

The Bilge Pump

Vol. 03, No. 11 - November, 2015
*The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the
Barque Lone Star*



From the Editors: A compilation of various topics for you this month. Steve & Walt

December 6th Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Sunday, December 6th, at LA MADELEINE COUNTRY FRENCH CAFE, in Addison.

The restaurant is at 5290 Belt Line Rd #112, just east of the Tollway.

We will be reading "The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk."

The quiz will cover this tale.

Each monthly meeting will also include toasts as well as general business, introductions, and general fellowship.

November 1st Meeting

There were 19 in attendance at the monthly meeting. Don Hobbs gave the Opening Remarks in a Toast to "Boscombe Valley and Oleo" (see page 2).

The quiz was given and ended in a tie between Cindy and Sandra. (Again.)

Steve gave a presentation of Sherlock by the Numbers detailing the shortest and longest stories and novels in the canon. It was noted that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short stores got shorter as he got older bringing up the discussion of various possible reasons (boredom with the character, etc.)

A discussion also ensued relating the "canon" of Sir Arthur to the Holy Bible which also is called the canon and believed to be inspired by God and closed to additional public revelation.

Tim Kline gave a brief update of ordering new badges for the society. The cost will be approximately \$9.00 per badge.

We were also reminded to sign up for the Christmas card exchange if we are interesting in getting a card and giving a Sherlockian/Victorian card.

The Sherlock Holmes symposium will take place next Saturday between 9 am and 3 pm at the Allen Public Library. We got a write-up in the Dallas Morning News about the upcoming symposium. Members are reminded to wear their Sherlock ID clothing.

Stu reminded folks that the series "The Librarian" which is on Sunday night on USA will air an episode called Moriarty tonight.

Steve Mason closed the meeting with a reading from the Baker Street Journal from October 1959 entitled "Arthur Conan Doyle, the anniversary of his 100th birthday" (page 3).

Thanks to Cindy for taking the minutes of the cruise. The full minutes are posted on our webpage at: <http://www.dfw-sherlock.org/log-of-the-crew.html>

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

You can follow us on Twitter at: @barquelonestar

You can friend us on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/BarqueLoneStar>



Who dunnit:



Third Mate
Helmsman
Spiritual Advisors

Secretaries
Historian
Webmaster

Steve Mason
Walter Pieper
Don Hobbs, BSI
Jim Webb
Cindy Brown, Brenda Hutchison
Pam Mason
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THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY: AN OLIO TOAST

Don Hobbs, BSI

One of the definitions of olio is: a medley or potpourri, as of musical or literary selections.

There might not be a better word to describe the characters and places in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*.

We have Ms. **Patience Moran**, but is she sister of Sebastian or is she related to Stoke Moran and that dastardly Roylott?

What about **John Turner**?

We know eventually he is a murderer.

But what of his wife, mother of poor little Alice?

Maybe she did not die young and instead ran off to become the long suffering landlady of 221B Baker Street, the Mrs. Turner mentioned by Holmes in *A Scandal in Bohemia*?

We know Boscombe Valley is a country district not far from **Ross**.



Is that namesake of Colonel Ross of *Silver Blaze* fame?

What about that place called **Hatherley Farm**?

We can only give it a one thumbs-up rating for originality, especially if Victor had anything to do the naming.

We should all know Victor Hatherley lost one of those appendages in *The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb*.

Has anyone ever heard of Mortimer Snerd?

He is the second most famous creation of the great American ventriloquist Edgar Bergen.



Bergen was likely a closet Sherlockian, likely naming Mortimer Snerd after Dr. James Mortimer.

He who introduced Holmes to the case that became known as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Care to guess Bergen's most famous creation, none other than Charles McCarthy (Charlie to his friends)!

The murdered victim in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*.

Bergen was a Sherlockian, for sure.

My wife once told me that not everything revolved around Sherlock Holmes but I told her oh yes they do.

So let's butter our bread with some oleo and raise our glasses to toast this not so original tale – at least this toast is original.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Baker Street Journal - October 1959



Last May, as in every year, the world paid tribute to the memory of a great man on the occasion of anniversary of his birth.

That man, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was a gentil knight who jostled bravely in hopeless causes which were not always lost; a bold essayer of the impossible and the incredible; an eager, questing soul whose achievements in a fantastically varied field of endeavor won him the love and admiration of all who knew him, and those as well to whom he was no more than a name and a reputation.

He was an innovator and an inventor; a crusader for bright and often quixotic ideals; a spinner of yarns—for—their—own—sake and a superlative historical novelist; a pioneer in the field of science—fiction and a versifier who was almost a poet; a champion of virtue and justice so righteous—minded that smugness lay just around the corner, and (since art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms), a dedicated spiritualist and an undedicated ophthalmologist.

