

# The Bilge Pump

Vol. 07, No. 11 - November, 2019  
*The Irregular Publication of the Crew of the  
Barque Lone Star - founded April, 1970*



## PLEASE NOTE:

### December 01 06 Meeting

#### NOTICE

The next meeting will be held on **Sunday, December 01**, at 1:00 pm. At **TWO GUYS FROM ITALY**, in Dallas.

The restaurant is at 11637 Webb Chapel Road, Dallas, just south of LBJ Freeway.

We will be reading "**The Red-Headed League**." The quiz will cover this tale.

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

## September 01 Summary

There were 19 in attendance at the meeting. Karen Wilson toasted the oft-misunderstood Character of the Canon (see page 3).

The Crew then took a quiz on "A Scandal in Bohemia," which was won by Karen Olson, with Ann Caddell taking second place.

We discussed the movie night at Half Price Bookstore on November 15.

We were honored to have two special guests - Bonnie MacBird and Julie McKuras.

Julie talked about the Sherlockian archives at the University of Minnesota, the largest collection of Sherlockiana in the Country.

Bonnie MacBird provided a wonderful reading from her latest book, "The Devil's Due".

We closed the meeting with a reading (by Cindy Brown) from the Spring 2011 Baker Street Journal, "Dream the Impossible" (page 4).

Thanks to Cindy Brown for recording a summary of the meeting, which can be found on our website, [www.dfw-sherlock.org](http://www.dfw-sherlock.org).



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

You can follow us on Twitter at: @barquelonestar

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

## Who dunnit:



Third Mate  
Helmsman  
Spiritual Advisors  
  
Secretaries  
Historian  
Webmaster

Steve Mason  
Walter Pieper  
Don Hobbs, BSI  
Jim Webb  
  
Cindy Brown, Brenda Hutchison  
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## Our Website:

[www.dfw-sherlock.org](http://www.dfw-sherlock.org)



*"That will await him when he enters port," said he, chuckling. "It may give him a sleepless night. He will find it as sure a precursor of his fate as Openshaw did before him."*

*"And who is this Captain Calhoun?"*

*"The leader of the gang. I shall have the other."*

*"How did you trace them, then?"*

*"He took a large sheet of paper from his pocket.*

*"I have spent the whole day," said he, "over in January and February in '83. There were attracted my attention, since, although it was*

*"Texas, I think."*

*"I was not and am not sure which; but I know*

*"What then?"*

*"Forsake all the Thieves around me, and I am*

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**World of Sherlock Holmes**  
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**THE MAY MEETING**

Date: Sunday, May 7, 2017  
Time: 1:00 p.m.  
The next meeting will be held at LA MADELEINE COUNTRY FRENCH CAFE, in Addison. The restaurant is at 5299 Bell Line Rd #122, just east of the following:

McGill's Bookstore "The Adventures of the Monogram Builders" The Monogram Builders

**A SHERLOCK HOLMES LITERARY SOCIETY**  
Monthly meetings every 1st Sunday @ 1pm  
La Madeleine Country French Café

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# "A MISUNDERSTOOD CHARACTER"

Karen Olson

Born to a bitch of uncertain ancestry.  
Ripped from your mother's breast  
By a cruel and greedy hand.  
Separated from parents and siblings.

Never to become a cherished friend or  
loyal protector.

Never allowed a place  
by the fire on a cold  
winter night.

Never to wade into a  
cool stream on a  
hot summer day.

Never to know the  
gentle touch of love  
and care.

Taught angry lessons  
enforced by the  
boot and the rod.

Groomed to be feared and hated by  
all.

Tarted up like some demented  
painted lady.  
Denied healthy provisions but growing  
up to be strong and lean.

Forced into a role you never asked for  
nor deserved, Like  
some misunderstood  
Frankenstein's monster.  
When your end came  
and the bullet pierced  
your heart, Was it a  
relief to be freed from  
the heartless torture?  
To rest forever,  
undisturbed beneath  
the moors of Devon?

Let us drink a  
posthumous toast to  
the hound of the Baskervilles...



