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Canadian Holmes

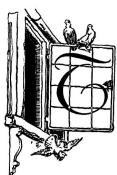
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Graces of Bootprints

'Tis the season

The Christmas season is at its best when there's a good ghost story making the rounds.

The BBC's latest yuletide offering was Conan Doyle's terrifying tale "Lot 249," first published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1892. Director Mark Gatis makes the episode his own, adding an ending with a twist and a few overt Sherlockian themes.

Of course, aficionados may be excused for hearing of Sherlock everywhere on the British public broadcast system late in 2023.

"Killing Sherlock: Lucy Worsley on the Case of Conan Doyle" entertained with a three-part look at the relationship between the author and the famous detective. Created for a wide audience, the documentary touches on many aspects of Conan Doyle's life but always brings it back to Sherlock.

Both productions will no doubt generate their fair share of discussion and debate at upcoming meetings and gatherings. Healthy debate, and more mainstream profile for Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes, are a good thing and could create new Sherlockians, something we all wish for this new year.

This first issue of the new year brims with good things, starting with Barbara Rusch's Bow Window column about gentlemen's clubs. New contributor Brian Wang looks at Holmes's place in Chinese detective fiction. Donny Zaldin delves into the origin of that Sherlockian favourite, the agony column. Dean Jobb sets sail toward a real-life mutiny that inspired Conan Doyle's non-fiction. Bruce Harris shows his soft spot for Stanley Hopkins, who also inspired balladeer Jim Ballinger. Mark Jones examines the case of a doctor from the *Round the Fire Stories*. A few reviews and Diary Notes round out this instalment.

May the months ahead in 2024 bring lots of opportunity for Doylean and Sherlockian fellowship and perhaps another screen adaptation or two.

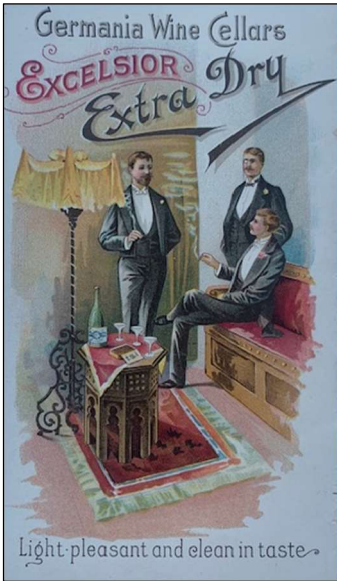
The view from the bow window

Barbara Rusch explores various aspects of Victorian and Edwardian life as they relate to the canonical tales. Bow Window illustration by Laurie Fraser Manifold.



The gentlemen's clubs of the 19th century were bastions of Victorian morality – in addition to breeding grounds for masculine bad behaviour. Established in the 18th century, these exclusive upper-class reserves flourished both within England and throughout the Empire. Often built by the same architects who designed the finest country homes of their day, they generally consisted of a formal dining room, a bar, a billiard room and a reading room. The more elaborate also featured fitness amenities and guest bedrooms. By the 1880s, over 400 of these establishments attested to their popularity. Many specialized in a particular aspect of politics, the arts or travel, and any man with a credible claim to the status of “gentleman” could find one – or indeed several – to admit him, unless his character was for some reason so objectionable that he was deemed “unclubable” (a term coined by Samuel Johnson). Admission was by committee and subject to intense scrutiny. Waiting lists were sometimes lengthy and the possibility of being blackballed was a constant deterrent. These seeming enclaves of propriety offered a convenient retreat for those who wished to escape female company, and were a welcome respite for men who had been educated in elite, patriarchal institutions.

London's oldest club, White's, was founded in 1693, and was essentially a hotbed of scandal. Here, overprivileged and undisciplined males were offered a safe haven to indulge in their improprieties and indiscretions with impunity, while concealing their sinister secrets. Its main function was wining, dining, and gambling. Wagers were placed on everything from which raindrop would reach the bottom of the windowpane first, to the date when the Prince of Wales would father an illegitimate child. The Reform Club, founded in 1836, served as the point of departure for Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg's famous wager of £20,000 that he could circumnavigate the globe in 80 days. The Albermarle Club opened in 1874, and unlike most others, admitted women from its inception. However, it acquired the taint of notoriety for its association with Oscar Wilde the night the Marquess of Queensberry, father of his lover, Lord



at least three of which – the Nonpareil, the Tankerville and the Bagatelle

Clubable toffs enjoy champagne and cigars on this advertising trade card, c. 1890. From the author's collection

Alfred Douglas, left his card with the message, “For Oscar Wilde posing as somdomite” (sic). Wilde sued him in open court, but was charged with “gross indecency,” and was ultimately incarcerated for two years at hard labour, emerging a broken man. In a measure of poetic justice, Queensberry died alone at his club at age 55 of a stroke, while in the advanced stages of syphilis, a year prior to the death of the man he ruined. When H.G. Wells’s mistress, the daughter of a fellow member of the Savile Club, became pregnant, her father waited at the door every day, revolver in hand, until the author of *The Time Machine* and *The Invisible Man* was forced to resign.

There are nine named clubs in the Canon, – are associated with scandals involving cheating at cards. Holmes manages to clear Major Prendergast of this severe breach of protocol at the Tankerville, while the incident at the Bagatelle leads to the murder of the Honourable Ronald Adair.

When threatened with exposure for his unscrupulous conduct, Colonel Sebastian Moran, Professor Moriarty’s second in command, shoots Adair with an air rifle through an open window. Holmes’s brother Mycroft is a founder of the Diogenes Club, whose members are “the most unsociable and unclubable men in town.” No interaction is permitted on pain of expulsion. If anyone is an appropriate candidate for membership, it would be Mycroft’s younger brother – antisocial, misanthropic and taciturn in the extreme. Sherlock himself admits to having found it “a very soothing atmosphere.” Neither is he averse to “comfortable chairs and the latest periodicals,” not to mention a front row seat onto the world at the bow window. As Mycroft observes, “To anyone who wishes to study mankind this is the spot.”

The Failures of the Great Detective: Chinese Fan Fiction for Sherlock Holmes in the Early 20th Century

By Brian Wang

Brian Wang is currently based in Yokohama. Brian studied East Asian literature in Montreal and New Haven. He is interested in Victorian popular fiction and how it transformed as it made its way to Asian countries like Japan and China.

The allure of Sherlock Holmes is both transtemporal and transnational. When the craze for Holmes swept through Britain, this ingenious detective also harvested a multitude of fans in the remote Orient. After Conan Doyle's serialization of the Canon in *The Strand Magazine* garnered momentum in the West, translations soon landed in the newly charted territory of newspapers and literary journals in Meiji Japan and late Qing China in the 1890s.

Two years after his first debut in Japan, Holmes made his way to China in September 1896, when the translation by Zhang Dekun of "The Naval Treaty" started to serialize in *Chinese Progress*, (1) a reformist newspaper founded

上 英包探勘盜密約案 譯啟洛克阿爾晤斯筆記	英有攀息 <small>名翻爾白斯</small> 姓者為守舊黨魁爵臣阿爾黑斯特的甥幼時嘗與醫生滑震同學年相若而班加於滑震二等眾以其世家子文弱頗敗之蹴球則故癩球其身為乘然性敏慧館中課試輒高列得獎賞最多後學成大書院已而仕外部以有才又得舅之援故每得差遣後其舅為外部大臣又與升轉部中有要事無不與聞一日呵密召攀息至其室以灰色紙一捲授之曰此英意密約俄法使臣欲以重金購之外間報館已有知者不可再洩故特命汝書汝宜鎖諸書桌屜內追晚我常遣各人去汝速書竟仍藏諸屜屜明早我至部呈我可也攀息謹受教日將沒又案房中人散盡惟車爾斯各落武未去攀息乃出晚食攀息本約其妻舅約瑟於夜十一下鐘乘華武路火車至華肯勃來勃雷屋中故喚歸署見車爾斯各落武已去乃急開屜出約觀之大約言法水師在地中海之權械若過於意大利則英當以何法制之其法文二十六款末有兩國大臣署押其語果極緊要甫書九款而頭目昏頰欲睡思得加非醒之乃掣鈴索呼門者俄一肥碩之中年婦人至自云即門者之妻向日署中官役索加非皆取辦於我攀息乃即命作之復書一紙愈昏眩思加非愈
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The Chinese translation of "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty" (1896)

by the political activist Liang Qichao (1873–1929). Soon afterwards, other Holmes stories in translation, including “The Crooked Man,” “A Case of Identity,” and “The Final Problem,” rolled out in *Chinese Progress*. Although primarily translated and published as true crime reports rather than fiction, these stories reached and were enjoyed by large audiences, among whom many well-known Chinese detective fiction writers in the Republican period, such as Cheng Xiaoqing (1893–1976), are numbered.

Not unlike the case in Meiji Japan, Sherlock Holmes stories, if not all Western literature, served as a source of both entertainment and enlightenment in late Qing China. (2) For Chinese intellectuals who were hellbent on political reform, the Canon was not simply a pastime. With its great popularity and ability to penetrate various social strata, those stories served as an ideal window into Western civilization. They enabled Chinese readers to get some exposure to Western science, democracy, the legal system, and the like. Despite that, contemporary elite critics often challenged the enlightenment dimension of the stories and their artistic value. Just as British literary critics excluded the Canon from the category of literature due to its proclivity toward entertainment, intellectuals including Zheng Zhenduo (1898–1958) and Lu Xun (1881–1936) also looked askance at them as a whole because of their deficiency in literary merit. (3) While there were also some more open-minded writers, such as Cheng Xiaoqing, suggesting that critics focus more on the story per se, in regard to parameters like imagination, feeling, and taste, rather than simply objecting to the genre. (4)

The criticisms against detective stories failed to dampen Holmes’s popularity in China. With suspense-ridden plots and interesting characters, the Canon, and detective stories in general, attracted countless fiction lovers in China. As a result, translations and re-translations of detective stories flooded the pages of newspapers, magazines, and literary journals in China; separate editions and collections of Sherlock Holmes stories were churned out by dozens of Chinese publishing houses. At that time, almost all the notable translators in China, including Lin Shu (1852–1924) and Liu Bannong (1891–1934), played a part in introducing Western and/or Japanese detective stories into China. Statistically, about 69 works under Conan Doyle’s name were published during the late Qing and Republican periods; more than 30 translators were involved in the translation of Holmes stories in particular. (5) These translators and their sought-after publications together made *Fuermosi* (“Holmes” in Chinese) a household name in China at the turn of the century.

