacting with historical figures are willing to give the Freud encounter a free pass because of this book. But once that door is open, other historical meetings should be allowed and respected as well.

What does this have to do with this month's reviewed pastiche – which is *not The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*? It's mentioned because in this month's recommendation, Holmes and Watson become involved with a historical event, and the historical people associated with it.

In 1986, when post-Canonical Holmes adventures were rare treasures, Canadian author L.B. Greenwood quietly slipped on stage with *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Raleigh Legacy* – an amazing book that will be the subject of a future recommendation. Her presentation of Holmes and Watson was exactly correct and Canonical. In a later interview, she stated: "*Holmes's attraction, I think, lies in the fact that he and Watson are so totally gentlemen, that they exist in a world in which that phrase meant so much*." After *The Raleigh Legacy*, Ms. Greenwood wrote two other Holmes novels and three Holmes short stories. I have some vague memory that she has passed away, but I can't find evidence, and apologies if that's incorrect. I never had the privilege of communicating with her, and would certainly have recruited her to contribute to the Holmes anthologies that I edit, if I'd had the chance. Per various biographical blurbs, one learns that Lillian Beth Greenwood was born in 1932 in Tisdale, Saskatchewan, lived in Kelowna, initially wrote a non-Holmes Victorian novel called *The Steel Sparrows*, and had membership in Vancouver's *Stormy Petrels*. Anyone knowing more about her, please feel free to share.

In 1997, editor Mike Ashley put together one of the most brilliant Holmes anthologies assembled to that point: *The Mammoth Book of New Sherlock Holmes Adventures* – over two-dozen new stories in one volume, arranged chronologically, and with a chronology included as one of the book's two appendices. There was also a cover by *THE* Holmes cover painter, John Atkinson Grimshaw. When examining the later 52-volume series that I created and edited, *The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories*, one can see how much Mr. Ashley's wonderful book influenced me – the structure of the title, the chronological arrangement of the stories, the Grimshaw covers, and the use of traditional Canonical adventures.





Although my notes do indicate that a couple of the stories in *The Mammoth Book* are "*crap*" and are disregarded because they contain actual supernatural encounters, the book is otherwise overwhelmingly strong, and it ends on a high note with L.B. Greenwood's incredible short story, "The Last Battle".

I chose this story as the November recommendation because it's set at the conclusion of the War, at the time of Germany's surrender on November 11th – initially commemorated in the United States as "Armistice Day", and later changed to the more-general "Veteran's Day". There are *many* Holmes's adventures set in World War I – see this entry from my irregular blog for further discussion, "The Great War and The Great Holmes Tapestry":

https://17stepprogram.blogspot.com/2024/11/the-great-war-and-great-holmes-tapestry.html

The narratives of Holmes's war service commenced with the War's beginning in August 1914 ("His Last Bow"), and powerfully concludes with Greenwood's "The Last Battle" (November 1918).

For those who grind their teeth when Holmes and Watson get involved in historical events, this one will be especially painful. But for those who can *never* have enough of Our Heroes' adventures, this tale is especially rewarding, and I'm very glad that Ms. Greenwood recovered it from Watson's Tin Dispatch Box.

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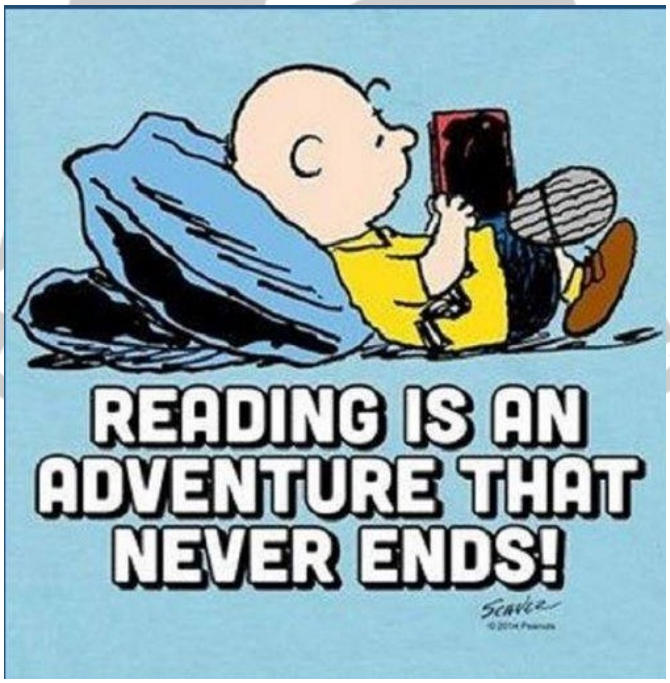

SWANK!

Karen Murdock

The Sherlock Holmes Canon is consistently interesting, from its first page to its last. On the last page (page 1122 of the "Doubleday Canon" the standard one-volume edition found in the hands of many American Sherlockians), at the conclusion of "The Retired Colourman," this exchange occurs:

"You certainly seem to have met every difficulty," said the inspector. "Of course, he [Josiah Amberley] was bound to call us in, but why he should have gone to you I can't understand."