# "DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE" (EXTRACT)

Steven Rothman, Editor, BSJ, Spring 2011, Vol 60, No. 3

Without Watson we would have no Canon. We all accept the truth of this and of his reliability (even though we include a few stories with other narrators).

Still our knowledge of how Watson acted and reacted when Holmes was not present is limited; even rarer are those scenes where Watson is not only the reporter but, in the Holmesian sense, the observer.

The two that come quickest to mind are the early chapters in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* when Watson sends his reports to Holmes who remains, so we have been told, in London, and in the beginning of "The Empty House" where Watson, to borrow from *Without a Clue*, becomes Watson, The Crime Doctor.

Watson tells us, in "The Empty House," "I even attempted more than once for my own private satisfaction to employ [Holmes's] methods..."

He clearly recounts the facts of the case as known, and of his examination, along with "a group of loafers," of the area surrounding the house in which the Honorable Ronald Adair was found dead.



This is as far as we see the workings of The Crime Doctor because, when he returns to his Kensington home, Watson is interrupted by "the strange old book-collector," Holmes in disguise, ready to tell his old friend the good news.

Of course, with Holmes once more about, Watson's crime-solving skills are no longer required.

Still we wonder if, just once, we might have been permitted a glimpse of the sidekick saving the day, clearly he could not have solved the Adair murder, which required previous knowledge of air-gun-wielding, tree-climbing, tiger-hunting colonels, not something Watson would have had under his hat.

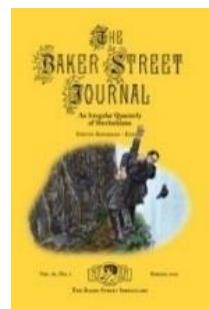
It is the hints of scenes we never will see, as much as those so familiar that we can recite them by heart, that draw us again and again to Doctor Watson and Sherlock Holmes.

We hold such things dear along with the hints of a Watson—brighter, stronger—than any we shall ever know.

The Baker Street Journal continues to be the leading Sherlockian publication since its founding in 1946 by Edgar W. Smith.

With both serious scholarship and articles that "play the game," the Journal is essential reading for anyone interested in Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and a world where it is always 1895.

Got to: <http://www.bakerstreetjournal.com/itemsforsale/subscriptions.html> for subscription information.



# UPCOMING CONFERENCES

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**"Sherlock Holmes Birthday -- The BSI Weekend"**

January 15-19, 2020 – New York City, NY

<https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/bsi-weekend/>



**"221b Con – A Fan Con for all Things Sherlock Holmes"**

April 3-5, 2020

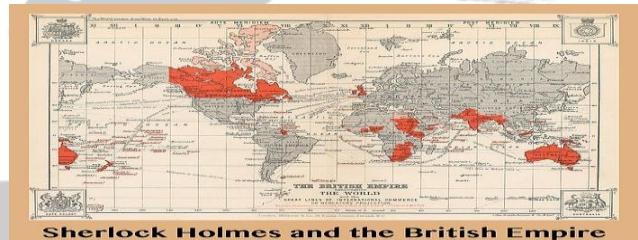
<https://www.221bcon.com/>



**"Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire"**

July 17-19, 2020 -- Bear Mountain Inn, NY

<https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/2019/08/03/bsi-2020-conference-dates/>



**"Holmes in the Heartland"**

July 24-26, 2020 -- St. Louis, MO

<https://parallelcasestl.wixsite.com/home/holmes-in-the-heartland>



# SEVENTEEN STEPS TO "THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE"

Brad Keefauver, Sherlock Peoria

Seventeen thoughts for further ponderance of "The Red-Headed League" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

## WHO GETS THE SETTEE?

Who do the Hounds think wound up in the settee?

Watson or Wilson?

I always assumed it was Wilson, but a careful re-re-reading after that question changed my mind.



Wilson only \*half\* rose from his seat.

He would have had to rise all the way to change to the settee.

Watson, on the other hand, was dithering as to whether he should remain.

So, of course, Holmes suggests the settee, which is far more polite than telling him to "Sit down, already!"

\*\*\*\*\*

## THAT ELDERLY REDHEAD

Had Wilson retained his hair color to an elderly age, or is Watson, still fairly young at this point, over-exaggerating Wilson's elderliness?