He was a giant of a man in every dimension and in, every way.

We Sherlockians think first of all of Dr. Doyle as the entrepreneur who gave the light of day to the tales that Dr. Watson wrote about Sherlock Holmes.

We think of him next as an author in his own right, the wielder of a trenchant pen who created a world of fantasy verging upon fact, peopled by characters who have come alive.

At the top of the list of his heroes stand Brigadier Etienne Gerard and Professor George Edward Challenger; and close behind them are such stalwarts as Rodney Stone and Samkin Aylward, Sir Nigel Loring and Micah Clarke, Captain Sharkey and the Croxley Master.

A goodly company all: and there are few other authors who come to mind — one can think of only William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens — who invented men and women and breathed the

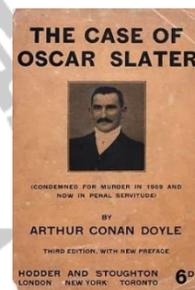
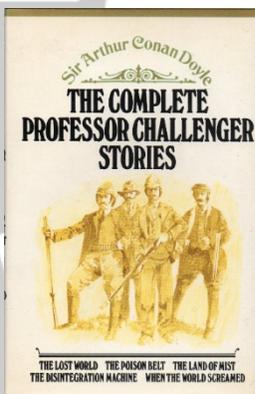
breath of life into them in quantities and qualities to stand comparison.

We may be sure that Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson read all the tales Sir Arthur wrote, and looked with interest on all the other things he did — his dogged defense of Edalji and Oscar Slater; his rationalizing of Britain's deeds in South Africa; his introduction of skiing into Switzerland; his advocacy, so many years before the time, of helmets for soldiers end of amateur assistance for Scotland Yard.

No wonder Watson turned to him for help!

It was his great good fortune, and Sherlock Holmes's, too, that such a man as Dr. Doyle should have stood beside the ménage in Baker Street as he did, and that he should have lent the glamor of his name, and the discernment of his editorial pen, to the glory of the fabled scene.

Each May, we should all ensure that our voices of praise are heard.



SHERLOCK HOLMES IN POPULAR CULTURE: THE SYMPOSIUM

On Saturday, November 7, the Crew conducted our first annual symposium, "Sherlock Holmes in Popular Culture." The event was graciously hosted by the City of Allen Public Library. A slate of wonderful speakers presented various aspects of Sherlock Holmes throughout the years.

Cindy Brown initiated the proceedings with a summary of the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, giving attendees an understanding of his personality traits and diverse life.



Don Hobbs then provided the audience a whimsical view of the Hound of the Baskervilles, focusing on the covers of the over 100 foreign editions of the novel, and how the different countries portray the Hound.

Colleen O'Connor gave participants several useful hints on writing a pastiche, as well as resources available to assist the budding writer.

Tim Kline offered the audience a view into the world of Sherlock Holmes' games throughout the years.



Dean Clark developed a wonderful radio play, complete with commercials, that the Crew performed, accompanied by sound effects.

Our featured speaker, Carole Nelson Douglas, provided a wonderful presentation on her perspective of Irene Adler, and how she reached the decision to have Adler be the focus of her series. Carole also compared the way in which Irene has been portrayed by the different movie and television shows, to the original Irene of the Canon.



Sandra Little then gave an outstanding discussion on how fandom has grown in the past few years, including the myths around the online community of Sherlock fans.

Stu Nelan provided the final presentation, in which he provided the audience with a useful understanding of societies of Sherlock Holmes, including the activities of the Crew itself.

A great thanks for all the speakers, as well as those who worked very hard to pull off the symposium, including Brenda Hutchison, Liese Sherwood-Fabre, Cindy Brown, and Rusty Mason.

BEST SHERLOCKIAN BOOKS AND DVDS OF THE YEAR

Randall Stock

Randall Stock, who maintains a wonderful catalog of the Paget illustrations, has published his list of the best Holmes and Conan Doyle books and DVDs for 2015.

"This year there were lots of good book choices and it was tough to limit the list. One that

would have been listed but is already out of print is the Catalogue of the Museum of London Exhibition, and there were several others that I could have included. As usual, I didn't have time to evaluate some items published late in the year, but will

consider those for my list next year. If you think there is something I overlooked on my 2015 list, send me an email."

The 2015 list is at:

<http://www.bestofsherlock.com/sherlock-gifts.htm#newgifts>

CREW OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR of North Central Texas

From the September, 1972 Baker Street Journal

THE CREW OF THE BARQUE LONE STAR of North Central Texas

Correspondence: Margaret F. Morris, Third Mate, 4.72 Westview Terrace, Arlington, Texas 76013.

On 11 April 1972 the Crew held an informal spring cruise at the home of the Third Mate. Twelve Crew members welcomed Stanton Garner (a "former Naval person") as expert for the Adventure of the Evening, "The Bruce-Partington Plans."