"Pure swank!" Holmes answered. "He felt so clever and so sure of himself that he imagined no one could touch him. He could say to any suspicious neighbour, 'Look at the steps I have taken. I have consulted not only the police but even Sherlock Holmes.'"

"Swank" is the most interesting word in that piece of dialogue.

Swank only appears this one time in the Canon, on its last page.

A one-time word in a given work is known as a hapax legomenon (plural "legomena"). All of the hapax legomena in the Sherlockian Canon were collected in a computer program written by Les Moskowitz (1936–2021), an actuary and computer guru from Baltimore. He came up with some 8300 hapax legomena. Almost all pages of the Canon contain several examples. Even that final page, 1122, although it is only half a page of print, contains five hapax legomena:

bi-weekly
death-chamber
dog-kennel
Observer
swank

Swank is one of those words which can be either a verb meaning pretentious behavior (Rich people like to swank around in their new BMWs), an adjective meaning luxurious and expensive (She sure has a swank apartment) or a noun meaning swagger, behavior or talk that is overly proud or confident (The president's proposal was mainly swank). The adjective form tends to predominate in North American usage, the noun in Great Britain.

Sherlock Holmes uses the noun form to describe Amberley's ploy.

The origin of the word is uncertain. The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that it is "akin to Old English swancor, pliant, supple, with notion of swinging the body . . . akin to . . . Middle High German swanken to sway." It traces the first use of the term in English to 1854. An online etymology elaborates: "a Germanic root meaning 'to swing, turn, toss' (source also of Middle High German swanken 'to sway, totter, turn, swing,' Old High German swingan 'to swing'. . . . Perhaps the notion is of 'swinging' the body ostentatiously (compare swagger). (https://www.etymonline.com/word/swank)

In addition to the meaning of swank as "showing off, giving yourself airs, posturing," it can also mean "behavior that is too confident." That certainly applies to the behavior of the Retired Colourman. He might have been able to pull the wool over the eyes of the official police, had they been the only ones assigned to the case. His "swank" in bringing the world's greatest detective into his case led to his arrest for a double murder.

A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT "A CASE OF IDENTITY"

1. Summary (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married and not living at Baker street.

Mary lives with her mother and stepfather. She is a good typist and can type as many as 15 to 20 pages a day for which she receives 2d per sheet. She also has some New Zealand stock which she inherited from her Uncle Ned which pays her 20 pounds a year. She thus has a very good income but gives her money to her parents since she lives with them. Naturally, her step-father does not wish her to get married and leave home, taking her inheritance with her. She meets Hosmer at the Gasfitter's Ball and falls in love with him.

It is a very strange courtship. Hosmer only shows up when James is in France; he wears tinted glasses and whiskers, he only walks out at dusk, all his letters to Mary reveal nothing about him and all are typewritten --including his signature. He speaks in a whispered voice (he told Mary he had quinsy as a child). He tells Mary he is a cashier in an office, but not where he works. He gets his mail general delivery and Mary does not know his address. Even Lestrade could see that Hosmer is James in disguise! He wants to keep Mary at home so he can enjoy her income. Hosmer arranges to wed Mary and makes her promise that she will wait for him - no matter what happens. He then disappears on the way to the altar. Mrs. Windibank, who was a part of the scheme, advises Mary to come home and wait for Hosmer to reappear.

Holmes contacts James at his office by mail and asks him to drop by Baker street. James writes back to say he will come and Holmes can tell that both James' letter of reply and Hosmer's letters were typed on the same machine.

Holmes threatens to beat Windebank severely because of his actions, although Windibank points out that he has not committed a crime. Holmes decides not to tell Mary the truth because he feels she will not believe him. He predicts that Windibank will rise higher in the annals of crime.

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2. Story Info Sheet (McMurdo's Camp)

- First published in:
  The Strand Magazine, September 1891

- Time frame of story (known/surmised):
  Reference to "A Scandal in Bohemia" places this story after March 1888, and not long after.

- Holmes & Watson living arrangements:
  Watson on his own. "We sat on either side of the fire in his lodgings at Baker Street" as stated in the first sentence sounds as if they were Holmes' lodgings, not OUR lodgings as Watson would have said were they still roomies.

- Opening scene:
  At 221B. Client came to consult Holmes in a hurry.

- Client:
  Miss Mary Sutherland, a large woman with vacuous face, but having fair personal advantages.

- Crime or concern:
  Disappearance of Mr. Hosmer Angel, client's fiancée, on the wedding day.

- Villain:
  Stepfather, Mr. James Windibank, who masqueraded as Hosmer Angel. He was aided by his wife, who was 15 years older.

- Motive:
  Prevent stepdaughter and her £112 10s./yr income from leaving the household. Not stated but many readers believe there were more intimate relations involved.

- Logic / clues used to solve:
  Windibank and Angel were never together. Angel's manner and appearance were odd, like a disguise. His living arrangements and employment status were unusual and vague. Notes and signature from Angel were always typewritten.

- Policemen:
  None involved.

- Holmes' fees:
  Windibank refers to the expense of hiring Holmes. Mary Sutherland's expenses would have come out of the household income, to which she was a significant contributor.

