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Canadian Holmes

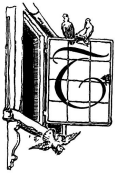
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One-hundred seventy eighth issue

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Graces of Bootprints

We have all heard many times about the empty waiting room, the endless hours and lack of patients the young Dr. Conan Doyle had while working as a general practitioner in Southsea and later as a consultant with an eye to becoming an ophthalmologist in London. It was during these hours that he began writing *A Study in Scarlet* and continued work on a long line of fiction for a variety of magazines. As with all myths there is a basis of truth but it is exaggerated to make a more compelling story.

Conan Doyle opened his Southsea practice in May 1882, and it wasn't until eight years later that he chose to end his medical career. Conan Doyle didn't pay the rent and start a family without some patients and some level of success. While reading the introduction to the new edition of *Round the Red Lamp* (see review on page 39) it becomes clear that despite scarcity of patients the young doctor was enthusiastic in his chosen profession and intended, at least at the beginning, to become a successful general practitioner or London consultant. As with most things, the more we investigate them the more nuanced and interesting they become, Conan Doyle's medical writing and career included.

In this issue Barbara Rusch takes a look at the ghostly realm and religion of Spiritualism in the Victorian age. Peggy MacFarlane examines Japanese translations of the Canon with a detailed look at the first chapter from *The Blood-Stained Wall*. Christopher Redmond hunts for information on a nearly forgotten early Bootmaker, Owen T. C. Jones. We get wrapped up in the mummy stories and Conan Doyle's influence on the horror genre by Nancy Holder. Rich Krisciunas gives us a few reasons why he doesn't like "The Adventure of the Three Students" with his tongue-in-cheek poem. Your co-editor Mark looks at a nearly forgotten 1927 contest in *The Strand Magazine* asking readers to list their favourite Sherlock Holmes stories and try to match it with Conan Doyle's list. Robert Katz has a surprising diagnosis of Moriarty and how Watson's own diagnosis of the professor may have influenced that contest on the edge of the Reichenbach Falls. We take another look at that famous meeting with John Linsensmeyer's article followed by Mark Jones's column, this time about "The Club-footed Grocer." Sherlockian songster, Jim Ballinger, is under the microscope in *Strictly Personal*. The issue wraps up with reviews and, of course, Diary Notes. Enjoy your Spring reading.

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.



Things that go bump in the night, diaphanous apparitions framed in the doorways of haunted houses, the conjuring up of spirits at séances in darkened rooms – all of these predate the Victorian age. On both sides of the pond, ghosts have enjoyed an enduring cultural heritage, from Roman and Greek mythology to the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt. The ghost of Hamlet’s father propelled the prince along his tortured journey for justice. And yet, these spooky activities have become almost emblematic of the age of Victoria, when many of its celebrated authors – from Charles Dickens to Edgar Allan Poe – boasted their own spectral characters in the form of Jacob Marley and Madeline Usher.

The Victorian fixation with the paranormal took flight with what became a kind of cult of death, known as spiritualism, whose precepts stated that life exists beyond the grave. This includes the view that communication with those who have crossed over is possible with the aid of those equipped to do so – mediums and channellers who in séance rooms reconnected loved ones who had passed beyond the veil. It was a kind of pseudo-religion which promised life everlasting, proving to be an especially powerful message in an age when traditional religion was losing its appeal, and scientists like Darwin were redefining the very origins of life and what it meant to be human. Nevertheless, at a time when death was very much a reality of life, the Victorians were on a quest for a spiritual touchstone. With curtains drawn, tambourines, trumpets and bells sounded from out of thin air, tables levitated inexplicably, and “ectoplasm,” purporting to be a preternatural substance, oozed from the orifices of fraudulent mediums. Eerie visions of lost loved ones appeared in photographs alongside bereaved family members. Queen Victoria herself had an abiding interest in the occult, in an attempt to make contact with her beloved Albert, who predeceased her into the Great Beyond by 40 years. Whether these antics constituted witchcraft, diabolic possession or mere parlour tricks, what had begun with such moral fervour was fast

evaporating into misty swirls of scandal and disreputable behaviour.

Stories of revenants returning to terrorize the living, especially innocent virgins, found their origins in the Slavic countries. Creatures of the night, they have spanned generations and, like Dr. Watson's experience of women, extend over many nations. The first published vampire tale was penned on an inclement weekend in June of 1816, when Lord Byron challenged his friends at the Villa Diodati on the banks of Lake Geneva to write a ghost story. The result was two seminal works of Gothic horror: Mary Shelley's story of the Frankenstein monster and Dr. John Polidori's tale of a bloodsucking vampire. But it is Bram Stoker's take on the undead neck-biter, *Dracula*, published in 1897, that has become the inspiration from which all other tales are merely derivative. Stoker was actor Sir Henry Irving's business manager at his Lyceum Theatre, where Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson and Mary Morstan meet Thaddeus Sholto at the third pillar from the left in *The Sign of the Four*. Possibly inspired by the very public scandals of his old school chum Oscar Wilde two years earlier, or Jack the Ripper's brutal slayings of five women in London's Whitechapel district in 1888, no other literary character has been possessed of so blatantly dark an eroticism. The tale itself has been called an allegory of repressed sexuality, in which cloves of garlic, exposure to sunlight, silver bullets and wooden stakes plunged through the heart provide the sole antidotes to Dracula's malevolent power.