For Chinese writers who were experimenting on writing their own detective stories, Holmes stories were also superlative textbooks of

narrative mode (e.g., the use of limited perspective) and characterization. A case in point would be Cheng Xiaoqing's *Huo Sang* series. *Huo Sang*, an authentic Shanghai detective who is as perceptive and righteous as Holmes, and his partner Bao Lang, who narrates and plays the part of Watson, fought battles of wits with different kinds of criminals. The success of the *Huo Sang* stories even won Cheng the title of "The Oriental Conan Doyle."

In addition to translating and creating, some Chinese writers were also interested in the remaking of the Holmes stories. As a result, a deluge of fan fiction popped up. In December 1904, a short story, "The First Case after Sherlock Arrives in Shanghai," appeared in the influential Chinese newspaper *Eastern Times*, marking the birth of the fan fiction stories of Sherlock Holmes in China. The author, (Chen) Lengxue, was the chief editor of the newspaper and an avid reader and translator of Conan Doyle. In the foreword, he praised the Sherlock Holmes stories for being "extremely interesting" and "thought-provoking," which provided him with excellent materials to play with. Declaring that his work is just written for fun, Lengxue begged the readers to not "laugh at [his] poor imitation."(6)

"The First Case" relates a tour of Holmes and Watson in Shanghai. However, unlike in London, Holmes failed to make correct deductions due to his unfamiliarity with the decadent society of late Qing China. Filled with witty repartee, this pithy story caught on immediately and spurred imitations. A few months later, (Bao) Tianxiao (1876–1973), a famed popular fiction writer and translator as well as personal friend of Lengxue, wrote the second case. Once more, Holmes's investigation ends in failure as he mistakes a pleasure-seeking Chinese returnee student for a patriotic youth. In the following years, the two authors also wrote the third and fourth cases, both of which feature Holmes's encounters with various irregularities in China that reduce him to puzzlement and embarrassment. In the third case, he was perplexed by the fact that in China the equally addictive morphine was used as a medicine for coping with opium addiction. In the fourth one, he was shocked by the fact that a Chinese noble family would store dozens of opium pipes at home. (7)

Obviously, these were written as social satire. The failures Holmes suffered mirror the unreasonableness of many social phenomena in late Qing China. Among them, opium smoking, which was touched upon in all four stories, seemed to be what concerned Lengxue and Tianxiao the most. In Conan Doyle's stories like "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891), the discourse on opium addiction is often tinted with a strong Orientalist hue: it is often treated as a moral disease that bears great relevance to the image

of the Chinese (8) and is liable to defile the superiority of the British identity. Conversely, in the contemporary Orient, Sherlock Holmes stories were also employed by writers for a reflexive criticism.

Though very short, these four stories achieved wide currency at the time, and their echoes also resounded into the next decade. As they grew popular, these parodic Holmes stories also became fodder for Chinese writers for further parody. A great example is “The Great Failure of Sherlock Holmes” series (in *Chung Hwa Novel Magazine*, 1915–1916), (9) written by Liu Bannong, one of the co-translators of the *Canon of Sherlock Holmes* and a leading figure in China’s New Cultural Movement in the 1910s and 1920s. Labelled “comical fiction,” the series consists of five independent but related short stories, each of which features Holmes’s failure to solve crime in China. Continued from the four stories by Lengxue and Tianxiao, the series presents Holmes’s experience during the First World War: As Watson was enlisted in the army and military spies stole the stage through their performances in espionage, the business of armchair detectives like Holmes had gone into a decline. Therefore, Holmes decided to travel to China alone to take some orders for money and retrieve his reputation.

On the surface, the influences of both Lengxue and Tianxiao’s parodies and the original Sherlock Holmes stories on Liu Bannong’s stories are apparent. On one hand, the “case solving plus unexpected failure” pattern in Lengxue and Tianxiao’s stories provided Liu with an ideal template for structuring his stories. On the other hand, Liu also incorporated narrative elements of Conan Doyle’s originals by inserting a monologue by Watson at the beginning of a story. Added to this, there are also numerous sketchy references to the Canon from time to time, which not only showed his acquaintance with the Sherlock Holmes stories, but also reminded the readers of the link between his stories and the original works.

In his stories, Liu Bannong offered Holmes a much more unpleasant trip in Shanghai. Far more than being puzzled and embarrassed, as he was the last time, in this case, Holmes was duped, blackmailed, and even kidnapped by his Chinese clients. For example, in the second case of the series, “The Naked Detective,” Holmes was cajoled by a client into a bathhouse to ponder the details of a case. However, right after that, his clothes were stolen, and the naked Holmes became a laughingstock to the client. In a similar vein, in the following case, Holmes was coaxed into a dilapidated building, where he was kidnapped and humiliated by the clients.

In Shanghai, Holmes was no longer an omniscient detective as in London, but a square peg in a round hole, always ending a case with egg



*Illustration of “The Naked Detective,”
from A Grand View of Illustrated Fiction
(1916).*

residence in China, established his own mansion, and gradually acculturated to the Chinese way of life. This did not prevent him from being fooled by the “authentic” Chinese, however. In dealing with Holmes’s assimilation, Liu made some adaptations that may outrage Holmes’s fans today. In the fourth case, Holmes married a Chinese workingwoman of a spinning mill, who was portrayed as a typical Chinese shrew. As Holmes had been “deeply influenced by the Oriental society,” (10) the idea of polygamy also sprung to his mind. He ended up having an affair with his typist, Miss Li. However, the Holmeses soon found themselves ensnared by Li and her lover, Zhao. The young typist and her partner separately asked Holmes and his wife out, then took photos that falsely depicted them in affectionate gestures with others (these photos were taken from a misleading angle), and subsequently used these photos

on his face. Liu’s rationale for tormenting Holmes does not simply lie in making a stronger comical effect; more importantly, like the case in Lengxue and Tianxiao’s stories, Liu also managed to voice his criticism against the environment in which this unsuccessful Holmes is situated. Take the first story as an example: By having Holmes mistakenly take a pretentious groom for a well-educated elite, Liu satirized the vanity of some pompous Shanghai people who always presented themselves in a “Westernized” or “civilized” manner.

Nevertheless, Holmes was not always cast as a cultural outsider and a clueless observer of China. As the story goes, he decided to take up long

to blackmail the couple. To prevent rumors from spreading, Holmes had no choice but to accept Zhao's unreasonable demand to work at his mansion. Surprised by the slyness of his Chinese employees, Holmes made a sarcastic remark: "I have never imagined that you Chinese people are 'mischievous' to the core. I, Sherlock Holmes, cannot even gauge one ten-thousandth of it." (11)

With exquisite touches of satire, Liu laid bare some symptoms of social ills in China and what he perceived as common flaws among the Chinese people through Holmes's unusual experiences. Liu did not make his stories sheer rant and rage. By adding comical zing, he watered down the seriousness of his critique, making it more approachable to the general reader.

Liu Bannong, as well as Lengxue and Tianxiao, was not the only writer who fixed his mind on the failures of Sherlock Holmes in early 20th-century China. In fact, failure is a recurrent motif in this early Sherlockian fan fiction: "The Failure of Holmes" (Xiaodie, 1915), "The Great Failure of Holmes [in Wuxi]" (Qianlong, 1916), "The History of Sherlock's Failure in Crime-Solving" (Sun Shouhua, 1921), and "The History of Holmes's Failure" (Xushisheng, 1927). Of course, Chinese writers' preoccupation with "failure" has nothing to do with disbelief in the resourceful detective. Instead, by showing Holmes—a symbol of modernity and personification of values like science, reason, and justice—running into walls in China, these fan-writers highlighted the fact that China is so peculiar that even the most intelligent mind cannot get a good grasp of it. For them, modernity is something desirable but hard to come by. Therefore, in addition to exposing the distance between China and "modern civilization," they also expressed their worries over the myriad problems and odd occurrences that had arisen and might arise with the advent of modernity in a time-honoured state.

The stories translated below are two examples of such "fan fiction." Written in classical Chinese in 1904 and 1907, respectively, they offer a valuable glimpse into not only the Chinese writers' reception, representation, and imagination of Holmes, but also the societal zeitgeist in China at the turn of the century, when the various trends and narratives of tradition and modernity were constantly blending and competing with each other.

The First Case after Sherlock Arrives in Shanghai (1904)

By Chen Lengxue

On the following day of Sherlock Holmes's arrival in Shanghai, around twelve o'clock in the afternoon, he was reclining in an armchair with a

cigar in his mouth, and discussing the bizarre happenings in Shanghai with Watson. Suddenly, he heard a knock at the door. He then came to let the visitor in. Opening the door, he saw a Chinese client of thirty-one or two years old. After the client entered the room and exchanged greetings, Sherlock soon invited him to take a seat and share the reason for his visit.

The client said, "I have heard so much about you, sir. I have read *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* before and know that you are good at investigating people. With your powers of observation of trifling details, you could know everything in the past and future. Today, I found out you were in Shanghai, so I came specially to you and ask some questions." Sherlock was eager to know what the client wants him to investigate, "A theft? A relative goes missing? A murder case?" The client denied all, "This has nothing to do with the business of others. I would like to ask you, sir, can you list all the things I did from last night to now one by one?" Sherlock nodded, surveyed him up and down.