- Transport:
  Bride and mother took a hansom to the church. Groom followed in a 4-wheeler, but had exited the other side without being observed.

- Food:
  A wedding breakfast was planned after the morning wedding. (Similar to "The Noble Bachelor")

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

- Vices:
  Holmes smoked the old and oily clay pipe, with thick blue cloud-wreaths spinning up from him.

- Other cases mentioned:
  The Dundas separation case, in which Holmes had been engaged in clearing up some small points. The husband was a teetotaler, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife.
  One rather intricate matter which had been referred to Holmes from Marseilles.
  The case of Mrs. Etherege, whose husband Holmes found so easily when the police and everyone had given him up for dead.
  A matter of great delicacy in which Holmes served the reigning family of Holland. He was rewarded with a ring which contained a brilliant gem (but not a Blue Carbuncle).
  SCAN, In which Holmes was rewarded with a snuffbox of old gold, with a great amethyst in the centre of the lid.
  Ten or twelve other cases which were important but uninteresting.
  Reference to SIGN and STUD.
  A parallel case in Andover in '77, and something of the sort at The Hague the year prior to this case.

- Notable Quotables:
  " . . . it is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook. If not, why should you come to consult me?"
  "You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important."
  "You may remember the old Persian saying, 'There is danger for him who taketh the tiger cub, and danger also for who so snatches a delusion from a woman.' There is as much sense in Hafiz as in Horace, and as much knowledge of the world."

- Other interestings:
  In this story, Holmes & Watson have a page-boy, referred to by Watson as "the boy in buttons".
  Client's deceased father had a tidy business as a plumber in the neighborhood where Henry Baker lost his hat and goose.

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3. Selected Chronologies

a.	The Original Story by Arthur Conan Doyle	Spring 1888
b.	William Baring-Gould	Friday, June 14, 1889
c.	H.W. Bell	September, 1888
d.	Roger Butters	May, 1888
e.	Jay Finley Christ	Wednesday, June, 26, 1889
f.	Jean-Pierre Crauser	September, 1888
g.	D. Martin Dakin	September, 1889
h.	Bill Dorn	Friday, June 14, 1889
i.	Henry Folsom	Monday, November 17, 1890
j.	John Hall	September, 1888
k.	Craig Janasek	Tuesday, October 18, 1887
l.	Brad Keefauver	Monday, April 16, 1888
m.	Toshio Suzuki	Sunday, June 16, 1889
n.	June Thomson	April 1889
o.	Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler	Wednesday, October 9, 1889

4. Canonical Queeries (Ralph Edwards, BSI)

- Is the resolution of the case satisfactory?
- What would be the ramifications of a different relationship?
- Is “hand in hand” used to suggest the relationship between Holmes and Watson?
- Is truth really stranger than fiction?
- Why did Dundas hurl his teeth?
- Is there significance in royal gifts always being jewelry?
- Did Holmes always use “delicate” only to mean affairs de coeur?
- Was the reply about Mrs. Etherege significant?
- Did Holmes collect a fee for this case?
- Would a letter return from Bordeaux faster than a traveler?
- Was there a clue in the reference to Balzac?
- Why didn’t Hosmer disguise his signature?
- Why didn’t the employer tell Windibank of Holmes’ inquiry?
- Did the employer’s letter serve a purpose?
- Who paid for the four-wheeler and the minister?
- What proof would Holmes have had if Windibank had replied in longhand or by wire?
- Was Windibank correct about the locked door?
- Why didn’t Holmes bring Mrs. Windibank into the case?

5. 17 Steps (Brad Keefauver, BSI)

1. Friends With Things In Common

In this tale Watson refers to Holmes's "position of unofficial adviser and helper to everybody who is absolutely puzzled, throughout three continents."

Does this coincide with Watson's 3 continents? Is this also, perhaps, evidence that Watson was in the habit of seducing Holmes's clients? And while we've often mused upon the identity of Watson's three continents, what were Holmes's three?

2. That's A Plumb Good Business Ya Got Thar!

Miss Mary Sutherland tells us, "Father was a plumber in the Tottenham Court Road, and he left a tidy business behind him, which mother carried on with Mr. Hardy, the foreman; but when Mr. Windibank came he made her sell the business. . . . They got L4700 for the goodwill and interest . . ."

Nearly 5000 pounds for a plumber's business without a plumber? Perhaps Escott's "rising business" in CHAS shouldn't have been abandoned so hastily by Holmes! How big a business must Sutherland have owned? How many more employees besides Hardy the foreman might he have had?

3. With Pound Signs In His Eyes

"You interest me extremely," Holmes says before he hears anything at all about Miss Sutherland's problem, but having just heard about her monetary situation. Was the rent due at 221B? Were his royal clients giving him too many baubles and not enough cash? Or is Holmes just greedy?

4. But Maybe It Wasn't The Money

"Quite an interesting study, that maiden," he observed. "I found her more interesting than her little problem." Compare this statement to Sherlock's comments after Mary Morstan leaves in SIGN, as he barely notices she's female. Is Sutherland the anti-Morstan? Does Holmes actually find her attractive? Is there significance in the fact that Sutherland is the only female in the Canon that Holmes refers to with old-fashioned gallantry as "a maiden"? Could Watson's Irene Adler praises have been red herrings to cover Holmes's true love?