Or was "elderly" younger back then than it is now?

A little of each, I suspect.

I do know people who've retained their hair color into their 70's, and I suspect that anything over 50 would have been considered elderly back then.

\*\*\*\*\*

## PHOTO STUDY OF A PAWN SHOP

So, what was he taking pictures of?

Nothing.

I'm sure that he told Wilson that he took the pictures on his day off (Sunday) when the store would have been closed.

And he no doubt came up with some reason or other why the pictures didn't come out well enough to be shown.

Or he had a stack of pictures of birds, flowers, scenery, etc., that he'd taken and developed in the past to show Wilson.

After all, the latter gentleman was not brightest bulb in the chandelier, and he seemed to be able to believe almost anything.

He wasn't even curious enough to ask to see the photographic setup in his own basement!

\*\*\*\*\*

## IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN

During the boredom of his daily copying routine, wouldn't you expect Wilson to wonder about the rest of the league, spread across London in individual offices, copying away?

But Wilson wasn't too swift, and the pay was so good for so little work, that he wasn't about to rock any boats by questioning the arrangements.

An enterprising fellow like Wilson, looking to move up in the League to a Duncan Ross level position.

I doubt that advancement ever entered Wilson's mind.

I'm sure Clay knew that.

If Wilson were the curious type who went beyond the surface of what

he was told, (and remember, he never looked in his basement for three months to see what Clay's equipment looked like), Clay would have had to use some other method altogether.

If Wilson had suddenly developed a bump of curiosity, I fear that Clay would have buried him in that same cellar and told anyone who inquired that Wilson had sold him the shop -- at least up until the day of the robbery.

\*\*\*\*\*

## JONES'S NAPOLEON OF CRIME

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



Now, that's a pretty impressive testimonial from Inspector Peter Jones . . . at least until we hear Holmes tell Watson that Jones is "an absolute imbecile in his profession."

If Jones is that stupid, can Clay be quite so clever?

Well, Holmes says Clay is the fourth smartest man in London.

Even a stopped watch is right twice a day, after all, and Jones may also just be repeating what he's heard from others in the police.



And as we'll learn in a future story, a certain mathematics professor is operating behind the scenes in London's criminal world, helping the common criminal look much brighter than he was.

So what is the Hounds' verdict on Clay?

Criminal genius or candidate for a COPS episode with Moriarty's help?

From the wording of Holmes' description of Clay's activities, I suspect he's rather high in Moriarty's organization; there are certain parallels of phrasing.

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#### GYPSY EAR-PIERCERS STRIKE!

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

Was this a valid Victorian excuse for having pierced ears?

Did lads often run off to see the gypsies and get their ears pierced?

Was there any truth to it, or was it a fanciful tale covering some darker ear-piercing secret . . . and what would that be, anyway?

John Clay was very likely born on the wrong side of the blanket, quite likely to a servant on the estate of his father's family.

He wasn't one of The Family, so was allowed to run somewhat wild, hence the experience with the gypsies.

He was, however, provided with an education once he was old enough to be hard to ignore; he probably resembled his father or grandfather a great deal.

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#### THE LEAGUE RULES AND THE MEN WHO OBEY THEM (BARELY)

Okay, Hounds, be honest.

Your business, like Wilson's, can spare you from ten to two each day, without affecting your income.

You get offered \$500 American per week and a berth in the Red-headed League, with all the League's rules.

Do you take it?

And if you do, how many sheets of paper do you show up with on the first day?

IMHO, the rules were set up to need red-headed men who needed help.

If you are making a good living otherwise, why would you take this boring job in the first place?

If you need the money, you might well be willing to do anything legal, however idiotic.

After all, anyone who's worked for someone else has been asked to do something idiotic now and then anyhow.

If I took the job, I'd show up with more than seven sheets of paper, since I'm sure that I could fill more than less than a single sheet in a half hour, which is all that Wilson allowed.

I haven't hand written anything more than a note or a shopping list in so long that I have no idea how much I could fill, but IIRC, I went through a lot of pages in a blue book in a one-hour exam in college.

True, Wilson may not have written as fast (or as messily) as I do and probably took his time checking unfamiliar words, and so forth, but seven still seems small.