Sherlock asked the client, "I see the gums on your eyes are not gone yet; it is not quite an hour from you waking up to coming here, right?" The client said, "Right!" Sherlock continued, "Your eyelid is still drooping, so you just haven't been fully awake, right?" The client replied, "Right!" Sherlock continued, "The thumb and index finger of your right hand are in black, and the colour is still new. Your teeth are stained and rotten, and your exhalation smells of opium, so you must have smoked opium before coming, right?" The client replied, "Right!" Sherlock continued, "There are callouses on your finger pads, that means you must be fond of playing Chinese dominoes. That you stayed up all night must be because you were playing Chinese dominoes, right?" The client replied, "Right!" Sherlock continued, "The skin under your eyebrows and above your eyes is red and bloodshot, plus you often look blank, so you must have indulged in sex last night and had caught a disease, right?" The client replied, "Right!" Sherlock finished his words while the client was still listening agog. Sherlock then added, "The answers to my questions are all in the confirmative, right?" The client said, "All right!" Sherlock said, "Then my investigation is over; you could leave now." The client then burst into laughter.

Sherlock asked the reason for the laughter. The client answered, "If that's it, I can become a well-known detective, too. Nothing wonderful." Sherlock asked him why, then he added, "Would you like to take a shot to investigate me?"

The Chinese client asked, "I know you are a human being, right?" Sherlock answered, laughing. "Right!" The client then said, "I know you are not Chinese as I am, right?" Again, Sherlock giggled and replied,

“Right!” The client continued, “Your mouth speaks, eyes see, ears hear, hands move, feet walk; you eat, drink, wake up, sleep, and breathe, right?” Sherlock replied, “Right!” At this point, the client suddenly fell into silence. As Sherlock asked him why he stopped talking, the client said, “The answers to my questions are all in the confirmative, right?”

Sherlock said, “All right!” The client said, “Then my investigation is over; what else do you want me to say?” Sherlock said, “That’s wrong! What you just said is nothing but everyday matters. What’s the point of investigating?” The client replied with a sneer, “What you have said are nothing but everyday matters of we Shanghai people; what’s the point of investigating?”

Opening his eyes wide, Sherlock was left speechless. The Chinese client went straight away.

The author comments: “Sherlock Holmes reaches the end of his tether in Shanghai.”

*The Case of the Hidden Guns:
Sherlock Holmes’s Fourth Case in China (1907)*

By Bao Tianxiao

On the night that Sherlock learned the news that a group of bandits had shot criminal investigators to death, he turned to Watson and said, “Since my arrival here, I have encountered many failures. Now, with such a major case at hand, I must assist the Shanghai criminal investigators in arresting the remaining bandits and save my reputation from people’s mockery.” Watson replied, “Great!”

The following day, in the inn where Sherlock was staying, two Chinese guests checked into the neighboring room. They waxed lyrical in a lofty manner, acting as if there was no one else present. Sherlock then secretly eavesdropped on them. He faintly heard a guest say, “Many people in Shanghai are hiding guns at home now. This person hides dozens of guns; that one, too. Their guns are extremely exquisite.” Sherlock was very delighted to hear that and thought to himself, “Those people must be the confederates of the bandits. But today’s newspapers reported that the shooting case last night only involved some petty bandits. How can there be so many confederates of them?”

“Perhaps it’s because there is civil unrest throughout China right now. Members of revolutionary parties all possess very efficient guns and ammunition. Someone must be supplying them with weapons here in

Shanghai. If someone is hiding so many guns in the foreign settlement, then it is enough to worry about any violation to the public order here.”

He then overheard the other guest say, “Please provide me with the address in detail. I plan to visit him tomorrow.” The former guest told him the address word by word, and Sherlock took it down letter by letter.

The next morning, Sherlock first paid a visit to the gun collector’s residence, but the host was not awake yet. He returned in the afternoon, but the host was still in bed. At dusk, Sherlock made another attempt. This time, the host let out a yawn and rubbed his sleepy eyes. He rang the bell and summoned the attendant, “Come here!”

After a short while, the attendant came. The host asked, “Is the carriage ready?” The attendant replied, “Yes.” The host said, “Put my gun in the bag. I’m going to attend a banquet at the collator’s home. (12) He has told me many times to carry it there. Be careful! You might damage my gun!” The attendant replied with deference and carried the blue bag away. Before long, the carriage door swung open, and an elderly man wearing a marten fur hat and a fox fur coat boarded the carriage before departing.

Sherlock proceeded to the police station, requesting the police chief’s assistance in issuing an arrest warrant. They quickly made their way to the collator’s place. At that moment, that host was lying still and smoking opium. He put up an arrogant and rude manner at the sight of Sherlock.

Sherlock asked, “Are you the gun collector, Mr. John Doe?” The host replied, “Right.” Sherlock pressed on, “You have collected dozens of guns, is that right?” The host replied, “Right.” Sherlock said, “The guns you collected are all extremely exquisite, right?” The host said, “Right.” Sherlock continued, “Then, in which factory are they made? From which country? Krupp? Mauser?” The host widened his eyes and retorted, “My guns are all crafted by well-known artisans. There are ones made of ivory, rhino horn, tortoiseshell, jadeite, and jade that resembles gold. I wonder, which specific type are you talking about?”

Sherlock heaved a sigh and asked, “What kind of gun are you referring to?” The host said, “I have no idea what kind of gun *you* are referring to, either.” Sherlock felt for a pistol and said, “I’m referring to this.” The host raised his hands, holding a “smoking gun” (opium pipe), and said, “I’m referring to this.”

Deeply embarrassed, Sherlock froze the words on his tongue for a good while, “I have never imagined that a Chinese ‘gun’ is something like this. Even so, why do you hide so many of them?” The host said, laughing, “Sir, you don’t know, I have several wives and concubines at home. If each of them gets a ‘gun’ for themselves, it adds up to quite a number. With numerous sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, even dozens of ‘guns’ are

still not enough. What's more, those so-called 'elites and aristocrats' in China today are probably all like this. How come I am the only one?"

Returned dispiritedly, Sherlock said to Watson, "Please remember, Mr. Watson. This is yet another failure of mine in crime-solving in China."

References

(1) Yan Wei, *Detecting Chinese Modernities: Rupture and Continuity in Modern Chinese Detective Fiction (1896–1949)*, Boston: Brill, 2020, p. 35. See Tsutsumibayashi Megumi "'There's a west wind coming': Sherlock Holmes in Meiji Japan," *Keio Communication Review*, No. 37 (Mar. 2015), p. 92. According to Megumi, the first Sherlock Holmes story translated into Japanese was "The Man with the Twisted Lip," published in 1894 as Kojiki Doraku ("Indulgence of Begging").

(2) Megumi, pp. 85–90; Yan Wei, p. 3.

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The “Agony Column” in Victorian Culture and in the Sherlockian Canon

By Donny Zaldin

Donny Zaldin, MBt, BSI, ASH is a longtime Bootmaker and has served the society in multiple leadership roles over the past three plus decades, including as Meyers and Colonel Ross. He has been published in many Sherlockian journals and contributed as author and editor to *The Magic Door*, the quarterly journal of The Friends of the ACD Collection at the Toronto Public Library, and to several BSI series books, including Canon Law.

As the world’s foremost consulting detective, Holmes’s “methods” included a systematic investigation of the crime scene, a combination of critical observation and ratiocination, his immense knowledge of “sensational literature” and the employment of his unofficial police force, the Baker Street Irregulars. He also resorted to advertisements and “agony columns” in the newspapers in 20 of the 60 Canonical tales.

Origins and Evolution of Advertisements and “Agony Columns”

In 1690, a 32-year-old London bookseller, author and printer, John Dunton, was having an affair but could not consult anyone about it without revealing his identity. Realizing that his dilemma could not be unique, he launched the popular, miscellaneous periodical, *The Athenian Mercury*, and opened its pages to field reader’s anonymous questions. In doing so, he created the first agony column – although that term was not devised until more than a century and a half later. This nickname refers to the anguish suffered by the person writing in, covering a wide range of human experience and emotion.

An early advertisement seeking information of the type utilized by Holmes was published in *The Times* (London) on December 18, 1800, by “a Gentleman” seeking a line from “the Lady ... possessing every virtue and charm ... whom he handed into her carriage from Covent Garden Theatre, on Wednesday, the third of this month.”

A CARD.—It the Lady who a Gentleman handed into her carriage from Covent Garden Theatre, on Wednesday the third of this month, will oblige the Advertiser with a line to Z.Z. Spring Garden Coffee House, saying if married or single, she will quiet the mind of a young Nobleman, who has tried, but in vain, to find the Lady. The carriage was ordered to Bond-street. The Lady may depend on honour and secrecy.—Nothing but the most honourable interview is intended. The Lady was in mourning; and sufficiently cloathed to distinguish her for possessing every virtue and charm that man could desire in a female that he would make choice of for a Wife. Deception will be detected, as the Lady's person can never be forgot.

The small advertisement from a gentleman to a lady that was on the front page of the December 18, 1800, edition of The Times

The earliest known use of the term, “agony column” appeared in *The Durham Advertiser*, on October 21, 1853, though the first such column originated in *The Times*. It was defined in *The Bristol Times* of August 3, 1861, as follows:

The Agony Column in the Times.—The top of the second column of the first page of the Times, is the place where the printers “pile agony.”

Although officially referred to as “The Second Column” by *The Times*, it was referred to as the agony column by almost everyone else, including its correspondents, columnists and readers. In his article titled “The Triumph of Baby,” published in the June 1871 issue of *Belgravia, A London Magazine*, author and journalist George Augustus Sala wrote, “I am in the habit of smoking over the second column of the Times ... called the ‘Agony Column’ ...”.