5. You See But You Do Not . . . Well, Maybe You Do Observe!

"Well, she had a slate-coloured, broad-brimmed straw hat, with a feather of a brickish red. Her jacket was black, with black beads sewn upon it, and a fringe of little black jet ornaments. Her dress was brown, rather darker than coffee colour, with a little purple plush at the neck and sleeves. Her gloves were grayish and were worn through at the right forefinger. Her boots I didn't observe. She had small round, hanging gold earrings, and a general air of being fairly well-to-do in a vulgar, comfortable, easy-going way."

Who says Watson does not observe? Is this amazing attention to detail a sign that Watson was actually learning under Holmes's tutelage?

The critique from his teacher isn't too bad, for Holmes: "It is true that you have missed everything of importance, but you have hit upon the method, and you have a quick eye for colour." Watson has actually hit upon Holmes's method! Did Watson attempt to be a true partner in the detective business, before eventually settling in as chronicler and publicist? Is this part of a larger pattern of Holmes the teacher/Watson the student running throughout the tales?

6. The Brother, The Uncle, Or Cousin Earl?

"It is just as well that we should do business with the male relatives," Holmes announces as he's about to wrap up the case. Why the plural? Is he making a policy statement for the future, or had Holmes contacted other male relatives of Mary Sutherland in hopes of letting them finish the thrashing that Holmes almost starts on Windibank?

7. Everybody Has To Impress Somebody

For an ice-cold reasoning machine, Holmes does seem to make an effort to show off his new snuff-box and ring to his friend. And why not? If your best friend stops over after you've recently been given some pretty swanky merchandise (in contrast to your "homely ways and simple life" as Watson puts it), wouldn't you show it off? And would you do it as Holmes did, or just say, "Hey, Watson, look at this neat snuffbox I got!"

Or was Holmes just wearing a pricey ring around the house and waving a jeweled snuffbox without thinking about it?

8. Calling Dr. Qwerty!

"I find that I can do pretty well with what I earn at typewriting. It brings me twopence a sheet, and I can often do from fifteen to twenty sheets in a day." Fifteen to twenty sheets a day? Was this a reasonable speed for a Victorian typist? How long a day was she putting in? And was she using all ten fingers, or was the whole world still hunting and pecking back then?

9. The Gasfitter's Cinderella

Mary Sutherland meets her Prince Charming at the gasfitter's ball. Sounds like dancing, but what kind of band were the gasfitters likely to have at their ball? A couple of fiddles and a tambourine? We always see the grand affairs of royalty in movies, but what was the typical combo of the working man's dance party?

10. This One's Got A Job

As the Canon moves on, we shall see many a step-father scheming to hang on to his step-daughter's money, but James Windibank is unusual in that he actually seems to have a job. He also doesn't seem to have a large family estate to keep up. Why was he so desperate for the extra cash that he'd head for the very first social event his step-daughter goes to? This is a guy who's seriously afraid of losing that income. Why?

11. Diagnosis: Liar?

Hosmer Angel tells his date that "He'd had the quinsy and swollen glands when he was young, he told me, and it had left him with a weak throat, and a hesitating, whispering fashion of speech." Okay, medical experts, we know Hosmer isn't telling the truth, but is this a credible fib? Might a fellow have existed with such a speech impediment as the result of quinsy?

12. Could They Only Afford The One?

The Smash may be showing his own dreadful ignorance here, but the phrase, "He was in dreadful earnest and made me swear, with my hands on the Testament . . ." strikes me odd. Does the mention of a single Testament indicate one particular religious persuasion or another for the Windibanks? I'm betting they're not Mormons, despite the near-bigamy thing, but wonder if the Hounds can clear the meaning of this usage up for me.

13. The Adventure Of The Common Spinster

"A Case of Identity" makes a nice pairing with "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor," doesn't it? Both feature clients whose betrothed disappears on the wedding day, and as Holmes says in the later tale, "They often vanish before the ceremony, and occasionally during the honeymoon . . ." He also tells of working on a similar case for the King of Scandinavia. And, in this tale, parallel cases in Andover in '77 and at The Hague the previous year.

Was this another reason he frequented the personal ads? Was the tracking of marital escapees a specialty of his? Would Scotland Yard concern themselves with this sort of thing at all, or did they leave the field open to the private investigator?

14. A Little Something For The Scientists . . .

Watson comes into 221B and smells "the pungent cleanly smell of hydrochloric acid." Holmes soon tells him the result of his chemical experiment was identifying bisulphate of baryta. How would the hydrochloric acid figure into such an investigation?

15. Talk Of Ages

James Windibank is "some thirty years of age." His wife, then, is about forty-five, and his step-daughter around twenty-five. Holmes is only around thirty himself, and Watson a few years older. Was Holmes's treatment of Windibank affected by their common ages? Did Holmes and Watson see Windibank as a lesser creature for marrying a woman they may have regarded as far too old? And would Holmes have taken up the hunting crop and started after a man who was more plainly his senior? And were Holmes and Watson comparing observations on Mary simply because she was a female of an age that suited their fancy?