I guess I'd buy a dozen and write on both sides, to start with, adjusting as I saw what time it took to do a page.



Or I'd practice on an old newspaper to time myself, if I didn't want to waste money on paper.

I've always wondered how Wilson managed to fill up "nearly a shelf" at his rate of seven sheets a day.

That's 7 sheets a day for six days a week for eight weeks, or 336 sheets.

That's very close to two thirds of a ream, and even a whole ream doesn't take up that much room..

# A TIN OF DIAMONDS

Liese Sherwood-Fabre, PhD

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle rewrote "The Crown Diamond" (originally penned as a one-act play) as the short story "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone."

The basis of the tale involves the theft of a yellow diamond, part of the British Crown Jewels.

As the story opens, Holmes shares he has determined Count Sylvius Negretto is in possession of a stolen diamond—part of the Crown Jewels that had been on public display.

The narrative describes how the detective tricks the thief into revealing where he's hidden the diamond and arranges for his arrest.

Negretto's success at having actually purloined the gem puts him above all other thieves and their attempts to steal the Crown Jewels. Colonel Blood, in 1671 came the closest to actually stealing Charles II's collection.

At that time, the Jewels consisted primarily of a crown, a scepter, an orb, spurs, an ampulla (held the oil to anoint the monarch) and a spoon (oil from the ampulla was poured into it).

Blood made friends with Edwards, the Assistant Keeper of the Jewels, who was allowed to show the collection for a fee.

After Blood overpowered the 76-year-old guard, Edwards' son made an unexpected visit to his father and caught the colonel and his cohorts with the evidence.

Blood had disguised himself as a parson and hidden the crown in his robes.

The thieves never made it out of the tower. (1)

The Jewels Blood attempted to steal had been assembled for Charles II's coronation.

Following the English Civil War and Charles I's execution, Oliver Cromwell had sold the previous Crown Jewels (some dating back more than 400 years and used in each coronation) or melted them down to mint coins.

Only the ampulla and spoon survived. (2)

Some of the gems from the previous collection were sought out, recovered, and used to adorn Charles II's regalia.

These include sapphires (one dating back to 1042), diamonds, rubies, and pearls. (3)



The Jewels played, and continue to play, important symbolic roles in the coronation ritual.

The future monarch enters Westminster Abbey, escorted by two maces (staffs representing authority), three swords (signifying mercy, spiritual justice, and temporal justice), the Great Sword of State and St. Edward's Staff.

The anointing with oil using the ampulla and spoon follows.

The sovereign is then dressed in the coronation robes and presented with spurs (indicating knighthood and chivalry) and armills (bracelets symbolizing sincerity and wisdom).

The orb (for Christian sovereignty) is placed in the right hand, then returned to the altar.

A ring is then placed on the right hand, and two scepters (one for temporal power and the other for equity and mercy) are presented.

The final act involves placing the crown on the new monarch's head. (4)

Since Charles II, different monarchs have added crowns as well as other pieces to the collection.

Altogether, the Crown Jewels consist of 140 items including additional orbs, bracelets, swords, and banqueting plate. (5)

During the London bombings in WWII, most of these items were buried in underground chambers at Windsor Castle.

Under a trap door hidden by rugs in the footman's vestibule, an old escape route led to the two chambers where the Jewels were stored.

The most valuable, however, were taken from their settings and kept in a cookie tin, ready for a quick getaway, if needed.

These included the Second Star of Africa, the largest diamond in the world; the First Star of Africa; two

additional diamonds; the Stewart sapphire; and the Black Prince's ruby.

The hiding place for these special pieces was only recently uncovered during research for a documentary on Queen Elizabeth's rise to power.

The royal librarian discovered letters detailing how the family had secreted the gems. (6)

Today, the entire collection can be viewed as part of a Tower of London tour for about \$27.



The Jewels are kept in the Jewel House behind bombproof glass and surveilled by cameras. (7)

Such current precautions represent a much more secure system than when a son's unexpected visit or the careful investigation of the world's greatest consulting detective saved the day.