John Hudson took top honours in the quiz and to conclude the evening the crew repaired to the bar and spliced the main brace before signing the log.

At the Extraordinary Summer Cruise on 11 June, the Crew welcomed its most distinguished Reservist, John Bennett Shaw, and his charming wife Dorothy at a

sumptuous dinner at the Steak and Ale restaurant in Ft. Worth. Following modest libations, several toasts were offered.

After dinner, Mr. Shaw enlightened the Crew about certain "Dark Doings in New Mexico, or Wherefore Art Thou, James?" an account of The Brothers Three, of Moriarty. He then offered an evily inspired quiz at which honours were taken by the Third Mate.

After the signing of the Ship's Log, Lone and Steven Stavron invited the Crew to their home for champagne and dessert.

Sherlock: The Abominable Bride

Zap2It

For the first time ever, "Sherlock" is getting a same-day premiere in both the United States and the United Kingdom. PBS and "Masterpiece" announced Saturday (Oct. 24) that "Sherlock: The Abominable Bride" will premiere on New Year's Day 2016 in both the U.S. and U.K. The 90-minute special sees Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman return as Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, only this time they find themselves in 1890s London. Mary Morstan (played by Amanda Abbington), Lestrade (Rupert Graves) and Mrs. Hudson (Una Stubbs) also turn up at 221b Baker Street.

In addition to the television broadcast, a cinema screening will premiere on Tuesday, Jan. 5 with an encore Wednesday, Jan. 6, both at 7:30 p.m. local time. Theater audiences will experience 20 minutes of exclusive, additional footage which will include a guided set tour of 221B Baker Street hosted by co-writer/executive producer Steven Moffat prior to the feature, and a "making of" short film starring Benedict Cumberbatch, Martin Freeman and many more immediately following.

The fourth season of "Sherlock" will go into production in spring 2016, with an airdate that is yet to be announced. See photos from the new special below.

Fathom events has just announced which theatres will be showing Sherlock: The Abominable Wife on January 5 and 6. In the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, this includes:

Village on the Parkway 9, Addison
Galaxy Theatre, Dallas
Northpark Center 15 with IMAX and ETX, Dallas
Stonebriar 24 with IMAX, Frisco
Firewheel 18 with IMAX, Garland



17 Steps to the Stockbroker Clerk

Brad Keefauver, Sherlock Peoria

IN THE PRIME OF HIS WATSONHOOD

"I had confidence," Dr. Watson tells us, "in my own youth and energy and was convinced that in a very few years the concern would be as flourishing as ever."

After all Watson's earlier talk of what a weak and beaten man he has been since his return from the Afghan war, this statement is a refreshing change of pace. How young would one expect Watson to be as he stepped enthusiastically into his new practice? And how long would it have taken him to recover from the war?

WATSON WAS EXCITED ALL RIGHT...

Holmes greets the long absent Watson with, "I trust that Mrs. Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of the Sign of Four."

It has always struck me as odd that Watson never mentions Mary Morstan by name at any other time except during The Sign of the Four. In this tale, however, we find the statement that convinces most Sherlockians "Mary Morstan" and "Mrs. Watson" are the same person. But might there be another explanation?

What if Watson was already engaged or married at the beginning of SIGN? And what if the tale happened much as he wrote it, with the excitement of lost treasure, the excitement of a strange mini-assassin, *and* the excitement of falling in love with a pretty blonde client? There is an excitement that it might take Mrs. Watson some time to recover from, and an excitement that might drive Watson to energetically take on a new practice and distance himself from Holmes's affairs for three months.

While we'd hate to see such a moral lapse in Watson, such a

circumstance would explain much marriage (and chronological) confusion.

Should we give such a thought any credence? What evidence do we have that Watson was a faithful husband other than our own high hopes?

WHILE HOLMES CATCHES CRIMINALS, WATSON CATCHES COLD

"Summer colds are always a little trying," observes Holmes.

"I was confined to the house by a severe chill for three days last week," replies Watson.

What can we diagnose about Watson's "chill"? Common cold or something more? Was he self-confined to the house, kept in by Mrs. Watson, or was his physical condition actually bad enough to keep him down for three days? And how bad off was he to require a fire in June? If he was that ill, how is he a remarkably robust-looking fellow only a week later?

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR FEET, MEDIUM OR WELL DONE?

The soles of Watson's slippers are described as "slightly scorched," which he seemingly acknowledges is because he sat with his feet stuck out toward the fire. How close to a fire would one have to put one's feet to a fire to put visible scorch-marks on the soles of one's slippers? And what effect would that have on one's feet? If Watson had his feet directly touching the flames, could scorching occur before the heat caused him any anguish? (Kids, don't try this at home!)