16. The Bald Truth

"About five feet seven inches in height; strongly built, sallow complexion, black hair, a little bald in the centre, bushy, black side-whiskers and moustache; tinted glasses, slight infirmity of speech."

So reads the printed description of Hosmer Angel.

"I eliminated everything from it which could be the result of a disguise--the whiskers, the glasses, the voice, and I sent it to the firm, with a request that they would inform me whether it answered to the description of any of their travellers."

So sayeth Sherlock. Which leaves us a five-seven, strongly-built, sallow-skinned fellow with a bald spot. Enough data for Westhouse and Marbank to identify one of their employees? Perhaps, with that bald spot. But the bald-spot isn't mentioned by

Watson when he sees Windibank, and it would seem a dead giveaway to the step-daughter. Could Windibank have faked a bald spot with Victorian make-up technology?

17. Criminal Typists Beware!

"I think of writing another little monograph some of these days on the typewriter and its relation to crime," Holmes says, after explaining how he used the distinctive characteristics of type to match up Hosmer Angel's letters with Windibank's note. How many other criminal activities could possibly be related to the typewriter?

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6. View Halloas (Rosemary Michaud)

Poor Mary Sutherland! She's good-natured, rather nearsighted, and not exactly the brightest gas-lamp on the street. We feel sorry for her, and we are as outraged at her stepfather's duplicity as we are frustrated with her failure to see through his disguise. Still, Mary had just enough sense to ask Sherlock Holmes for help. Or was that another mistake? Next up: some of the questions that must be asked whenever Mary Sutherland's case is discussed, plus some thoughts on a few alternative directions for conversation. And by the way, why is it that plumbing and sex seem to go hand in hand in the pages of the Canon?

There's Something About Mary: Let's get them out in the open right at the start: those two questions that everyone wonders about in "A Case of Identity": 1) How could Mary Sutherland be fooled by her stepfather's disguise? and 2) Why didn't Holmes tell her the truth about Hosmer Angel? We cannot get around these questions, no matter what other spin we might put on the story.

Along with these fundamentals, a few other thoughts come to mind. Would the Windibank/Sutherland household have been headed for rough waters even without young Mary's inheritance from her Uncle Ned? What else was going on in that family? Was Windibank secretly (or openly) attracted to Mary all along? If so, then why didn't he marry her in the first place, instead of her mother? Another idea: an abusive husband will sometimes choose to torment his spouse through her children. Was Windibank's Hosmer Angel scheme part of his on-going abuse of both women? Did Mary's mother go along with the "joke" because she was afraid?

Or was Windibank merely a greedy and selfish fool, a man who concocted what seemed (to him) a harmless way to keep Mary and her income at home for a bit longer? Did his own scheme run away with him? Do you think that Holmes was right or wrong in his assessment of Windibank as a felon in the making? Do you think his contact with Holmes frightened him into better behavior?

Parallel Cases: Holmes solved the riddle of Hosmer Angel faster than Mary Sutherland could produce a page of typescript, due mainly to his familiarity with those "parallel cases." But the most interesting parallel of all may be the case with a completely different sort of woman – that of Irene Adler. The internal evidence indicates that "A Case of Identity" took place after "A Scandal in Bohemia" and before "The Red-Headed League." Irene Adler and Mary Sutherland are nearly side-by-side in the Canon. Did Watson intend for us to compare the two women? Consider the following:

Irene Adler	Mary Sutherland
Resolute	Amiable
A face a man might die for	A vacuous face
Happily married at the end of the story	Left in the lurch without an explanation
Temporarily fooled by a disguise, but clever enough to turn the tables on Sherlock Holmes	Totally fooled by a disguise
An "Adventuress" (some might even say that she was prostitute)	Supplemented her inherited income by doing boring, but a honest, work

Yes, Irene had a lot of natural advantages that Mary didn't have, and we Sherlockians tend to romanticize Irene Adler and shake our heads over Mary Sutherland. Are we being fair to Mary? What do you suppose Holmes and Watson thought about the merits and failings of the two women?

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7. Delicate Questions (Chris Redmond, BSI)

It has been observed that in this case the Angel proves to be a devil.

If one assumes that many of the names quoted by Watson are pseudonyms, can one read anything into such a curious choice in this case, and are there examples of names in other tales that are equally incongruous?

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8. Additional Thoughts (Steve Clarkson)

This is one Adventure where sufficient advance information is given to enable the reader who is so inclined to form a correct solution without waiting for Holmes to provide essential details. Perhaps it is no coincidence that it is a case in which, legally speaking, no crime was committed or at least none that Holmes knew of. The subject of Holmes' investigation is a sneaky stepfather, James Windibank, whose head deserves more credit than his heart. Whatever else one might say about him, it can surely be stated that Windibank was no Angel.