(1) [http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/crown\\_jewels.htm](http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/crown_jewels.htm)

(2) <https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/trails/the-crown-jewels/the-regalia-of-charles-ii>

(3) [http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/crown\\_jewels.htm](http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/crown_jewels.htm)

(4) <https://www.royal.uk/crown-jewels>

(5) [http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/crown\\_jewels.htm](http://www.englishmonarchs.co.uk/crown_jewels.htm)

(6) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/01/13/as-the-nazis-bombed-britain-the-royals-hid-the-crown-jewels-in-the-least-likely-place/>

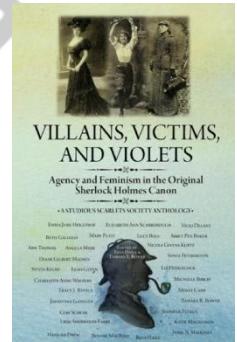
(7) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewel\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewel_House)

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](http://www.liesesherwoodfabre.com).

A non-Sherlockian adventure can be downloaded at:

<http://www.liesesherwoodfabre.com/extras.html>

Liese Sherwood-Fabre's articles on Sarah Cushing and Scandal in the Canon are now out in "Villains, Victims, and Violets," a study of feminism and agency in the original Sherlock Holmes stories. Available in paperback and eBook from BrownWalkerPress, Amazon, and Barnes and Noble.



# MIXED TEAMS IN THE CANON, OR CRIME IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Ron Lies, Chips, 05-19-2015, *Hounds of the Internet*

A question posted on the Welcome Holmes discussion site started it all. "Isn't it rare in the Canon to have a male and female act jointly for a criminal purpose?"

I came up with the following list and added some of my thoughts about the pairings. What is a team? The first definition I come to is a group of people banded together to accomplish a common goal.

But can a group of people with different reasons for being in that group be called a team? Can someone be forced by fear or blackmail to be in that group be a member of such a team?

I say yes, how about you dear reader? Let me know what you think? I would welcome your thoughts along with any pairing I missed.

1. My first pairing is Barney and Susan Stockdale in 3GAB. From the words of their employer in this case "They are good hounds who run silent."---- "They will take what comes to them. "That is what they are paid for.", All 3 of the above quotes are from Isadora Klein, their current employer. I shudder to have be the target of their services or have crossed their Employer.



2. Next is Mr. Jethro Rucastle and his second wife in COPP. This odious couple is working for the same purpose and result. A father and a stepmother working against the father's own daughter. What will their son turn to be with such parental figures to look up to?



3. Our third team is The Butler Brunton and Rachel Howells in MUSG. This duo could be proof of the old adage "Hell has no fury like a Woman scorned". Or was the outcome of the case a tragic accident? I find it hard to feel sympathy



for Brunton. Yet Brunton feeling his life dying with each breath he takes, so horrible!

4. Anna Sergius, wife of Sergius/Professor Corum and the unnamed second secretary of Professor Corum, in GOLD. He was an agent of a private detective firm who provided Anna with what she needed to break into the Professor's. Then the unnamed agent quit before he was involved any further in Anna's plot. So she is forced to go into the Professor's on her own. Blind so to speak.



5. There is Anna Sergius and Professor Corum, in GOLD. They acted together to hide Anna from discovery by Holmes and The authorities. They hated each other and wanted the other dead but they acted together for a common purpose, I wonder what would have happened if they would deceived Holmes and Authorities who have left Professor and Anna alone to their own devices.

Anna Sergius is one for which it can be said that she was in the wrong places at the wrong times. She strikes me as a female Joe Btfsplk: The world's worst Jinx (Check out the Cartoon strip Li'l Abner by Al Capp for background)

6. In the HOUN, we have Beryl Garcia, aka Vandeleur, aka Stapleton. In addition, there is Jack Baskerville aka, Vandeleur aka Stapleton. Beryl composed and sent the letter warning Sir Henry not to go to Baskerville Hall. She tries to warn who she thought was Sir Henry on the moor. Beryl seems not to be a willing participant yet she is willing to risk her life to warn a stranger?



7. Sir George Burnwell and Mary Holder are next, in the Beryl Coronet. Here are a combination of the wolf and the sheep. They are one of the best examples I know of love being blind.