DETECTIVE AND CLIENT, DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO YOUR DOOR

Holmes makes a conscious decision, upon hearing Hall Pycroft's problem, to come pick up Dr. Watson on their way to the train station.

Holmes hasn't seen Watson for three months, and he doesn't really give a reason why he wants Watson along. Is there something particular about this case that would make Holmes think he would be better for Watson's presence? Or is the detective so confident that he'll succeed brilliantly that he wants to be sure and have it written up? Was he missing his old friend, just as Watson seems to be? Or was there some other reason for Holmes's special efforts to bring Watson in on this one?

THE BEST OF TWO MEDICAL PRACTICES

Both the medical practices of Dr. Watson and his neighbor are long-established, as old as the houses themselves. Holmes decides that Watson has the better practice because his steps are worn three inches deeper than the neighbor's. Yet Watson has already told us that the previous resident's practice dropped "from twelve hundred to little more than three hundred a year" due to that doctor's condition. While it may have once been the better practice, how can Watson believe it still is? Wouldn't all of the previous doctor's missing patients have moved on to other doctors? And if location was the determiner of prosperity, surely Watson and the neighbor have equal chance on that scale, don't they? Is Holmes just making his severely flawed deduction about the worn steps just to make his friend feel good? He surely knew the steps could have just been worn by the larger size and weight of the family that lived there earlier, didn't he?

SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, WATSON?

Watson describes Hall Pycroft as "a smart young City man, of the class who have been labeled cockneys, but

who give us our crack volunteer regiments, and who turn out more fine athletes and sportsmen than any body of men in these islands."

Was Pycroft a true cockney? Or is Watson saying that he is of a class that gets called cockneys, but are actually something else? Is "cockney" a term that describes a sort of man one would not expect to be a fine soldier or athlete? Or is it strictly geographic in nature?

SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, PYCROFT?

"I used to have a billet at Coxon & Woodhouse's, of Draper Gardens, but they were let in early in the spring through the Venezuelan loan, as no doubt you remember, and came a nasty cropper."

Okay, the gist of this is that Hall Pycroft lost his job, but why exactly did he lose it?

PULLING THINGS OUT OF HIS DRAWERS

Hall Pycroft observantly observes, "I stared rather straight at the two deal chairs and one little table, which with a ledger and a waste-paper basket, made up the whole furniture." He seems very clear about it, and yet a moment later, he's saying that Arthur Pinner "took a big red book out of a drawer." Is this a lapse of observation on Pycroft's part? Or is it the thread with which we can start unraveling his story like a cheap sweater?

PARLEZ-VOUS FRANCAIS, MONSIEUR?

This big red book (big, yet small enough to fit in a drawer that was apparently attached to a small table or a deal chair) that Pinner says is a directory of Paris. He then tells Pycroft that his job is to go through it and mark off all the hardware sellers from the trades listed after the names of the people therein. Wouldn't a directory of Paris trades be in French?

Would a man of Pycroft's career and background be expected to know French?

DEFINE "HARDWARE" . . .

After first telling Hall Pycroft to find all hardware sellers in Paris for the Franco-Midland *Hardware* Company, Pinner tells Pycroft that he "will eventually manage the great depot in Paris, which will pour a flood of English crockery into the shops of a hundred and thirty-four agents in France."

Did "hardware" have a different definition back then? Or is this swerve from hardware to crockery a glitch in Pinner's tale that Pycroft should have seen through? Or was a hardware company selling crockery the same sort of sideline as the Paris furniture shops had (according to Pinner) selling crockery?

THE WELL-KNOWN NAME OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

While we're used to cases being brought to Holmes by Scotland Yard and referred by past clients, here we find a client who, when perplexed by the strange circumstance of two brothers sharing the same tooth, recognizes it as the kind of thing Sherlock Holmes handles. Does this mean that Pycroft had read A Study in Scarlet? Or did he know Holmes from some local reputation, being a city man before he headed to Birmingham? Is there some other possibility for how Pycroft knew of Sherlock?

THE POINT OF REALIZATION

In this case, we can almost pinpoint the moment Sherlock Holmes realizes what's going on, as he says to Pycroft:

"What qualities have you, my friend, which would make your services so valuable? Or is it possible that-- --" He then begins biting his fingernails and gazing blankly out the window. Is Holmes's nervous nail-biting due to the fact he knows deviltry is afoot at Mawson &

Williams and he's trapped on a train heading toward Birmingham? If so, why doesn't he send a telegram back to London the minute they arrive in Birmingham?

RUSH HOUR IN BIRMINGHAM

At seven o'clock in the evening, Holmes, Watson, and Pycroft are walking along Corporation Street in Birmingham when they see Pinner cross the street to buy a paper:

"As we watched him he looked across at a boy who was bawling out the latest edition of the evening paper, and, running over among the cabs and busses, he bought one from him."