Sherlock Holmes is neither fooled by fraudulent mediums nor taken in by a pseudo-religion. When confronted with the possibility of a vampire sucking the blood of an innocent baby, he famously declares: "This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply." As for the Victorians, while their methods may have been faulty, they cannot be faulted for their sincerity. Their little dramas in dimly lit chambers may have amounted to little more than passing amusements; and yet, they were searching for something greater than themselves in which to believe, those elusive secrets of life beyond our own earthly experience.

A ghostly apparition looms over ACD in this spirit photograph. An ardent spiritualist, he attended séances at the home of Dr. Thomas Glendenning Hamilton in Winnipeg, dubbed the "ectoplasm capital of the world."



Sherlock Holmes in Translation: a brief look at The Blood-Stained Wall

By Peggy MacFarlane

Peggy MacFarlane spent over 10 years as a translator and Asian Studies librarian prior to her present work in the Special Collections Department of the Toronto Public Library. She lives by the maxim that no information or experience goes to waste when it comes to the study of Sherlock Holmes.

Those of you who attended the *2022 Jubilee @ 221B* conference will have heard Mitch Higurashi's excellent presentation on Japanese translations of the Canon. Mitch certainly knows his subject. He has worked as a translator for many years, and one of his Sherlockian books recently received the Mystery Writers of Japan's 2023 award for Best Critical and Research Work.

During this presentation, the audience was introduced to a number of different translations of the Canon into Japanese. The ones that sparked particular interest were the earliest stories done during the latter part of the Meiji Era (1868-1912.) A couple of people in the audience asked if they'd ever been translated into English. Unsurprisingly, they had not. Unsurprisingly, because as a general rule, one doesn't translate a translation back into the original language. In the vast majority of cases, the end result would only be an ever more anaemic version of the author's work. However, these early Holmes stories were not just straightforward translations. The work was approached so loosely that they can be regarded as adaptations. As Mitch's audience appreciated right away, it would be interesting to see what early Japanese translators did to make these quintessentially British stories appealing and comprehensible to readers across a divide of language and culture.

I was quite curious about this myself, so as a former professional translator of Japanese, now dyed deep in Sherlock Holmes, I thought I'd take a stab at putting one of these stories back into English. The first step was sourcing the text. Although originals of these publications mostly appeared in daily newspapers and are by their nature quite rare, I was able to access some reproductions in Toronto's Arthur Conan Doyle



This illustration from a later chapter shows the pivotal scene in which Komuro finds the word “fuku” written in blood on a wall.

Collection, thanks to the 2001 publication *Meiji-ki shārokku hōmuzu honyaku shūsei* (Collected Meiji-era Sherlock Holmes Translations) edited by Michiaki Kawato, Kiyoshi Arai, and Takanori Sakakibara. This work is actually an epic three-volume set containing reproductions of quite a few stories from the era. I decided on an 1899 translation of *A Study in Scarlet* published under the grisly title *The Blood-Stained Wall*, and, since I couldn't ask our *Canadian Holmes* editors to devote the next couple of

years worth of journal issues to a translation of the whole novella, I settled for the first chapter—a significant one that retells the iconic meeting between Holmes and Watson, or, giving them the names they go by in the adaptation, Komuro and Wada.

As soon as I sat down to read it, there were some more indications as to why this story hadn't been translated already. The language of the story is archaic, much further removed from modern Japanese than the English of Victorian England is to us. Most modern readers would need to use specialized dictionaries to understand the text, and that certainly includes me. As well, in keeping with the conventions (or rather lack of conventions) of the era, there's almost a complete absence of punctuation aside from a superabundance of commas. Nothing to distinguish dialogue or questions and—worst of all—hardly any periods to prevent a sentence from careening across two or three pages. There was a total of only two full stops in the entire chapter that follows here. In wrangling this flow of words into English, I've increased the total number to 45. Not that I'm complaining. All these little oddities only made the work more compelling. I enjoyed translating this and I hope you enjoy reading it.