The imagery in the beginning of this story likens Miss Mary Sutherland, the bereft stepdaughter, to a "full-sailed merchantman" when contrasted with the "tiny pilot boat" figure of the boy in buttons who ushered her into 221B. This is but one of many seafaring connections Watson injects in his chronicles; the mention of Clark Russell's sea stories in FIVE, and the depiction of convict life aboard a "China coaster" brig in GLOR are just two more. It is apparent that Watson is knowledgeable about life aboard ship, and indeed many Englishmen were so at the time because England was the greatest seafaring power on earth, A number of her citizens had traveled aboard ship in one capacity or another. The Literary Agent, for instance, was a third-year medical student when he signed on for a year's voyage aboard a whaling vessel. But what we know of Watson's seafaring experience would lead us to believe that he might have formed a more jaundiced view of life at sea than was the case. If his voyage to India as an Army doctor was not unpleasant, we can say with some degree of certitude that his return voyage to the Mother Country was not an excursion trip. What was it that might have inspired Watson's apparent love for things nautical?

On another tack (since we're in a nautical context right now), Holmes remarked to Watson that he had ten or twelve cases at hand when IDEN begins and that they were important but uninteresting. How could Holmes juggle so many cases at one time and do full service to all of them? Were they "important" because they carried large fees with them, but "uninteresting" because they were, in Holmes' estimation, devoid of fascinating twists and turns, of outrè circumstances that took the "one step from the bizarre to the grotesque?"

"Hosmer Angel" attributed his whisper-like method of speech to quinsy, which was the then-current term for a peritonsillar abscess. Quinsy today is treated with antibiotics and tonsillectomy. Since antibiotics were unknown in Victorian times, the condition would have been treated by tonsillectomy alone. Could this condition, untreated, have left the sufferer hoarse with impaired speech? Could a botched tonsillectomy have left such an impairment?

A "boy in buttons" is evidently another term for a page. Your Maître de Chasse surmises that this is a reference to a row, or double row, of buttons on the lad's uniform. Was it customary for pages to wear uniforms? Could Mrs. Hudson have afforded to pay for a page? Or, could Holmes and Watson have afforded such a luxury at this stage in their respective careers? Were there other lodgers at 221B Baker Street who could have "chipped in" for this service?

Miss Mary Sutherland said that she augmented the income from her Uncle Ned's gift of stock by typing, at the rate of threepence a page, often doing six pages a day. Figuring a six-day workweek for fifty weeks a year, this would have amounted to an additional £90 per year. For a single lady living at home, coupled with her stock income, this was a handsome annual income of slightly more than £200. Surely, could she not have aspired to more elegant social affairs than a Gasfitters' Ball?

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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?"

Let's change the motive in this coming week's story, A Case of Identity.

At first blush, Windibank's motive is money, and a sexual interest in Mary is also implied. But one hundred pounds a year isn't exactly a fortune. Similarly, Mary is no temptress. If not money or sex, what possible motive can you find for the invention of Hosmer Angel? Jealousy? Revenge? Or can you build a case for something else?

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

There have certainly been times over the many years it has taken me to write my novel when I have worried about the story being a bit too far-fetched at times, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Overall, I don't think it is but, well, I suppose some parts do stretch the imagination somewhat. But clearly I needn't have worried because in A Case of Identity reality is suspended as we are asked to believe this very far-fetched tale of a girl and her evil step father.

Poor Miss Mary Sutherland has been duped into believing that someone wishes to marry her and when he disappears she resolved to keep her pledge until he returns, just as he begged her to do should anything happen to him. This mysterious Mr Hosmer Angel however, is actually her greedy stepfather in disguise. He doesn't want her to leave home and take her £100 a year allowance with her; therefore he concocts this whole saga so that she will resist all suitors for a good few years to come.

Personally, I love this story. I think it is great fun even though impossible to believe. Despite the stepfather's disguise of beard, side-whiskers, tinted glasses and whispery voice surely the girl would recognise the man she lives with every day? The girl tells her story to Holmes in a clear, intelligent way so is obviously not stupid enough to fall for such a callous trick? Holmes even says to her upon hearing her story – 'You have made your statement very clearly'.

But then, fiction doesn't have to be completely believable does it? Are books not meant to be our escape from the all-to-believable realities of modern life?

I really like the line Holmes says to Watson at the start – 'Life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent.' I think this may have inspired my opening line in Barefoot but actually didn't realise this until reading the story again today – :

'Life in all its complexities is stranger than any fiction and full of so many intricate twists and turns that we sometimes lose track of ourselves, of who we really are.'

Isn't it strange how lines from Holmes stories become so familiar to us that they just become part of our everyday phraseology without us even realising? Or am I just strange like that?

Anyway, other points of interest about this story are that the reader is left in no doubt as to the extent of Holmes' success both in England and internationally. Watson remarks early on how Holmes is a 'Helper to everybody who is absolutely puzzled, through three continents'. Holmes then talks of his work with the King of Bohemia and the reigning family of Holland. Holmes also tells Watson that he has twelve cases on the go – so clearly business is booming!

Quite unusually I think, Holmes is so enraged by the stepfather's behaviour and the lack of official action which can be taken as no actual law has been broken, that he goes to whip him with his hunting crop. This seems to be an uncharacteristically emotive action from such a cold and reasoned man. Holmes does have hidden depths of emotion and exploring those in my own novel was an absorbing task.