8. A mean team is James Ryder and Catherine Cusack, in BLUE. To do the crime and try to pin it on an innocent party and at Christmas time!

They are my candidates for The Marley Scrooge, Snidely Whiplash award for the nastiest at Christmas Time. (For background, if needed on Whiplash see the Adventures of Dudley Do Right on the Rocky and Bullwinkle show.) If background needed on Marley and Scrooge, you have to be kidding!



9. Next up is Jonas Oldacre and his housekeeper Mrs.

Lexington, in the Norwood Builder. Talk about there being a fine line between love and hate. His housekeeper could fill in for Mrs. Danvers at Manderley. (See the novel Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier if background is required)



10. James Windibank aka Hosmer and Mrs. Windibank, in IDEN. What a pair! I have heard of evil stepparents but an evil stepfather and the victim's own mother. That is a new one on me.

11. Then there is Mrs. Eugenia Ronder and Leonardo the strong man, in VEIL. Mrs. Ronder is one for whom I have sympathy for. Holmes was extremely kind and sympathetic to her. To me, this is an example of what Holmes had learned about people over the years and how he changed.



12. We have The Lady Trelawney Hope and Eduardo Lucas, in SECO. The expression of "being caught between a rock and a hard place" fits this Lady Hope to a T. I have my suspicions about the lady herself. She showed a clever mind later on in the story. Yet for her to believe that she was being forced to steal only minor papers at the start?



13. We have Holy Peters and Annie Frasier aka Peters, aka Schlesinger, in SOLI. They are another pair of really, really, nasty people. I wonder if there has ever been a pastiche written about these two.

14. Next come the Butler Barrymore and his wife Elisa in HOUN. I imagine Barrymore as a man in a difficult situation. On one hand, he has an obligation to turn in a vicious killer, on the other destroying his wife and possibly his marriage.



15. We have Von Bork and his wife, in LAST. His wife acted as a funnel for minor papers while protected by her diplomatic immunity. Von Bork had one very bad evening.

16. Then we have Reuben Hayes and his wife in PRIO. This unnamed wife had a reputation in the neighborhood as a good person. Yet she could not do anything and would not do anything without her husband's permission for fear of her husband.



17. We have the unnamed Man, who acted as carriage driver and his equally unnamed wife in GREE. Surely, that must be a pastiche written involving these two characters. On the other hand, maybe posting this will give someone the idea to write one.

Teams consisting of One Female/ two males are:

18. We come to a trio who very little is known about. We have Elsie, Stark and Ferguson from ENGR. Elsie is opposed to Stark using violence again so she has been with the team at least a year. If so why does she stay? Family love, Romantic Love, Fear, or another reason? She warns our Engineer, helps him escape. So why leave our maimed and bleeding helpless Engineer laying in the garden? Short of a confession from one of the three we will never know.



19. Here are Carrie Evans and her husband, who practiced his trade as an actor and Sir Robert Norberton from SHOS. The old saying that money is the root of all-evil applies in this case. That must have been quite a brother sister relationship in the Norberton family.

20. Next we have Ivy Douglas, her husband John Douglas aka Bertie Edwards and Cecil Barker in

VALL. Mrs. Douglas was trying to protect her husband. I have wondered, based on my reading the story, were Cecil Barker's motives really, what they seemed to be on the surface?

Teams that consisted of two females/one male combinations who acted jointly together are

21. Lady Eva Brackenstall, her personal maid Theresa Wright and Captain Jack Crocker in ABBE. A plot device that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle used so well in this and the next case on this list.



22. Hatty Doran/Mouton, her personal maid Alice, and Frank Mouton in NOBL. To marry another man while seeing her first husband in attendance. Wow! What a lady who can think so fast on her feet.



Two teams of Female as leader of a group of males are:



23. Signora Victor Durando/Miss Bernet and the society who conspired against Don Murillo in WIST: Revenge in this case is one I can sympathize with and hope she was able to find peace.

24. Isadora Klein and The Spencer John gang in 3GAB.

This Villainess reminds of Cruella De Ville of The original Disney cartoon movie "One Hundred and One Dalmatians."

To paraphrase the song about Ms.