Why were there so many cabs and busses running through Corporation Street at seven p.m.? Were people just heading home from work at that hour?

Just what was the average working day back then?

THE SKYSCRAPER AT 126B CORPORATION STREET

The offices of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company are located at 126B Corporation Street, which unlike 221B Baker Street, does not seem to mean "on the second floor of 126 Corporation Street." In fact, the offices of the FMHC are five flights up, at the very top of a winding stone staircase at the end of a passageway between two large shops. Was there a five story stone building in Birmingham located behind two shops? Were the shops and the offices part of the same building? How many five-story buildings were there in Birmingham at that time, and did stone staircases run that high?

A RARE EMOTION COMES OVER PINNER

Watson writes, of his first encounter with Pinner: "... as he looked up at us it seemed to me that I had never looked upon a face which bore such marks of grief, and of something beyond grief--of a horror

such as comes to few men in a lifetime."

We later learn that Pinner is reacting to the death of his brother -- yet many men lose brothers, parents, wives, and children during their lifetimes. Why is Pinner's horror "such as comes to few men in a lifetime"? Did he lose more than a family member with his brother's capture? Was it something other than his brother's capture, like a fear of returning to prison? Or was it just the sort of intensity of emotion that would drive one to suicide that Watson speaks of as being so rare?

THE HARD-WORKING STAFF OF THE EVENING STANDARD

Now the Smash knows something of the newspaper business, and what it takes to get news from the

keyboard to the press and out to the readers, and the work of London's Evening Standard in the case of the Mawson & Wiliam's robbery is simply amazing. The discovery of the crime occurs at 1:20 in the afternoon. At that point, the police still have to catch the criminal, drag him to jail, the Standard's reporters have to find out about it, and get the story back to the paper's offices. There it must be set in type, run off the press, bundled and distributed. As we saw earlier in the story, the train from London to Birmingham takes at least seventy minutes, at which point the papers have to get from the train to that paperboy who drags them out to Corporation Street and starts to sell them, putting one in Pinner's hands at seven-o'clock.

While this chain of events might seem very possible if the Mawson & Williams robbery were the only story the newspaper was dealing with, and had no set deadlines nor train schedules to adhere to, the addition of those factors, plus all the other little human delays involved in such a process, make this turnaround something of a wonder.

Was such a turnaround even possible? How many people's hands did the robbery news pass through between the arresting officer and the newsboy on Corporation street? What would the news cut-off deadline have been for the Evening Standard's early edition? Would this "gigantic" robbery have rated special treatment?



Victorian Apiculture

Liese Sherwood-Fabre

In the adventure, "His Last Bow," Sherlock presents Watson with a copy of his book Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen, based on the study of his own hives (1).

Doyle's description of Holmes' retirement involving an exploration of beekeeping reflected a true movement occurring in Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Beekeeping, a cottage industry dating back centuries, began to shift toward a more commercial effort as scientific research increased hive efficiency and production (2).

Until the 1800s, little change occurred in beekeeping from ancient times other than where bees were kept.

Spanish cave drawings depicted people harvesting honey from natural hives more than 8000 years ago.

At some later point, these natural hives, found places such as hollow logs, were moved (with great difficulty) to wicker beehives called skeps (3).

Because the skeps, basically upside-down baskets, offered no way to retrieve the honey except to turn the hive over and extract both it and the comb with the risk of a dangerous number of bee stings, cottage beekeepers would place the skep over burning sulfur to kill the bees before cleaning out the then-dead hive.



This practice of killing the hive provided a major impetus for the scientific study and approach to beekeeping: to find a

way to harvest honey without destroying the hive.

The first major breakthrough was the movable frame hive developed by the Reverend L. Langstroth.

While his was not the first design involving structures to manipulate comb construction, his use of scientific

observation and experimentation created the most effective model and still provides the basis for about 70% of current hive designs (4).

Instead of allowing bees to simply build the combs by attaching them to the skep's side without any organization, Langstroth's design involved hanging frames from the top of a box-shaped structure leaving a scientifically-determined distance between the frames and the box's top.

Langstroth had experimented with the spacing to discover how far apart the frames had to be to ensure the bees did not connect the comb of one frame to that of another or to glue the lid to the box (5).

Another addition to the Langstroth hive, and of particular interest to Mr. Holmes, was the queen excluder.



Despite the ability to remove the frames and harvest the honey and beeswax as it was produced, beekeepers noted only enough honey was manufactured as needed to sustain the hive.

Segregating the queen to only one section, however, caused the rest of the hive to create more honey than required for the bee population (6).

This separation was accomplished by putting a screen over the "brood comb" where the queen laid the eggs. The barrier's holes were large enough to allow worker bees to pass, but too small for the larger queen (7).