My only problem with the story however, is that Holmes doesn't tell poor Mary the truth and I imagine that she carried on staying true to the non-existent Mr Angel into her old age. How strange that Holmes cared enough to want to whip the man who duped her, but not enough to tell her truth?

For this reason, I can't give the story any higher than a 6 out of 10 despite enjoying it very much until the last page.

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11. Observance of Trifles (Brian Keith Snell)

The Mystery of the First Case of Catfishing

On it's face, **A Case Of Identity** is a trifle, a *curio*, a minor piece of the Canon.

It has been adapted *far* less frequently than most **Holmes** stories, especially compared to other stories from **Adventures**, which would seem to indicate a fairly low level of interest. It is quite short. There is no crime involved. Holmes never leaves the confines of **Baker Street**--no disguises, no derring-do. There are no great revelations about Holmes' or Watson's pasts. It's not too much of a mystery--Holmes has solved it well before **Miss Mary Sutherland** even finishes her story. And let's be honest--the title is a bit of a *giveaway*, isn't it?

But we shouldn't be too quick to dismiss A Case Of Identity, for there are, as Holmes would put it, some areas of interest.

I think a tendency many readers have, upon reading **ACOI** the first time, is scoff at how *unlikely* it all seems. She allows herself to be wooed *by her own step-father*, and doesn't recognize him? She was familiar enough with his handwriting that he had to conceal it, but tinted glasses and bushy whiskers and a "*hoarse voice*" were enough to disguise him? Even if she is short-sighted? How blind

is she?

We have to remember that convincing disguises have a long history as a literary device. Holmes declares it "*an old idea*." All the way back to the ancient Greek theater, the Bible, Shakespeare... literature is replete with examples of disguises that just shouldn't work: kings disguising themselves as commoners, women dressing as men, "*bed tricks*." Even Sherlock Holmes is consistently able to fool **Watson**, who certainly should be expecting to have his friend turn up in astonishing disguises.

Compared with the goings-on of, say, **Twelfth Night**, or **Ahab**, or **Chaucer**, Mary not recognizing her step-father isn't terribly out of line--at least for a literary work.

The other issue about the disguise, and how Mary is taken in by it, is that the concept could fit very well into 21st century life. When I first read this story in the 1970s, I scoffed at the likelihood of it. 40 years later, though? I'd wager that all of us know someone who is in a relationship with someone they met online, a situation fraught with the chances of falling for someone who isn't really what they seem.

"**Catfish**" has become the well-known term for the situation where someone uses a false online identity to start a relationship with another person. We've had a movie and a television series based on the concept.

We've even had a major college athlete tell us the devastating story of the death of his girlfriend, only to have it turn out that she never really existed--he was being hoaxed in an online relationship (although some feel he may have been in on it).
Folks, *that's* a case of identity if ever there was one. Aspects of many of the Holmes stories have, of course, become dated over 120+ years; but in many ways, A Case Of Identity is *more* relevant to our culture now than it was in its own time, and perhaps well overdue for someone to adapt it into a modern context.

The other major area of interest is the huge *ethical* decision Sherlock Holmes made. Acknowledging that, legally, there is nothing he can do, Holmes allows Windibank to go...and he decides NOT to tell Mary Sutherland the truth!!

I have to say, I strongly disagree with this decision, on several grounds.

First, Miss Sutherland is Sherlock's *client*. Granted, as Holmes is the *first* private consulting detective, the ethical guidelines of his profession surely aren't set. Still it seems fairly clear to me--she hired him, and unless she turns out to be an evil murderess manipulating Holmes to recover the **Maltese Falcon** while she double-crosses him, Holmes' duty should be to her.

Secondly, if you argue that Holmes' first duty is to justice, it seems unclear how allowing **Windibank's** scheme to go on could serve that goal. The deception is *"as cruel and selfish and heartless a trick in a petty way as ever came before me*," and "*there never was a man who deserved punishment more.*" Yet since legal sanctions weren't available, why not at least unveil his scheme to Miss Sutherland? Why allow the cruel and selfish and heartless scheme to go on?

Holmes is certain that Windibank "*will rise from crime to crime until he does something very bad, and ends on a gallows*;" letting him off scot free seems more likely to allow him to reach that dangerous point.

Consider--at the very least, by keeping Mary in the dark, Windibank will continue to *"have the use of*" her annual £100 for a decade. And one can imagine that, as the 10 years draws near (or Mary becomes restive), a mysterious postcard or telegram would arrive, from an unknown origin, that would be enough to rekindle her devotion to **Hosmer Angel**. At the very least, letting Mary know the truth would deprive him the use of her income, and cause her to leave that awful, awful home.

Finally, Holmes' casual dismissal that "*she will not believe me*" is unpersuasive, especially as Holmes has substantial evidence and, *a witness to Windibanks' confession* in Watson. To follow that with an Persian proverb that it might be too dangerous to let her know simply means that Holmes is being far too *patronizing* and *paternalistic*.