De Ville: "At first you think

Isadora is a devil, but after time

has worn away the shock, you come to realize you've seen those kinds of eyes watching you from underneath a rock. A vampire bat, an inhuman beast! She ought to be locked up and never released. She's like a spider waiting for the kill," look out for Isadora Klein!



Finally, there is my favorite one of all:

25. A female or is it a male impersonating an old woman and Jefferson Hope in STUD?



Did this person give Jefferson Hope help in other ways that Watson and Holmes were not aware? How about the ideas

that the fellow actor helping Hope was John Clay or a member of the Moriarty organization helped Hope in return for a promise to help the Professor when the Professor called the favor in.

The opportunities for Sherlockian research theories will continue for as long people can read and think "what if?" May the Canon always be with us!

# THE PROBLEM OF "THE FINAL PROBLEM"

Karen Murdock, "May Blunder", Published in The Hounds' Collection (Sydney, Australia), Volume 8 (2003)



Why is it "The Final Problem" and not "The Final Adventure"?

Why is "The Final Problem" such a problem?

There is a group of Shakespearian plays which scholars call "The Problem Plays" because they do not fit well into any of the other three categories of his plays (Comedies, Tragedies, Histories).

The Problem Plays are "Troilus and Cressida," "All's Well That Ends Well," and "Measure for Measure." (Some scholars include "Hamlet" in this category, too, although most consider "Hamlet" to fall in the "Tragedy" category.) (1)



These plays, sometimes called "dark comedies," are difficult to interpret, show a tragic-comic view of the human condition, and exhibit an ironic or cynical cast.

These Shakespearian characteristics certainly do not apply to "The Final Problem," which is relentlessly earnest and not at all ironic.

Yet there is some sense in which **FINA** is a "problem tale" in its being hard to classify, lacking in expected characters and structural elements, and quite unusual in tone.

Only two tales in the Sherlockian Canon are titled as "problem" cases: **THOR** and **FINA**.

Almost all of the other tales are called "The Adventure of Thus-and-So."

Does this nomenclature mean anything?



If so, I can't seem to discern it.

I can easily conceive of a division of the tales into "adventures" and "problems" (with a few remaining unclassifiable, as always).

"Adventures" might be those tales involving a lot of action, trips in a hansom or train to and from the crime scene and the homes of various witnesses and affected parties, telegrams speeded off to all corners, Holmes throwing himself upon the ground with his magnifying glass to his eye, astonishing deductions, and a general air of hustle and bustle.

"Problems," in contrast, might be those tales which are more cerebral, more rarified, with Holmes playing much less of a direct role in the action and making few deductions.

Were this division to hold sway, **IDEN**, **FIVE**, **ENGR**, **YELL**, **GLOR**, **BLAN**, **SUSS**, and **VEIL** might count as

"Problem Tales," in contrast to such energetic stories as **SIGN**, **SIXN**, **PRI0**, **BRUC** and **HOUN**, which are definitely "Adventures."



"The Problem of Thor Bridge" would be an "Adventure" tale in this scheme, and so certainly would be "The Final Problem," with its great geographical range and the gripping quality of its narrative (the most intense in the Canon).

Apparently, then, this arbitrary division of the stories into "Adventures" and "Problems" meant nothing to the Literary Agent, or whoever gave the tales their titles.

A few of the early stories, for that matter, have neither "Adventure" nor "Problem" in their titles, but content themselves with terse and to-the-point titles such as "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Five Orange Pips."

Yet, undeniably, there is something most unusual about "The Final Problem."

Consider the utter lack of the plot devices, characters, and structural elements we have come to



expect in the stories of Sherlock Holmes: no light-hearted bantering between Holmes and Watson, no introductory "cozy" at 221B, no in-over-their-heads Scotland Yarders, no brilliant deductions, no crime scene (no crime, for that matter, except the three "off stage" assaults upon Holmes and the arson at 221B), no long pauses about three-quarters of the way through the narrative where Holmes works off-stage to solve the problem while Watson remains at home or at the hotel, as befogged as before, no ex machina appearance of Holmes at the end to clear everything up.

No appearance of Holmes at the end at all!