As a result of these changes, honey production was increased, hives could be preserved from one year to the next, and hives could more easily be transported to different fields for pollination.

The advent of World War I, however, derailed the scientific advancement of beekeeping. Although a

number of beekeeping associations and other related groups had made major inroads toward modernizing the rural cottagers, between a third to a half of the beekeepers still used the straw skeps, sometimes mixing them with the moveable frame hives in the same area (8).

The more humane treatment of the bees remained to be resolved until a later date.

In his retirement, Sherlock Holmes joined a great number of merchants, clergymen, and health and law professionals involved in the scientific advancement of British apiculture as they transformed a cottage industry to a more humane and scientifically-based practice.

Even in his third age, Holmes continued to contribute to the larger good.

By Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD. You can read more about this award-winning author's writing (as well as her previous articles in the Bilge Pump) and sign up for her newsletter at www.liesesherwoodfabre.com. A non-Sherlockian adventure can be downloaded at: <http://www.liesesherwoodfabre.com/extras.html>

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- 2) Ebert, Adam Wayne, "Hive society: the popularization of science and beekeeping in the British Isles, 1609 -1913" (2009). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Paper 10587. (<http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1611&context=etd>)
- 3) <http://beeswales.co.uk/en-GB/History-of-beekeeping>
- 4) <http://beeswales.co.uk/en-GB/History-of-beekeeping>
- 5) Ebert, Adam Wayne, "Hive society: the popularization of science and beekeeping in the British Isles, 1609 -1913" (2009). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Paper 10587, pages 77-78.
- 6) Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis, page 124
- 7) The Bear Guarding the Beehive, page 11
- 8) Ebert, Adam Wayne, "Hive society: the popularization of science and beekeeping in the British Isles, 1609 -1913" (2009). Graduate Theses and Dissertations. Paper 10587, Page 220



SHERLOCK HOLMES, PRO AND CON: THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS PRIVATE CONSULTING DETECTIVE LIVES ON

TERRY TEACHOUT

Since our recent symposium focused on Sherlock Holmes in Popular Culture, this article provides a good commentary on the popularity of Holmes. Thanks to Dean for providing this.

Is there a character in 19th-century prose fiction who remains more familiar to the general public than Sherlock Holmes?

While Captain Ahab, Lewis Carroll's Alice, Count Dracula, Huckleberry Finn, Jekyll and Hyde, Ebenezer Scrooge, and Uncle Tom are still widely known by name, most of them are well on the way to becoming symbolic figures who are better known as concepts (and as TV and movie characters) than as creations of literary art.

Yet the world's first private consulting detective lives on, not only as embodied by Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller on television but on paper as well.

When last I looked, the paperback edition of The Complete Sherlock Holmes ranked No. 5,650 in sales on Amazon, a more than respectable figure for two fat volumes of novels and short stories originally published between 1887 and 1921 by an author whose other books are forgotten.

The most important element of the appeal of the Holmes stories is the personality of their principal character, closely followed by his relationship with his amanuensis.

One can scarcely conceive of a more fitting tribute to the enduring popularity of Holmes and

Dr. Watson, his slightly dense but nonetheless lovable roommate-amanuensis, than The Big Book of Sherlock Holmes Stories,¹ a new collection of Holmes stories—homages, pastiches, parodies, spoofs—written by authors other than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Painstakingly and imaginatively compiled by Otto Penzler, the proprietor of New York's Mysterious Bookshop and a noted authority on mystery and crime fiction, this tombstone-sized volume contains 83 stories by writers who are by turns famous (Kingsley Amis, Stephen King) and known only to aficionados (Dorothy B. Hughes, Hugh Kingsmill). Some are maladroit imitations, but not a few are so well crafted as to be virtually indistinguishable from the real thing.

A Holmes fan not comprehensively familiar with the canon would be hard-pressed, for instance, to spot this passage from Vincent Starrett's "The Unique 'Hamlet,'" written in 1920, as a fake:

"Affluent, yes," said Holmes with a mischievous twinkle, "but not exactly a banker, Watson. Notice the sagging pockets, despite the excellence of his clothing, and the rather exaggerated madness of his eye.

He is a collector, or I am very much mistaken."

What may in the end be most interesting about The Big Book of Sherlock Holmes, though, is the mere fact of its existence. Other fictional characters, prominent among them Ian Fleming's James Bond, have been recycled by later writers, but Holmes's posthumous life (so to speak) outstrips that of any of his competitors.

Indeed, there are by now far more ersatz Holmes stories than original ones. And while it is amusing to see how the likes of Ring Lardner and P.G. Wodehouse went about resuscitating him, anyone who picks up Penzler's book, fascinating as it is, will more than likely be inspired to return to "The Red-Headed League" or The Sign of the Four instead of digging deeper among the lesser apocrypha.