Over the 19th century, the column evolved from an advertisement placed by readers seeking personal information from other readers, usually relating to missing persons and lost possessions or pets (more or less a lost and found column), to an advice column for those seeking guidance regarding personal problems. The requested advice would generally have been answered in England by an “agony aunt” or “uncle” (depending on the gender of the columnist), or by a “sob sister” in America.

Although unintended and likely unexpected, personal notices and agony columns became a source of entertainment for 19th-century readers.

However, “the reality of the evolving advice column was at odds with its premise,” given the days and sometimes weeks which would elapse between the time of the writing and submission of a question and its publication, together with a response from the newspaper’s columnist. As it turned out, “the draw of the column was not really about the questioner getting a timely answer; it was about the newspaper’s readers’ voyeurism” – and selling newspapers. The column became a “public conversation,” which invited readers to either learn the answer or weigh in with one’s own [with either empathy or mockery]. Notwithstanding, “the therapeutic act of framing a dilemma, of sharing a problem, kept the advice seekers writing, and the rubbernecker reading.” (1)

Whether because of or despite this format, personal/advice/“agony” columns became a ubiquitous, prominent and popular feature of the daily newspaper, and as fundamentally British as cricket, fish and chips, tea and Big Ben. Charles Dickens advertised in them and Queen Victoria, Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and Queen Elizabeth II, to name a few, have kept it up as “favourite” reading. (2)

The Cultural Phenomenon of the “Agony Column”

Morality and propriety in the age to which “a certain gracious lady” lent her name were as staid and confining as women’s undergarments of the period. Piano legs were sometimes covered lest they induce ungentlemanly thoughts in men, and chaperones were *de rigueur* for unmarried ladies, whose incoming and outgoing letters were screened and either confiscated or censored by their fathers, mothers or brothers. Hence, agony columns provided a convenient and inexpensive, secretive method of communication for unmarried women and men – or anyone who had no means of sending letters or receiving them without interference or fear of detection.

Obviously, anonymity was required by those simply seeking advice or by these secret correspondents, without drawing attention to themselves. Consequently, messages back and forth were encrypted or coded by their writers to avoid recognition. Those “denied the privilege of an open correspondence ... with a little ingenuity” sought “a way of communication that would baffle those whose eyes they fear.” (3)

Accordingly, pseudonyms were often used, although some were transparent on their face (e.g. using the name “Bocaj” for “Jacob”). Numbers were substituted for the letters of the alphabet, which were sometimes altered (e.g. using the next or third letter following: C for B, or P for M, or beginning the alphabet at the letter L so that O would stand for D). Sometimes stratagems were used to deceive the intended recipient –

as in the following notice in the March 19, 1903, issue of *The Times*: “The solicitors at Beckett Terrell & Co of 10 Ironmonger Lane state that any person by the name of St Amour may benefit by applying to them.”

Also, hoaxes were perpetrated, such as in the case of a man searching for his wife who had left him, advertising that he had inherited a lot of money, thereby hoping to entice her to return to him. (4)

Early on, it became something of a cottage industry to try to decipher the back-and-forth correspondence of the columns, which showed “a curious phase of life, interesting to an observer of human existence and human eccentricities. Messages were veiled in an air of mystery, with a view of blinding the general public, but at the same time gave a clue unmistakable to those for whom they are intended.” (5)

In 1869, the satirical British humour magazine *Judy* (a rival to its more established, *Punch*) employed a celebrated detective to unravel the mysteries of the Metropolitan Agony Columns and acquaint the public to them in its pages.

Members of the newspaper-reading public from all classes, including the exclusive members of the myriad of 19th-century gentlemen’s clubs of London, read, followed up, and analyzed the correspondence in the agony columns. At times the casual observer became a participant in the exchange. In his 1893 *Hand-Book of Literary Curiosities*, William S. Walsh wrote of *The Times* agony column: (6)

Even ciphers have been found dangerous. There are everywhere certain ingenious busybodies ... that make a study of this column, and, finding a key to the cipher in which a clandestine correspondence is carried on, insert a marplot advertisement, – sometimes for the mere fun of the thing, sometimes to stop an intrigue ... (Author’s note: a marplot is defined as one who frustrates or ruins a plan or undertaking by meddling, named after Marplot, a character in a play, the 1709 Restoration comedy “The Busie Body,” written by Susanna Centlivre).

In his 2015 article titled “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Cipher,” Sherlockian Marino C. Alvarez concurred:

In one circumstance, a student at Oxford was using cryptograms to send secret messages to his sweetheart. However, because this was a somewhat common occurrence, Sir Charles Wheatstone, a prominent and noted cryptologist, would review the agony column on Sunday afternoons as a pastime. Following some of the messages over time, he read the encoded message between Charlie, an Oxford

student, and his woman friend suggesting that they elope. Wheatstone intervened by placing an advertisement of his own directed at these two persons that advised that they abandon this foolhardy plan. A few days later there appeared a message that read: “Dear Charlie: Write no more. Our cipher is discovered!”

Notwithstanding, some of the agony columns of over a century ago remain unsolved to this day.

In the early 20th century, newspapers worldwide adapted their front pages to employ headlines in order to attract the attention of readers and potential consumers of advertised goods and services in order to increase circulation. The last holdout was *The Times*, in which the personals (including “agony columns”) held pride of place on its front page until 1966. This event was heralded in the *Free Lance-Star* of Fredericksburg, VA, with the headline, “‘Agony Column’ Now Missing From Page 1 of London Times.” The article read as follows:

The millennium has come when The Times of London decides to print NEWS on its front page! ... Since time immemorial (1785), this highly respected newspaper has devoted page one entirely to advertisements ... But The Times, staid voice of the British Establishment, recently announced that the ads will be relegated to pages two and three ... The change in format means that the Personal, or so-called “Agony” Column will lose its preferred position. Through the years the column has reflected the folkways and foibles of the English ... In the days of Disraeli and Dickens, some adverts in the column were written in code, and a fashionable pastime amongst the leather armchairs of Pall Mall clubs was cracking the cryptograms.

Advertisements in the Sherlockian Canon

While investigating cases, Holmes searches the newspapers for advertisements, which figure in several cases, including the following:

In “The Adventure of the Red Circle,” Holmes finds a string of ads in *The Daily Gazette* from one “G,” who turns out to be Gennaro Lucca, a former criminal, communicating with his wife, Emilia;

In “The Adventure of the Red-Headed League,” Jabez Wilson’s villainous assistant, Vincent Spaulding, points out to him an ad in *The Morning Chronicle* about a tremendous employment opportunity held out by The Red-Headed League;

In “A Case of Identity,” poor, deluded Mary Sutherland advertises in *The Chronicle* for her missing fiancé, Hosmer Angel, little dreaming how lost her cause was;

In “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist,” it is an advertisement in *The Times* that lures music teacher Violet Smith into a perilous position in the home of Mr. Carruthers;

In “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb,” an advertisement for a missing engineer reveals to Holmes the last time that Colonel Stark needed to have his machine overhauled;

In “The Adventure of the Stock-Broker’s Clerk,” Hall Pycroft advises Holmes that he successfully answered an advertisement for a billet at Mawson & Williams, a great stock-broking firm in London;

In “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” Holmes tracks communications between the spy Hugo Oberstein and the traitor Colonel Valentine Walter through ads in *The Daily Telegraph*; and in “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter,” Mycroft Holmes, that least energetic of men, stirs himself to place an ad “in all the dailies” offering a reward for information about Paul Kratides from Athens and a Greek lady whose first name is Sophy.

Sherlock Holmes and “Agony Columns”

Holmes is an omnivorous reader of sensational literature, which encompasses newspaper agony columns, the first thing he reads each morning.

Holmes clips, arranges, inserts, and indexes these columns in the commonplace books in which he files newspaper reports and other annals of crime, biographies, and his records of old cases – all mixed with the accumulated information of a lifetime.

Time and again, Holmes turns to agony columns in his consulting work, whether to locate a witness, gain information or entrap a criminal.

Watson reports that Holmes solved codes and wrote a monograph analyzing 160 separate ciphers, many of which he found in the agony columns.

There are seven stories in the Canon in which an agony column figures or is featured in the mystery or crime Holmes is investigating:

In “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb,” Watson calls upon Holmes with his patient Victor Hatherley in tow, finding the detective as he expected – lounging about his sitting-room in his dressing-gown, reading the agony column of *The Times* and smoking his before-breakfast pipe;

In *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes compares the “apocrypha” (i.e.- hidden or secret writings) of the agony column to those contained in ciphers;

In “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor,” Holmes confirms to Watson that the agony column “is always instructive;”

In “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” Holmes examines a series of agony columns in *The Daily Telegraph* and arranges them into “a fairly complete record,” incriminating Colonel Valentine Walter as the thief and traitor;

In “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs,” Holmes spars verbally with Nathan Garrideb, “I should have thought, sir, that your obvious way was to advertise in the agony columns of the papers.” Holmes then comments to Watson, “There have been no advertisements in the agony columns. You know that I miss nothing there. They are my favourite covert for putting up a bird;”

In *The Sign of the Four*, Watson writes, “I tossed the paper down, but at that moment my eye caught an advertisement in the agony column. It ran this way: ‘Lost.—Mordecai Smith, boatman ... the steam launch Aurora ... the sum of five pounds will be paid to any one who can give information ... at 221B Baker Street as to the[ir] whereabouts ...’ This was strictly Holmes’s doing ... It struck me as rather ingenious;” and in “The Adventure of the Red Circle,” Holmes makes his most illuminating pronouncement on the subject of the agony column and its importance in his criminal consulting practice:

There is one rather obvious line of investigation ... what a chorus of groans, cries and bleatings! What a ragbag of singular happenings! But surely the most valuable hunting ground that ever was given to a student of the unusual.