This is a "mystery" story with no crime to solve and no clues with which to solve anything.

This makes it a problem.

In his classic 1912 essay "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," Ronald A. Knox identified 11 distinct parts of the ideal tale from the Canon, and he gave them scholarly names such as Prooimion and Anagnorisis.

Knox wrote that "The Final Problem" contained only five of these elements.

However, several of these take place "off stage" and are only described to Watson by Holmes, not observed and described by Watson himself as in more conventional stories.

Most of the story is the back story.

Consider, too, the unique tone of **FINA**.

No other tale in the Canon ends with anything approaching the utter tragedy of this tale.

No final words of Watson are anything like as elegiac and lyrical as those with which he ends **FINA**.

The entire story just feels very different from any other in the Canon, not excluding **EMPT**, which is also a very unusual story by the standards of the conventions of the tales.

Sherlock Holmes, himself, seems to be the only one in the story who knows what is going to happen, who knows this is really his "final" challenge.

"Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson," he tells his friend, "upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe."

And in the final note he writes to Watson, Holmes reiterates this finality and acceptance: "my career had in any case reached its crisis, and that no possible conclusion to it could be more congenial to me than this."

"The Final Problem" is the greatest problem Holmes faces in his career, and he solves that problem at the end to his complete satisfaction, if to



Watson's great grief and distress.

Holmes accepts the finality of "**The Final Problem**," recognizes his engagement with Moriarty as the epic struggle that it is, and accepts his death in prospect with equanimity.

It is Watson who cannot accept the situation.

The tension in the second half of **FINA** is not between Holmes and Moriarty.



It is between Holmes and Watson. "**The Final Problem**" is a problem for Watson, not for Holmes.



The twosome even have a half-hour-long argument in the Strasburg salle-à-manger on the question of whether Watson should remain with Holmes or return to England—one of the only arguments the two friends ever engage in. Watson wins the argument, but in the end he loses his friend.

His presence at the side of Holmes proves ineffectual in staving off the inevitable end, and Moriarty is able to decoy the doctor away at the crucial moment by the Reichenbach Falls.

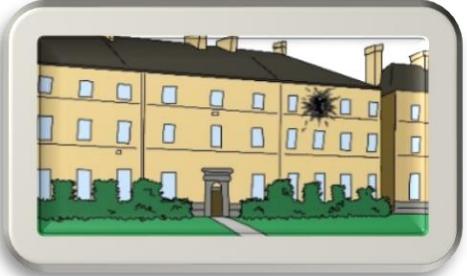
If Shakespeare can have his "Problem Plays," John H. Watson can have his "Problem Tales," and "**The Final Problem**" stands first among them.

#### ENDNOTE:

1. I wonder, by the way, if Shakespearian scholars have handy little four-letter abbreviations for the plays, like the ones Jay Finley Christ gifted the Sherlockian world with — TROI? ALLS? MEAS? HAML?

# Baker Street Elementary

Created by: Joe Fay, Rusty & Steve Mason  
The First Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson



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IT'S BEEN OVER FOUR YEARS SINCE THE 'GREAT LAB FIRE' YOU CAUSED SHERLOCK, WHICH SINGED OFF ALL YOUR HAIR, INCLUDING THE EYEBROWS...



I THINK YOU AND JOHN COULD STOP WEARING THOSE HATS EVERYDAY NOW.

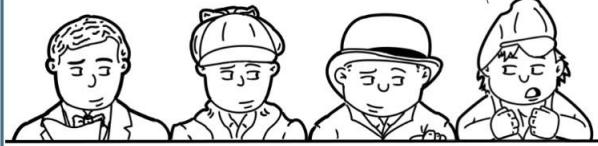


ACTUALLY I HAVE BECOME QUITE FOND OF MY CHAPEAU

THEY DO TEND TO COMPLIMENT YOUR LOOK...



I STILL CANNOT TELL IF YOU ARE WEARING YOUR HAT FORWARDS OR BACKWARDS ?



THAT IS A MYSTERY...

SIMPLE... IT DEPENDS ON WHETHER I AM FACING NORTH OR SOUTH...



UHH...  
STAMFORD, NOD AND ACT LIKE YOU COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND...