What keeps Sherlock Holmes alive? As is customarily the case with serial literature, the most important element of the appeal of the Holmes stories is the personality of their principal character, closely followed by his relationship with his amanuensis. Saturnine, sardonic, and inexplicably indifferent to women, rational to a fault yet afflicted by an ennui so profound that he must resort to cocaine in order to dispel

it, Holmes is the very model of an English eccentric, exotic everywhere but in his native land.

To have created him was a considerable feat of the romantic imagination. To have paired him with Dr. Watson, the retired army surgeon who narrates all but a handful of the stories, was a stroke of something not unlike genius.

It is Watson's phlegmatic good humor that roots the fantastic adventures of Holmes and his clients in the quotidian world of Victorian London, thereby making them as quintessentially British as H.M.S. Pinafore, Barchester Towers, or hot buttered crumpets and jam. What makes the stories rereadable long after we have their plots by heart is the byplay of the two men, as well as Doyle's charming descriptions of life in the Baker Street flat that they share:

But with me there is a limit, and when I find a man who keeps his cigars in the coal-scuttle, his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper, and his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very centre of his wooden mantelpiece, then I begin to give myself virtuous airs.

Yet there is more to the Holmes stories than charm. I suspect that most modern-day readers first encounter them, as I did, in childhood. They were not written for children, however, and to read them today is to see at once that they are direct reflections of the contemporary response to such shocking crimes as the "Jack the Ripper" murders, which took place in 1888, two years after Conan Doyle wrote *A Study in Scarlet*, the first Holmes story.

Conan Doyle is not known ever to have commented on Jack the Ripper. Still, he would have read about the murderer's widely reported activities, just as he was well aware of the sordid poverty of East London, which is portrayed in "The Man with the Twisted Lip," whose title character operates out of an East End opium den located in "a vile alley...between a slop-shop and a gin-shop." Indeed, some of the most modern-sounding passages in the Holmes stories are their grisly descriptions of crime scenes, which foreshadow the blood-soaked police-procedural TV series of today.

This points to another source of Holmes's perennial appeal, which is that he is, in common with most other fictional detectives of the 19th and early-20th centuries, a fundamentally reassuring presence, one whose phenomenal crime-solving abilities remind us that the encroaching disorder of the world around us need not be irresistible. Small wonder, then, that the Holmes stories were so successfully filmed in Hollywood during World War II, with Basil Rathbone's Holmes transformed into a hunter of Nazi spies.

Nor have the residents of 221B Baker Street come close to wearing out their welcome. In addition to an endless string of further film adaptations, two hit TV series—the BBC's *Sherlock* and CBS's *Elementary*—have transplanted Holmes and Watson to present-day London and New York, altering them as needed to accommodate the pop-culture obsessions of our own time (and, in the case of *Elementary*, turning Watson into a sexy Asian woman).

The popularity of these adaptations demonstrates the archetypal aspect of Conan Doyle's original characters, whose idiosyncrasies remain recognizable no matter how radical the change in setting. Whether Holmes stimulates his psyche with a 7-percent solution of injectable cocaine or the trendier nicotine patches favored in *Sherlock*, he remains the same chilly-souled master of ratiocination that he was in the days of Queen Victoria.

It is, however, one thing to create a permanently memorable character and another to write fiction of permanent interest about him. That the Holmes stories have remained readable is self-evident, but this is not proof of their literary merit, about which their author harbored no illusions:

The best literary work is that which leaves the reader better for having read it. Now, nobody can possibly be the better—in the high sense in which I mean it—for reading *Sherlock Holmes*, although he may have passed a pleasant hour in doing so.

Conan Doyle's own objection to the stories, and to detective stories in general, was that "they only call for the use of a certain portion of one's imaginative faculty, the invention of a plot, without giving any scope for character drawing." In fact, though, this objection comes close to inverting the truth about *Sherlock Holmes*. To be sure, the puzzles that he solves are clever enough, but their cleverness exhausts itself on first reading. It is Holmes the character that fascinates us—and it is his failure to develop other than superficially that is the principal weakness of

the stories, above all when they are read in bulk.

Anyone who returns to the Holmes stories in adulthood after having put them aside for half a lifetime, as I recently did in writing this essay, will be forcibly struck by this weakness. For the Holmes and Watson of *A Study in Scarlet*, it turns out, are already fully developed as personalities.

While we learn a certain number of new things about them in the tales that follow, they do not grow, nor does their relationship alter in any significant way. Similarly, they remain fixed in time and thus never grapple with the complicating problems of modernity (except in “His Last Bow,” a 1917 story that shows us Holmes and Watson on the eve of World War I).