In Chapter 7 (titled “A Hunting Ground of the Unusual”) of his 1986 novel, *Room Two More Guns: The intriguing history of the Personal Column of THE TIMES*, author Stephen Winkworth, writes:

There can be no doubt that throughout the Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle drew heavily on the personal column as a device in the unfolding of his plots and as a source of inspiration in general.

Winkworth also quotes journalist and author Peter Fleming, as follows:

The column conveys a feeling of ‘infinite possibility’ in the mind of the regular reader; it offers a cross-section of a vastly intricate world, made up of millions of intersecting human lives, all either passively co-existing or interacting, whether on a commercial,

romantic or criminal level. Every day some chance fraction of those dealings will be evidenced in a few printed words, often terse and enigmatic, and those printed slivers, like a microtome of a tumour, give the reader a diagnostic vision of the whole purulent metropolis and its outlying limbs – this was the source of its continuing attraction for Dr. Doyle. The day to day listing of articles, legal statements, places, names and dates is a sort of spoil-heap of trivial fact: a hunting-ground not only for detectives but for the literary imagination. As Holmes himself remarks, ‘life 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.’ The key to the fascination of the column is that it achieves the effect of lifting the lid off London, as Holmes put it in “A Case of Identity”: ‘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.’ (7)

It is Holmes himself who touches on the “very soul of the personal column” in the opening sentence of “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches”: (8)

“To the man who loves art for its own sake,” remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of *The Daily Telegraph*, “it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived.”

Here Holmes is referring to the column as “vernacular art” as he and Watson dip continuously into the advertisement columns of a succession of newspapers. (9)

The “Agony Column” in Popular Culture

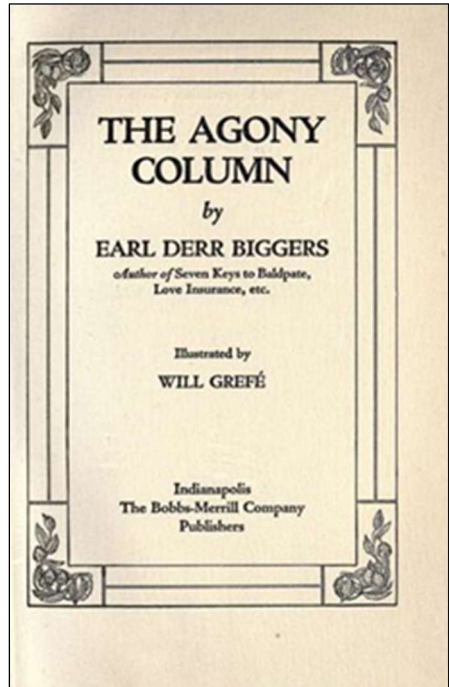
So pervasive was the agony column that it entered popular culture in song, literature and film:

In the 1870s, this popular newspaper feature was celebrated in a song titled *The Agony Column, or, Little Di*, written by W. Burnot and composed by T. Roberts. The words were published in New York in 1878, in *Beadle’s (Half-Dime) Singer’s Library (No. 16) of Comic and Sentimental Songs of All Nations and Ages*, and the words with music in

the contemporary *Comic and Humorous Songs, Second Series*, published by S. Brainard's Sons, NY.

When a stranger saves the life of Little Di in the street, she refuses to give her saviour her address but consents to communicate with him in the agony column of a daily newspaper but she does not specify which one. The chorus recites 18 possible publications.

In 1916, mystery novelist Earl Derr Biggers (who would author his first of six lucrative Charlie Chan novels a decade later) wrote *The Agony Column* (also published as *The Second Floor Mystery*) to critical acclaim. Set in 1914 before the start of The Great War, the story opens with Geoffrey West, an American businessman visiting London, reading the agony column in *The*



Daily Mail over breakfast at the Carlton Hotel. West notices a beautiful and charming young American woman named Marian, who is reading the same newspaper feature, and he places an anonymous ad in order to meet her. To his pleasant surprise, she answers it, anonymously as well, and agrees to meet him if he writes her a letter in the paper each day for a week and his letters prove that he is “worth knowing.” Of course, West does and they wind up together and embark on a melodramatic trail of romance, mystery, intrigue and murder, as war clouds gather over England and Europe.

In 1930, Biggers's novel was adapted into a movie, titled *The Second Floor Mystery*, a Warner Bros. production directed by Roy Del Ruth, starring Grant Withers and Loretta Young as the two Americans who meet in England before the First World War through the personal columns in *The Times*.

Conclusion: The Agony Column as Victorian Social Media

The agony column served as the social media of its time, connecting those simply seeking answers to personal issues, or searching for missing

loved ones or for love itself. Though described as an almost unfeeling automaton, Holmes was possessed of a thorough grasp of human nature, with as uncanny an instinct for the intricacies of the criminal mind as a familiarity and understanding of the human heart – despite the fact that he was himself almost entirely disconnected from such personal matters. Had the tools of modern social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and today’s dating apps been at his disposal, Holmes would no doubt have employed these advanced communal forums as weapons in his crime-fighting arsenal. The agony column was one valuable arrow in his quiver which was available to him well over a century ago in his pursuit to solve mysteries or bring criminals to justice. In its day, this newspaper space was a highly successful, forerunning means of conveying private information in the public sphere.

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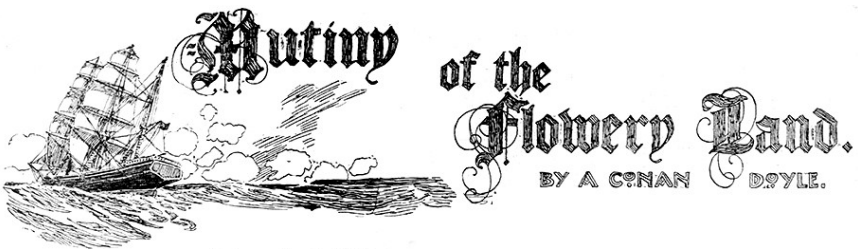
Arthur Conan Doyle and the Mutineers

By Dean Jobb

Dean Jobb teaches nonfiction writing at the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is the author of the nonfiction book, *The Case of the Murderous Dr. Cream* (HarperCollins Canada), about a Victorian era serial killer who preyed on women in England, the U.S., and Canada and became known as London's feared Lambeth Poisoner.

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in Jobb's "Stranger Than Fiction" column in the September 2020 issue of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.

William Taffer shot from his berth. Loud noises above his head – “like a beating or hammering,” he recalled – had jarred him awake. It was three in the morning. He was climbing toward the deck of the cargo vessel *Flowery Land* to investigate when he saw sailors armed with clubs, pummelling someone who was lying facedown at the top of the ladder. One of the assailants spotted him as he emerged from the hatch and struck him on the side of the head. Dazed, the second mate retreated below deck and called for the captain. There was no response. Rushing to the main cabin, he discovered the body of Captain John Smith lying in a pool of blood. He had been stabbed to death. Taffer locked himself in his cabin and waited, listening for footsteps. The mutineers, he was certain, would come for him next.



Opening illustration to Conan Doyle's mutiny story from *The San Francisco Call* on March 19, 1899.

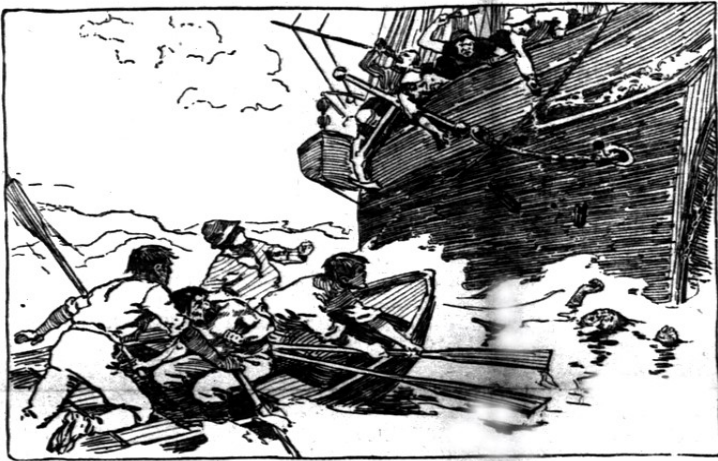
He would be the only ship's officer to survive the brutal takeover of the *Flowery Land* in the mid-Atlantic on the morning of September 10, 1863. By the time he awoke, a band of Filipino crewmen had ambushed and beaten the first mate, John Carswell, then callously thrown him overboard while he was still alive. The captain had been next and the man Taffer had seen being clubbed to death was the captain's brother, George, who was on board as a passenger. More men would die before the crew made landfall in South America and Taffer escaped to tell his tale.

"Dreadful Mutiny at Sea," proclaimed a headline in the *Liverpool Mercury* when news of the bloody uprising reached England almost two months later. By then, the surviving crew members were aboard a Royal Navy warship and on their way to London. Eight were slated to stand trial for murder in the Old Bailey, where a jury would be asked to decide who had taken part in the killings. And the mutineers' motives would soon become clear. Only one mystery surrounds the tragic tale of the *Flowery Land*, making it stand out among the many horrifying episodes of mutiny and piracy during the Age of Sail. Why did Arthur Conan Doyle, whose master detective Sherlock Holmes would have made short work of such an open-and-shut case, choose the mutiny as one of his few forays into the writing of true crime?

* * *

The *Flowery Land* – the ship's name was a common 19th-century term for China – sailed from London on July 28, 1863, bound for Singapore with a cargo of iron pipes, champagne and other wines, and bales of cotton. The crew was drawn from an array of countries – England, Spain, France, Norway, Greece, China, present-day Indonesia – but the largest contingent was a half-dozen Filipinos. These "Manila men," as they were known, spoke little English. The most fluent among them, who called himself John Lyons, acted as a go-between, interpreting the orders for the rest, who acknowledged him as their leader.