Nothing drives me more nearly insane than the "*we can't tell **X** the truth*" meme that crops up in fiction. The patronizing "*he can't handle the truth*," the condescending "*we know better than she does what's best for her life*," are infantilizing attitudes that do no justice to the people supposedly being "*protected*." More information is *always* better than less, and it is disappointing (although perhaps not surprising given the culture he arises from) that Sherlock Holmes believes that it is better a victim continues to be victimized, than to "*traumatize*" her by telling her the truth. Trust in her, and give her the choice--that's the correct action.

In fairness, I can see alternate sides of the argument, too. Maybe Mary Sutherland would be so traumatized by the truth, she goes on a *killing spree*, slaughtering her mother and her father-in-law. Or, perhaps by thwarting Windibank's plan, the truth would merely set him on a faster pace towards a gallows-worthy crime. As he already goes to the bank to withdraw the quarterly interest payment for Mary, he presumably could continue doing so if she were suddenly imprisoned--*or worse*--by the cad. So revealing the truth might drive him to desperate, more harmful measures. I don't think it would happen, especially if Holmes let it be known he would be watching very carefully. But I concede the possibility, even though I still say "Tell her, dammit!"

This isn't the last time that Holmes will take justice into his own hands, raising serious ethical concerns. But none will feature decisions so egregiously wrong, in my opinion.

So, for such a minor story, attracting so little interest from adapters, A Case Of Identity sure raises a number of cultural and ethical issues for contemplation. Which is why it's really *not* a minor story.

OTHER TRIFLES AND OBERSERVATIONS

** Let us not forget, Mary Sutherland's *unnamed mother* was part and parcel of this icky plan. "**Mother**" was all in favor of the betrothal, and the swearing of eternal loyalty, and encouraged the hasty wedding. She "*was even fonder of [Hosmer] than*" Mary. *EEEEWWWWWW!* Mother was all in favor of breaking her daughter's heart and keeping her from having healthy relationships, just so she could get access to Mary's money. And if it involved her younger husband's pitching woo to Mary, go for it. ***EEEEEEWWWWWWWWW!!!!!!!!***

All the more reason, I would think, for Holmes to reveal the truth and get Mary out of that vile little house.

** How much money did the Windibanks *need*?

As our handy chart reminds us, even if her father's plumbing business was undervalued when sold, the Windibanks received **£4700**...or roughly *47 years worth* of Mary's bequest from **Uncle Ned**.

Granted, running the household certainly might require more than £100 pounds per year. But Windibank also had his position as a traveling wine merchant. So unless there were substantial debts, bad investments, or terribly expensive habits, it's hard to see why Mr. & Mrs. Windibank so desperately need to keep control of Mary's income.

There's not much point in "*a man marrying a very much older woman than himself for her money*," if immediately afterwards he needs to rob the daughter's piggy bank. Was there less money than he thought, or did he have outrageous expenses?

** The Most Misleading Book Cover Ever?

** Watson's practice sure seems to have it's ups and downs. In The **Red-Headed League**--which takes place ***after*** this story--John declares, "*I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing."* Yet during this case, he tells us ,"*A professional case of great gravity was engaging my own attention at the time, and the whole of next day I was busy at the bedside of the sufferer*."

Sounds as if the practice *had* been absorbing, at least for one patient. Quite a swing in a short time. Perhaps in the "*case of great gravity*," the patient died, and so people decided not to patronize his practice anymore, resulting in free time for the Doctor in the later story...

** This story contains one of **Doyle's** greatest bits as prose, as Holmes declares:

> *"[L]ife is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent. We would not dare to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence. If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outré results, it would make all fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable."*

OK, it's just a wordy way of saying "*truth is stranger than fiction*." But I like it.

No *sniggering* over the image of Holmes and Watson flying out the window "hand in hand," please.

** You are challenged to use this phrase in conversation this week: "Oscillation upon the pavement always means an *affaire de coeur*."

** I'll admit, this makes me look dopey, but every time I read "Hosmer Angel," my brain transposes it to "**Homer Angel**," and I picture this as a **Simpsons** episode.

And then I picture Homer disguising himself to woo **Lisa** and get her allowance, and ***EEEEWWWWWWWWW!!!!!***

** Mostly vague allusions rather than concrete references to apocryphal cases this time, but we do have:

-- The matter of "*some delicacy*" for the reigning family of Holland, which Holmes cannot discuss with Watson, for which Holmes was rewarded with a dazzling ring

-- An "*intricate matter from Marseilles*." Some have speculated that since Windibank traveled to France for his wine business, perhaps Holmes was already investigating his misdeeds

-- **The Dundas Separation Case**--in which the husband took out his false teeth after every meal and threw them at the wife!

-- Finding the missing husband of **Mrs. Etherege**, when the police had given him up for dead.

** Holmes declaration that "*I believe that a single lady can get on very nicely upon an income of about 60 pounds*" tells us a lot the economics of Victorian London. There are a number of ways to calculate the inflation between 1888 and 2014. A straight inflation adjustment would translate £60 in 1888 to £5,800 in 2014, an amount almost certainly not enough for a single to get by "nicely" on in London today. <u>But looked at in terms of relative economic status</u> (e.g., how that income compared to others at the time), the £600 translate to a 2014 "*economic status*" of £41,000.

So, that would be probably be "very nicely."