The Blood-Stained Wall

By “Anonymous”

Chapter 1: The Wild Grass by the Cemetery

I, Shinichi Wada, served as a military doctor in the First Sino-Japanese war. At the battles in Pyongyang and Port Arthur, I devoted myself fully to treating the hundreds that were wounded. After this, I was sent to Taiwan where I was myself shot by bandits, and an injury to my left arm forced me to retire from military duties for a while. Needing to heal in quiet, towards the end of the spring of 1897 I went to Tokyo, which was like a second home to me. I thought that I could take advantage of this time to indulge an interest I had in studying forensic medicine.

I went to visit a widow named Onami Owada who ran a boarding house in Higashitake-cho in the Hongo district where I'd lived during my medical school days, and asked her if she could take me on as a lodger again. She told me she already had one boarder, and she felt that it would be difficult to accommodate a second in the small house. “However, having known you many years I'm really reluctant to just flatly refuse you,” she continued. “What do you think of this idea? Behind this house

there's a house where a foreign missionary lives. On the second floor there's a small apartment with four rooms. It can be rented for about 12 yen per month shared between two people, and I could provide the usual meals and service. You could perhaps share it with my current lodger. He is a bit of a moody person. I don't think there's any malice in him, but I won't deceive you, there's no doubt that he can give trouble sometimes."

I had some doubts about this person, but considering my current situation, I decided that I had no alternative but to agree to the proposition. Onami was very happy to hear that I was interested and wanted to talk to him about it right away. She said, "As for accepting you as a housemate, there can only be one answer from him! He has told me many times that he'd like to rent the apartment but that he wouldn't be able to manage it on his own. I'm glad that I was able to hold the place until today. On top of everything else, he's also told me he wants to have a friend who is a doctor. This arrangement will fulfill two of his desires and he must be satisfied with it."

I was pleased with how things were going. Fortunately, the lodger was in, and Onami immediately consulted with him. He had no objection to the plan and things were immediately settled. That's how it came to be that two strangers who'd never seen or heard of each other before were suddenly set to live in the same house. It was all a bit like a dream.

Through this introduction, I met for the first time a friend who would become very dear to me. His name was Tairoku Komuro, and he was about 35 or 36. He was a little shorter than average, he had square shoulders and wore a rather dirty tweed suit. His face was angular, with a swarthy, sallow complexion. The sparse yet unruly moustache and beard beneath his short nose resembled the wild grasses that grow near a cemetery.

Although his appearance was unprepossessing, he could speak with an indescribable charm, and then suddenly look at you so sharply that it would feel like a stab to your chest. One could see that he could be dangerous. He knew himself how sharp his eyes were, and tried his best to hide it. "I always avoid looking directly at people, and while I'm talking to them, I do narrow my eyes, but it's just a habit." "Chemistry research is my hobby," he said, "but I am not going to any school at the moment. I need to continue my research. I plan to study everything in the world in terms of chemistry. In connection with this, it has been my intention to find a doctor for a friend, and I'm overjoyed to find such a companion as you. As to what my current profession is, you will naturally find that out after several days of living together."

That night, we were able to reach an agreement with the owner of the house, and the next day I moved in my few belongings. Komuro had

already moved his things into a room that was completely out of the sun, and he was doing some kind of research when I arrived. He must certainly have heard me carrying in my heavy things, but he acted like I was a total stranger, never once even showing his face. After I'd arranged and put away all my possessions and he still hadn't come out of his room, I could not bear it anymore. I pushed aside the door to his room and just as I was about to enter, he cried out, "I've finally found it!"



I was tempted to render the final sentence above as "I've found it! I've found it!" thereby quoting the actual first words Watson hears Holmes say in the Canon. It does seem close enough for a little leeway or poetic licence. However, I stuck to the plan and what you have here is a fairly straightforward translation of the text into which I have not forced any connection to the original that wasn't already there.

So, what do you think? Do you find a recognizable Holmes and Watson in the above excerpt? There are certainly echoes of the first chapter of *A Study in Scarlet*, even if we are a bit surprised at the thought of an unkempt Holmes with an unruly beard. Whether we call this first Japanese version of the first Sherlock Holmes story a translation or an adaptation, reading to this point we can already see signs that it is faithful to the spirit of the original if not to the details. Watson is still a doctor, recently injured and returned from military service. Holmes is as peculiar and brilliant as ever.

We have no name for the writer who gave us these early Holmes and Watson avatars. Coincidentally, some of Conan Doyle's own early published works such as "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley" also appeared without a byline. That alone shows us that many of the unsung writers labouring in the periodical business back then were by no means hacks. It would be nice to know the name of the anonymous writer of *The Blood-Stained Wall* and learn if he went on to write more, but as far as I know, he is destined to remain a mystery.