Conditions on board soon spiralled into violence. The Manila men demanded more food and complained that their water ration, three buckets a day, was not enough. "Drink salt water then," was Captain Smith's alleged response. Unable to communicate with many of his crew, the captain slapped or punched the men – "sons of bitches," he called them – who botched tasks or seemed to defy his authority. "You are come aboard my ship as able seamen, and you cannot do your work," he shouted during one tirade. The first mate, Carswell, could be just as cruel and violent. "He was a strict man," Taffer acknowledged, "but he had to be strict – he wanted his work done."



"BUT LEON AND DURANNO FELTED HIM WITH EMPTY CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES."

Final of five illustrations to Conan Doyle's mutiny story from The San Francisco Call on March 19, 1899.

Two incidents about five weeks into the voyage, after the ship reached the coast of Africa and turned west to cross the Atlantic, may have touched off the mutiny. George Carlos, a Spaniard on the same watch as the Manila men, said he was too sick to work. Carswell, convinced he was faking illness, hauled him from his bunk and lashed him to the mast as punishment. The captain, in a rare display of kindness, intervened and directed that the man be sent back to his berth and given medicine. A few days later, when Carlos was scuffling with another crewman, Carswell intervened and punched him. The obstinate Spaniard and the disgruntled Manila men, who shared a common language, were now united in their hatred of the ship's officers.

After Carswell and the Smith brothers were murdered, Carlos and the Manila men gathered outside Taffer's cabin. The second mate emerged at their command and discovered he would be spared; he was the only one left who could navigate the ship. Their new destination was the River Plate in northern Argentina. "A good country," Carlos told him, with "plenty of Spanish people there." Taffer was allowed to wrap the captain's body in canvas before it was tossed overboard, as a mark of respect. "There goes the captain," one of the Manila men muttered in Spanish as the bundle sank. "He will never more call us sons of bitches."

Tense days followed as men who had not taken part in the uprising endured threats and menacing looks. Crates of champagne were broken open and soon empty bottles and drunken men littered the deck. The

captain's money and belongings were divided 17 ways, to make everyone left on board guilty at least of theft. Taffer expected to die the moment they sighted land but John Lyons, who seemed to be in command of the mutineers, became his protector. "He showed every anxiety," the second mate recalled, "to save my life." When they reached the Argentine coast in early October, the carpenter was ordered to bore holes in the hull to scuttle the ship. There was a final round of killings as 14 men cast off in small boats. The steward and a cabin boy were murdered; the cook was left on board and drowned when the ship sank.

The sailors came ashore with a cover story – their ship had foundered far offshore and they had been adrift for days. Taffer, however, escaped and reported what had really happened as soon as he found someone who could speak English. Argentinian authorities quickly rounded up the rest of the crew.

Taffer and other survivors identified the mutineers when eight crewmen charged with murder stood trial in February 1864. Defence lawyers, unable to dispute the eyewitness accounts, suggested the *Flowery Land* might not be a British vessel, rendering the crimes beyond the jurisdiction of British law; it turned out the owner was Scottish, allowing the prosecution to proceed. Six Manila men and a seaman from the Middle East were convicted; Lyons, who had saved Taffer's life, was among the five men hanged outside London's Newgate Prison as a raucous crowd looked on. George Carlos was acquitted of murder but sentenced to 10 years in prison for his role in sinking the ship. "The crime was heinous," acknowledged London's *Daily Telegraph*, but Filipinos worked on hundreds of vessels without endangering their masters. The *Flowery Land*'s abusive officers appeared to have goaded the Manila men – the "poor sweepings of maritime places" – to kill.

* * *

Arthur Conan Doyle's 3,900-word feature on the mutiny was published in at least a half-dozen major American papers, including the *Atlanta Constitution* and *San Francisco Call*, in March and April 1899. The story was little known in the United States, where not even a bloody tale of mutiny and murder had attracted much press attention in the midst of the carnage of the Civil War.

Conan Doyle's account was accurate – he appears to have relied on British newspaper accounts and may have consulted the trial transcript – but began with an imagined conversation between the captain and the first mate before they sailed from London. Carswell supposedly warned that the unruly crew will "need thrashing into shape," and it was safe to assume the mate said something along those lines. Conan Doyle's description of

the captain, however, strayed from fact into fiction. He was “a jovial, genial soul,” he claimed, “with good humour shining from his red, weather-stained face.” It was as if he feared it would taint the honour of the Empire for readers to learn the truth, that the commander of a British vessel could be so domineering and cruel.

And when it came to describing the Manila men, Conan Doyle succumbed to the racist stereotypes and attitudes of his times. They were dangerous, untrustworthy and even looked evil, with their “flat Tartar noses, small eyes, low brutish foreheads, and lank, black hair.” Their execution, he wrote, was a “fitting consummation” to a “monstrous” crime.

What drew him to the story? In 1899 Conan Doyle was taking a sabbatical from Sherlock Holmes, after killing him off (along with arch enemy Moriarty) in “The Adventure of the Final Problem,” published in 1893. Holmes would not reappear until *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was serialized in 1901. In the years between he wrote the Napoleonic Era adventures of Brigadier Gerard and began to dabble in true crime. He published accounts of three other murder cases in the *Strand Magazine* during 1901 and would later undertake his well-known investigations of the wrongful convictions of George Edalji and Oscar Slater.

Conan Doyle would have found it hard to resist a crime committed at sea. Between 1880 and 1882, at the start of his medical career, he had served as ship’s doctor aboard a whaling vessel in the Arctic and on a steamer that cruised the west coast of Africa. He remembered the voyages as “the first real outstanding adventure in my life.” He knew ships and he knew the men who sailed them; the mate on the whaling expedition was, like Carswell of the *Flowery Land*, “a very hot-blooded man” easily provoked “to a frenzy.” Sea stories featured in Conan Doyle’s fiction, from the multiple adventures of pirate captain John Sharkey to an early ghost-ship tale, “The Captain of the *Pole-Star*.”

Something else may have attracted him to the *Flowery Land* mutiny. Conan Doyle was a law-and-order man who unleashed his Great Detective on fictional evil-doers like an avenging angel. “I am the last court of appeal,” the last hope for those seeking justice, Holmes declared in one of his early adventures, “The Five Orange Pips.” The capture, conviction and execution of the mutineers was a warning to real-world criminals; time and distance offered little protection from exposure and punishment. “No more striking example could be given,” in Conan Doyle’s opinion, “of the long arm and steel hand of the British law.”

The Other S.H.

By Bruce Harris

Bruce Harris is a member of the Sherlockian Chronologist Guild and the author of two chronology books, *It's Not Always 1895* (2022) and *The Duration Debate* (2023). He currently serves as Jabez Wilson of The Red-Headed League of Jersey.

One of the many highlights of the January 30, 2021, Bootmakers of Toronto Zoom meeting was Jim Ballinger's rendition of his own "Inspector Stanley Hopkins." [reprinted after this article] Decades earlier, Owen P. Frisbie published a clever Stanley Hopkins sonnet in *The Baker Street Journal*. (1) Neither Ballinger nor Frisbie flatter Hopkins, in fact, just the opposite. They are not alone in their criticism of the Scotland Yard inspector. T.S. Blakeney writes in *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?*, "We learn that Inspector Stanley Hopkins was a young man upon whom Holmes had at one time based high hopes, but there are signs that by November 1894 the pupil was beginning to show his inherent weaknesses, and by July of the following year he had caused the master considerable disappointment. Not without reason, either." (2) In a blistering attack, Terry A. Klasek calls Hopkins an incompetent Bozo. (3) Nicholas Utechin labels Hopkins's behaviors sad and pathetic. (4) Holmes himself berates and belittles Hopkins in "The Golden Pince-Nez:" "What did you do, Hopkins," Holmes asks, "after you had made certain that you had made certain of nothing?" Inspector Stanley Hopkins wasn't perfect. But, he deserves better.

Stanley Hopkins actively appears in three stories: "Black Peter," "Abbey Grange," and "Golden Pince-Nez." Yet in "Abbey Grange," Holmes makes the following statement, "Hopkins has called me in seven times, and on each occasion his summons has been entirely justified." Holmes's statement is proof that Hopkins shows good judgement.

One criticism against Hopkins is that he failed to identify the significance of the sealskin tobacco pouch that remained on the table at the crime scene in "Black Peter." Watson and Holmes would have us think Hopkins believed the P.C. initials stamped on the pouch stood for Peter Carey. Perhaps not. Hopkins was smarter than that. A careful reading of his statements to Holmes reveals Hopkins knows the pouch did not belong to Carey. The Scotland Yarder first says, "...he [Carey] smoked very little, and yet he might have *kept some tobacco for his friends* (italics added)."



Dr. Watson greeting Stanley Hopkins at the beginning of "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez."

Shortly thereafter, Hopkins says of Carey's small hut, "He kept the key in his pocket, made his own bed, cleaned it himself, and *allowed no other foot to cross the threshold* (italics added)." In other words, the pouch's owner had to be an unwelcomed guest in the hut and no doubt the man they were after. Whether Watson understood this is debatable. Surely, Holmes caught on. Despite having provided Holmes, albeit subtly, with the key to the mystery, Holmes chides Hopkins for arresting Neligan. Holmes claims it would be intrinsically impossible for a man of Neligan's strength to throw a spear through Carey's body. That may be true, but Steven Clarkson calls into question whether Cairns could have accomplished the task in

the manner in which he claimed. (5) Perhaps it was a two-man job (Neligan and Cairns)? They both had a motive, Neligan's the stronger of the two.