While this perpetual sameness is generally taken to be part of the charm of the Holmes stories, readers who expect more out of literature than mental comfort food are more likely to find that it palls quickly. Conan Doyle certainly did. One of the most noteworthy features of the stories is the sharp decline that sets in after the publication in 1892 of the first collection, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

The excellence of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), the third and best of the four Holmes novels, suggests that he may have

felt constricted by the short-story format, in which he was rarely able in later years to do more than reshuffle his own clichés (“It was pleasant to Dr. Watson to find himself once more in the untidy room of the first floor in Baker Street which had been the starting-point of so many remarkable adventures”).

Whatever the reason, he was unable to maintain the quality of the series, and one suspects that the underlying problem was that he was not interested enough in Holmes and Watson themselves.

In addition, though, Conan Doyle had to contend with the larger limitation of melodrama, which is its narrowly restrictive subject matter. An intelligently written mystery story or crime novel may use the conventions of genre fiction to explore other aspects of modern life, but in the end, somebody always gets killed, just as a popular song, no matter how good it may be, is always three minutes long.

In saying this, it is not my purpose to demean pop culture: I believe, for instance, that most of the best movies made in America in the 20th century were crime dramas, Westerns, and screwball comedies. But there is more to life than murder and wisecracks, just as there is more to love than what can be said within the compass of a 32-bar ballad.

Taken one by one, the best of the Holmes stories contrive up to a point to circumvent this limitation. Yet I find it impossible to imagine, as F.R. Leavis said of the novels of Thomas Peacock, that they will have “a permanent life as light reading—indefinitely rereadable—for minds with mature interests.”

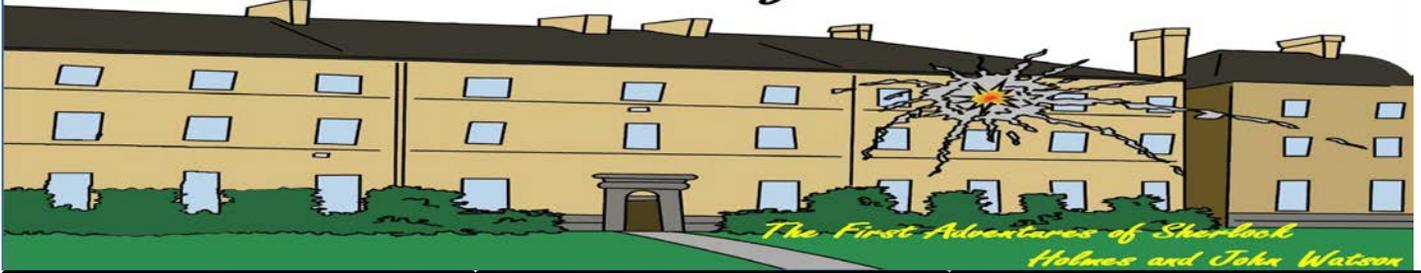
Christopher Morley came closer to the point when he described them as a “great encyclopedia of romance,” and to praise them in that way is to leave no doubt of where they fall short. When a great poet uses the conventions of romantic literature to plumb the infinite complexities of human nature, the result is *The Tempest*. When a talented commercial writer does so, the result is “*The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb*.”

Yes, Sherlock lives on—and on. Very likely he will continue to do so for decades more to come, if only in the form of the small-screen anti-heroes who have introduced him to a new generation of non-readers who prefer TV to books.

But his survival proves only that Conan Doyle knew better than any other popular writer of his generation how to tell his customers what they wanted to hear. That doesn’t make the Holmes stories classic—merely memorable.

Baker Street Elementary

Created by Joe Fog,
Rusty & Steve Mason



Baker Street Elementary
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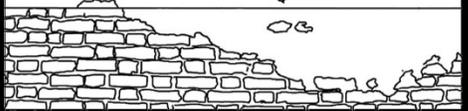
By Ron & Alan

ARE YOU MAD AT ME, SHERLOCK? YOU ARE STILL THE SMARTEST PERSON I KNOW. IT'S JUST IGNATIUS IS GOOD AT SPORTS. HE IS THE CAPTAIN OF THE FOOTBALL, GOLF, AND CRICKET TEAMS, AND HAS TAKEN UP BOXING AND SKIING.

WITH ALL HIS ATHLETIC PROWESS, HOW WELL DO YOU THINK THE GREAT IGNATIUS WOULD BE AT SINGLE STICK?

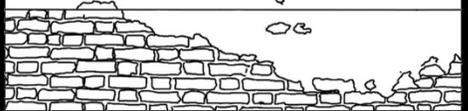
DO I NOTE A HINT OF JEALOUSY?

IGNATIUS IS BATTING NOW...



THWACK !!

...O-O-O-H-H!!!



...A-A-A-H-H!!!

...eek!

ADVISE ME WHEN YOU CHALLENGE IGNATIUS TO SINGLE STICK, SO I CAN WARN THE SCHOOL NURSE OF INCOMING...