Hopkins is unemotional, Holmes tells Watson in "Abbey Grange." Clearly, a positive trait for a Scotland Yard inspector. Utechin faults Hopkins for his gullibility in the case. "The ease with which he [Hopkins] accepted Lady Brackenstall's story about the Randall gang is quite extraordinary..." (6) But reading between the lines, it is evident the clear-thinking Hopkins knew Lady Mary Brackenstall's story was bogus. After the inspector's description of the murdered Sir Eustace Brackenstall, he tells Holmes, "On the whole, and between ourselves, it will be a brighter house without him." Holmes got the message. His and Watson's farcical judge and jury act that set Jack Croker free is proof.

As previously stated, Holmes's treatment of Hopkins in "The Golden Pince-Nez" borders on bullying. But, the proud Hopkins would have none

of it. Following Holmes's obnoxious question, "What did you do...after you had made certain...of nothing?" Hopkins snaps back. "I think I made certain of a good deal, Mr. Holmes." Hopkins then lists in detail his thought processes and thorough examination of Yoxley Old Place, the furniture, and Willoughby Smith's body. Also, on four separate occasions, Hopkins states that he cannot figure out a motive for the murder. He is not alone. Deep into the case, Holmes says to Professor Coram, "What your motives are, or what exact part you play in this strange business, I am not yet able to say." Finally, in "The Golden Pince-Nez," it should be noted that Hopkins located the doomed Anna. That is, he had tracked her down to the Chatham Road where she was seen by a group of children. Pretty good police work.

Inspector Hopkins is mentioned in one other story, "The Missing Three-Quarter." When Cyril Overton arrives at Baker Street, he tells Holmes, "I've been down to Scotland Yard...I saw Inspector Stanley Hopkins. He advised me to come to you. He said the case, so far as he could see, was more in your line than in that of the regular police." Michael W. Homer suggests that Hopkins referred the case to Holmes because of his familiarity with Holmes's methods. (7) It may be a trifle, but it is more likely Hopkins sent the case Holmes's way not because he is familiar with Holmes's methods, rather, because Hopkins is familiar with Holmes. Chronologists seldom agree on dates, but several date "The Abbey Grange," before "The Missing Three-Quarter." And, more than one highly regarded Sherlockian assigns January 1897 to "Abbey Grange" and February 1897 to "The Missing Three-Quarter." (8) Hopkins is human. Despite showing no overt resentment toward Holmes's sarcastic bullying treatment of him, it had to hurt. Knowing Holmes as he did, the inspector would know that Holmes never heard of Godfrey Staunton. Of course, he is correct. By not getting involved and sending Overton directly, Hopkins figured out a way to "get even" with the blustering Holmes. Overton puts the detective in his place. "Great Scott!...I didn't think there was a soul in England who didn't know Godfrey Staunton, the crack three-quarter, Cambridge, Blackheath, and five Internationals. Good Lord! Mr. Holmes, where have you lived?" Too bad Hopkins wasn't there to witness the beat-down. Surely, at some point, Hopkins asked Overton about it and Overton told him what had happened.

Jim Ballinger's chorus rings true. "Stanley, Stanley Hopkins, Stanley Hopkins, you're going to go far. You're the brightest there be in the whole C.I.D., Stanley Hopkins, yes, you are!" Let's all join in and sing a song to Scotland Yard Inspector Stanley Hopkins.

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- (2) Blakeney, T.S., *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?* Otto Penzler Books: New York, 1993, p30.
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Inspector Stanley Hopkins

By Jim Ballinger

Young Hopkins asked Sherlock Holmes to help him with
The letter-knife murder of Willoughby Smith;
The old pair of golden-rimmed specs he was holdin'
At once should have told 'em to seek not a man.

The Anglophone says it's a pair of pince nez;
The Frenchman would say: "Mon Dieu, c'est le pince nez."
To those Scotland Yard asses it's just some old glasses
And so the clue passes right out of their hands.

CHORUS: Stanley, Stanley Hopkins,
 Stanley Hopkins, you're going to go far.
 You're the brightest there be in the whole CID,
 Stanley Hopkins, yes you are.

When called to investigate at Woodman's Lee
As gruesome a case as he ever would see
The place looked like hell and was starting to smell
But young Hopkins could tell it was not suicide.

And so he arrested the lad who attested
That Peter was dead when he came to the shed,
But Sherlock Holmes baited a trap and then waited
And elucidated how Black Peter died.

CHORUS

Young Hopkins detected that something was strange
In the robb'ry and murder down at Abbey Grange;
Lady Brackenstall told how the burglars had boldly
Walked off with the gold after sampling the grape.

The wine glasses three were the clue Holmes did see
That the widow did not tell the truth in the plot.
Jack Croker's confession revealed crimes of passion,
So learning his lesson Holmes let him escape.

CHORUS

His best attribute is he knows when he's beat
And when to call at 221 Baker Street
The case is solved faster when done by the Master
And Stanley's disaster is Sherlock's success.

Inspector Lestrade was decidedly odd,
And his buddy, Gregson, a true rotten egg, son;
That only leaves Stanley, the girls find him manly,
He comes from good family and from good address.

CHORUS

Songwriter's note: This song was written for the Bootmaker meeting held at the Toronto Harbour Commission building on 25 April 1981. It was only the second story-song I had written. I later submitted the song to The Baker Street Journal, where it appeared in the June 1983 issue. It is among my most-performed songs, with eight performances at meetings, exceeded only by Simpson's in the Strand with 12.

Conan Doyle's non-Sherlockian work in The Strand Magazine: "The Story of the Black Doctor" (October 1898)

By Mark Jones

Mark Jones is a Sherlockian and Doylean based in York, in the United Kingdom. He writes widely on all matters ACD and is co-host of Doings of Doyle – The Arthur Conan Doyle Podcast.

A few days after ending his engagement to Frances Morton, Dr Aloysius Xavier Lana, the “Black Doctor of Bishop’s Crossing,” is found dead in his surgery, badly beaten and bruised. Suspicion quickly falls on Arthur Morton, Frances’s intemperate brother, who was incensed when the marriage was called off and was seen acting suspiciously around the doctor’s house. But why did Lana act so precipitously, what is the significance of a letter sent from the Argentine Republic, and why is a portrait of Frances missing from the doctor’s surgery?

Of all the *Round the Fire Stories*, this is the one that I strongly suggest you read before continuing with this review because it hinges on the reveal, and without the reveal it has little else to commend it. ‘The Black Doctor’ has much that suggests it was a Sherlock Holmes story abandoned at the first draft: the murder setting is laden with clues; there are undisclosed motives that dictate when information is revealed; and there is a suitably dramatic ending. But it is uncharacteristically clunky in the storytelling, with a two-part courtroom sequence that could easily be one, and a very lengthy exposition rife with details that should have been more elegantly foreshadowed.

Part of the problem with ‘The Black Doctor’ for modern readers is that it bamboozles with etiquette and social norms that are alien to us today. A case in point is the use of the term ‘Black’: while we think of ‘Black’ as denoting people of African descent, late-Victorians used ‘black’ to signal ‘other’ or ‘non-white’. Lana is from Argentina and has “a stately courtesy and carriage which suggested a Spanish extraction.” We might expect a racial element to the story, given its title, but mid-Victorians tended to

judge by social standing before skin colour. As a member of a respectable profession, and one who had performed “a remarkable surgical cure in the case of the Hon. James Lowry,” Lana would be accepted in the community, as indeed is shown in the story.



The Black Doctor as illustrated by Joseph Finnemore in The Strand Magazine (1898).

The more confounding aspect of etiquette is the ridiculous focus on probity and discretion which makes the plotting of the story infuriating. During her brother’s murder trial, Frances Norton claims that Lana is alive and well, but refuses to provide the court with any corroboration, despite her brother’s life being at stake. And when Lana finally gives his account of events, he explains he was driven to act by a desire to save his would-be family from scandal, despite the scandal being nothing that would reflect badly on any party. There is a more nuanced way to explore these details and still withhold the big reveal by including a police investigation, and it is interesting that John Hawkesworth, in his 1967 BBC TV adaptation, added just this element. Like some of the other *Round the Fire Stories*, ‘The Black Doctor’ feels like a Sherlock Holmes story that didn’t make the cut.

Ultimately, the problem with ‘The Black Doctor’ is that it relies on the most heinous of plot devices — twins. We readily share

Benedict Cumberbatch’s appeal that “it’s never twins” but, sadly, here it is. We can take solace in the fact that Conan Doyle did not use it in the Canon (although he used mistaken bodies for misdirection). But there is one aspect of the story that does have interest for Sherlockians. Take the section of Lana’s statement when he describes how his brother found him: “Some Liverpool man who visited Buenos Ayres [sic] put him upon my track. He had lost all his money, and he thought that he would come over and share mine.” Is this an early working of Patrick Cairns’s visit to Peter Carey in “The Adventure of Black Peter”? It certainly has the makings. For all ‘The Black Doctor’ is a forgettable tale, we can perhaps take solace in the idea that it inspired a far better one six years later.

“Holmes gave me a brief review”



Conan Doyle - Mystery and Adventure: Inside the Lost 1967 BBC TV Series 'Sir Arthur Conan Doyle' by Mark Jones (2022, Kaleidoscope Publishing £25.99 GBP, hardcover)

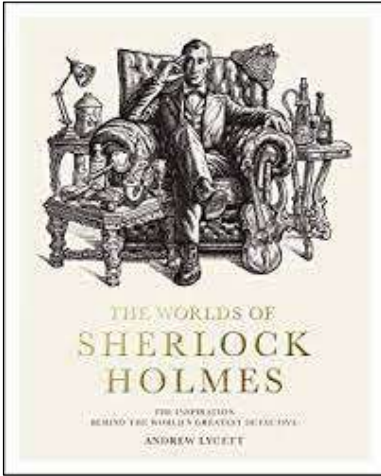
In 1967 the BBC produced and aired a successful series of thirteen 50-minute television episodes based on non-Sherlockian works of Arthur Conan Doyle (Lot. 249, The Brown Hand, Beetle Hunter, Playing with Fire, etc.) under the umbrella title *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. Unfortunately, like the contemporary 1968 BBC Sherlock Holmes series with Peter Cushing, the bulk of the episode (12 of 13) masters were wiped by the BBC for tape reuse and are now considered lost. As such, very little info on this series has been available ... until Mark Jones decided to go digging.

Having only one episode available to view (The Mystery of Cader Ifan/Gaster Fell) Jones had to mine the scripts (draft, rehearsal, camera), BBC written archives of production files, memos, letters, etc. as well as interviews (new and archive) and most importantly, ‘showrunner’ John Hawkesworth’s papers, to nail down the relevant data and create accurate synopses for each episode. The result is astonishing. Each episode breakdown also includes a section on ‘Script Development,’ followed by ‘Production Notes.’ The latter includes contextual bits on casting, shooting schedules, locations and so on. There is also an opening ‘Origins’ section that documents Hawkesworth’s drive to get the series made, including battles with the ACD Estate represented by Adrian Conan Doyle, and an ‘Afterlife’ segment that looks at Hawkesworth’s other proposed, but unmade, ACD-related projects and the lead up to his work on the Granada Brett Sherlock Holmes series. If you’ve listened to the *Doings of Doyle* podcast, or enjoyed Jones’s regular column here in *Canadian Holmes*, you’ll know the research is impeccable and is delivered in a similarly accessible manner.

This isn’t about being a good film/TV book of interest to just us Doyleans/Sherlockians, this is top-level coverage and a painstaking reconstruction of a classic ‘wiped/lost’ BBC television series. While a standout in Doylean/Sherlockian adaptation, where we’ve never seen this

depth of research applied, it's also a world-class piece of work in television/cinema studies, period, full stop. Highly recommended!

– Charles Prepolec



The Worlds of Sherlock Holmes by Andrew Lycett. (2023, Frances Lincoln, \$45.00 CAD, hardcover)

In this beautifully illustrated book, we are led to consider how the lives of Sherlock Holmes and creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were impacted by the times and places in which they lived. The book is filled with full-colour images – many familiar and many less so – but all reproduced in high-quality colour.

Conan Doyle biographer Lycett shows how both lives were impacted during those days when Victoria ruled,

when science was blossoming, and when the stories of detectives were appearing in print. The entwining of their lives is summarized in two interesting chronologies found as appendices: *Conan Doyle and World Events* and *A Chronology of Holmes and Watson*.

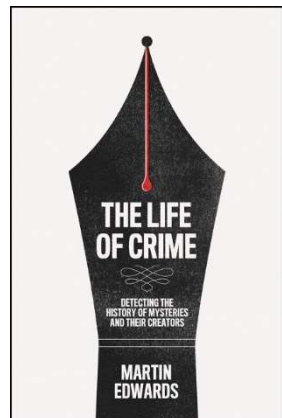
Sherlockian John Bennett Shaw was once asked, “Is Sherlock Holmes real or fictional?” His response was “Yes.” Perhaps he was anticipating a book such as this one. Both readers of Victorian history and Sherlockians will find this an enjoyable and educational read.

– Doug Wrigglesworth

The Life of Crime: Detecting the history of mysteries and their creators by Martin Edwards (HarperCollins, \$36.99 CAD, hardcover)

Edwards draws on his lifetime of knowledge to produce this in-depth study of mystery and crime fiction and the authors who have helped shape the genre. It's an ambitious work that spans the 18th century to today and travels the globe.

Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes get their due in an early chapter of this chronological



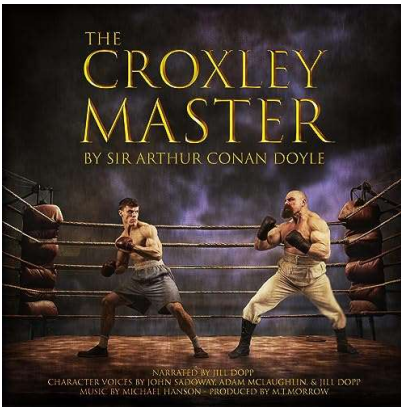
work. There's lots more for Sherlockians and mystery fans to chew on. Edwards skillfully helps readers build an appreciation of the influences on well-known writers by examining their lives and sources of inspiration.

Chapters alternate between individual authors, and genre development and themes during each era. Edwards shares his view that mystery authors often haven't received the literary acclaim they deserve.

This work is impressive in its scope and depth – pretty much any crime fiction writer you can think of gets at least a mention. This includes spy novelists and authors of contemporary thrillers. Canadian contributions are recognized, and Edwards further enhances the book by including movies and shows associated with various writers and their work.

This is a worthwhile and entertaining read, as well as being a useful reference tool. Be prepared to add to your reading list, including mysteries you haven't read before and ones you want to revisit.

– JoAnn Alberstat



The Croxley Master - A Great Tale of the Prize Ring, by: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Audible, \$6.95 USD, Narrated by: Jill Dopp, John Sadoway, Adam McLaughlin, Length: 1 hr and 34 minutes, released 2023-08-23). *The Croxley Master* is one of Conan Doyle's most popular non-Sherlockian stories. Telling the story of Robert Montgomery, a struggling medical student who steps into the prize ring to win money to finish his studies, this tale has been previously

dramatized for movies and television. This new Audible version is a delight to listen to even if you know the story well. The character of Dr. Oldacre is so well portrayed that the listener feels for Montgomery and his plight to further his education.

The beauty of an audio production is that the sounds of Montgomery's training, the sporting crowd, the boxing match and each hit during the fight comes to life and doesn't have to be imagined as when reading the story. This audiobook puts you in the middle of the ring with the sounds and the excitement of this tale.

– Mark Alberstat

BOOTMAKERS' DIARY



... it is a page from some private diary.

— *The Five Orange Pips*

Saturday, October 28, 2023

The Bootmakers of Toronto met via Zoom on Saturday, October 28, 2023, to investigate the case of “The Sussex Vampire.”

Mike Ranieri, as Mr. Meyers, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. There were 62 people in attendance.

After a number of announcements, Mike introduced our first speaker, Mark Dawidziak. He is the author or editor of 25 books, including three studies of landmark television series: *The Columbo Phile: A Casebook*, *The Night Stalker Companion* and *Everything I Need to Know I Learned in the Twilight Zone*. Mark is also an internationally recognized Mark Twain scholar, and five of his books are about the iconic American writer. He has been portraying Twain on stage for about 45 years.

Mike conducted an interview with Mark covering several topics. Mike also introduced Mark’s co-host Robert Beury, of *Kolchak’s Loop* Podcast. Robert talked about why *The Night Stalker* and *Dracula* continue to be so popular. He noted that Mark Twain and Stoker were friends. Twain wrote the Sherlock Holmes parody, *A Double-Barreled Detective Story*. Twain lived in Hartford, Connecticut, at the peak of his writing career and helped one of his neighbors, William Gillette, to become an actor.

Donny Zaldin gave the introduction to Denny Dobry. Dobry’s BSI Investiture is “A Large Airy Sitting Room,” and he is the former Headlight of the Beacon Society. The seed of a Sherlockian was planted when Denny read *The Speckled Band* in grade nine, but remained dormant until 1995, when he attended his first scion meeting. Stimulated by Paul Churchill, Denny constructed his re-recreation of the 221b Baker Street sitting room at his home in Reading, PA—now considered by many to be the most authentic and detailed recreation in the world. Denny spoke about how he built the room, showing pictures of the construction. He then showed pictures of how he filled it with authentic Victorian furniture, books and publications. Denny invited anyone who is visiting Reading, PA to contact him and come and see the sitting room.

Karen Campbell presented the quiz on “The Sussex Vampire.” The winner was Pratap Reddy. He will receive a prize from George Vanderburgh.

Karen Gold gave us a hysterically funny song about the story, “The Vampire Vamp,” sung to the tune of the “Monster Mash.”

Mike Ranieri then introduced Carlina de la Cova, to give the Wrap-Up of the story. Dr. de la Cova is an associate professor of anthropology and Undergraduate Director at the University of South Carolina, with a research interest in forensic anthropology, Victorian medicine, and teaches a course on the forensics of Sherlock Holmes.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

—Bruce D. Aikin, M. Bt., Sh.D.

Saturday, December 2, 2023

At 1:10 p.m. Mike Ranieri welcomed 33 Sherlockians in person and 29 by Zoom to The Pilot Tavern on Cumberland Ave. to the first hybrid Bootmaker meeting to look into the “Blanched Soldier.”

Meyers encouraged people to do 10-minute book reviews at meetings on any Sherlockian book they had read.

He then sang (played a recording of) a Sherlockian song, “Sherlock the Consulting Detective,” based on “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer.”

Mike introduced long-time Bootmaker and president of the Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Cliff Goldfarb.

Conan Doyle was an inveterate traveller and Cliff recounted the author’s trip to Egypt with his first wife, Louisa, where they visited familiar sights such as the Great Pyramid, and cruised on the Nile.

At the conclusion, Mike called a short break where people partook of a cold spread set out by the Pilot.

After the break, Mike introduced another long-time Bootmaker, Bruce Aikin, who spoke about A. J. Raffles, the gentleman cracksman created by E. W. Hornung, brother-in-law of Conan Doyle, and how some claim that Holmes and Raffles were cousins.

Karen Campbell as always had a crafty quiz on the story, the winner being Pratap Reddy, prize courtesy of MX Publishing.

Karen Gold, our Lassus sang “Dodd Saw a Face,” based on the Beatles’ song “I Saw a Face.”

Following Karen’s presentation, the meeting was adjourned, after which Donny Zaldin chaired our Annual General Meeting.

Mike concluded the afternoon at 3:10 p.m., thanking all who came either in person or via Zoom along with the presenters, and with a reminder that the next event would be a celebration of Holmes’s Birthday and the presentation of the Blue Carbuncle Awards. —David Sanders M.Bt.



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