Unfortunately, I will have to stop here and leave the rest of this story a mystery as well. This first chapter recounting the meeting between Komuro (Holmes) and Wada (Watson) is a mere fraction of the whole. I wouldn't mind translating the 234 pages that follow, but that would have to wait awhile. Instead, I'll just close with a couple of examples of how the rest of the story follows up on this promising beginning. In many ways

it continues to run parallel to the plot of *A Study in Scarlet*. There is even a story-within-a-story section that takes place in Japan's northern island Hokkaido, instead of Utah. For Japanese readers in 1899, this would have seemed fully as remote and untamed as 19th-century America's "country of the saints." In another significant plot point that gives the translation its title, Komuro finds a couple of Japanese words written in blood on a wall. They can be read as either a woman's name or as the word for "revenge," neatly mirroring the "Rache" of the original.

Beyond this, there is much more. There is love, and loss, and avenged honour; there are guilty people and innocent ones; and there is a brilliant but fallible hero whose job is to settle it all. Indeed, it may be that the most interesting thing about comparing *The Blood-Stained Wall* and *A Study in Scarlet* is not the differences but the similarities. The more we unravel these two intertwined "scarlet threads," the more the cultural gap standing between the original and this early translation fades away and reveals the eternal themes upon which all Sherlockiana thrives.

Note: Many thanks to Kiyoshi Arai, BSI for the image that accompanies this article.

Diary Notes continued from page 40.

The 2023 Warren Carleton Award for Best Informal Presentation or Contribution was presented to Karen Gold for her Story Meeting Songs.

Runner-up was Karen Campbell for her Story Meeting Quizzes.

The 2023 Derrick Murdoch Award for the Best *Canadian Holmes* Article was presented to Karen Campbell for "The Bright Heart of the Adventure of the Devil's Foot" (Volume 46 Number 4 Fall 2023).

The runner-up was Daniel L. Friedman and Eugene B. Friedman for "The Murder of Sherlock Holmes: Deaths in the life of ACD" (Volume 46 Number 2 Spring 2023).

Master Bootmakers for 2024 were Michael Brown and Steve Emecz.

JoAnn Alberstat gave a Toast to the Canon in Canada.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. – Bruce D. Aikin M.Bt

Saturday February 24, 2024

At 1:10 p.m., after admitting everyone to Zoom, Mike Ranieri welcomed 70 attendees to "The Mazarin Stone" meeting.

Mike then introduced Steve Doyle, the first speaker of the meeting.

Continued on page 12

Founder of that great emporium

By Christopher Redmond

Christopher Redmond is a longtime Bootmaker and Sherlockian writer. Most recently he edited a collection of works by his late father, Donald Redmond, under the title Sherlock Holmes Immortal Detective (Volume I), published by Wessex Press.

There is, as far as I know, only one published list of the “founders” of the Bootmakers of Toronto. It appears in Ronald DeWaal’s 1980 *The International Sherlock Holmes*, and I have no idea who compiled or authorized it, but it’s the best we have. It states that the Bootmakers were “Founded February 4, 1972, by Eric Silk, True Davidson, D. S. Melvin, Cameron Hollyer, H. Nathan, Owen T. C. Jones, and K. McCook.”

Well now. Of that venerable crew, Hartley Nathan is still among us, and David Skene Melvin, the stormy petrel of Sherlockiana, was active in the society until relatively recent times. The lore of our early days tells us about police commissioner Eric Silk, politician (and first Meyers) True Davidson, and librarian-turned-curator Cameron Hollyer. Katherine McCook was one of Cameron’s colleagues in the literature department of the Metropolitan Toronto Library, as it then was. And that leaves Owen T. C. Jones.

I don’t remember ever meeting that gentleman, although I was a member of the Bootmakers from very early times. “He was our first treasurer,” Hartley Nathan told me recently in answer to an inquiry, adding that Jones was “a quiet, pleasant guy to talk to.” It isn’t much to go on, really. There is one mention of him in Mary Campbell’s 1997 “Bootmaker Chronology,” indicating that in December 1971, when the Library held its historic “Weekend with Sherlock Holmes,” Jones was a member of a panel discussing future directions and concluding that a Sherlockian society ought to be organized — as indeed it soon was.

The Bootmakers, organized early in 1972, were not the first Toronto-based society, as we know. Jessie Amaolo, the present curator of the Toronto Public Library’s Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, reports finding a trace of Owen Jones: he was one of three authors of a “charter” and “constitution” for the Baker Street Squires, dated 1949. (The other two were Alan Fairlie and Gordon Macpherson.) Unfortunately the Baker

Street Squires have left little trace behind them, and it is not even clear how long the group existed.

In this respect they are very different from the other Canadian society of pre-Bootmaker days, the Canadian Baskervilles, which was based in Lennoxville, Québec, and had the customary connections to Sherlockian scholars and societies in the United States. It introduced itself to the wider community through a mock-serious report in the *Baker Street Journal* in 1949. *Canadian Holmes* has published several historical notes about the Baskervilles, including a long reminiscence in 1990, and a few years later a membership list, which does not show the name of Owen Jones.

The question remains, who was Owen T. C. Jones? The indefatigable Jessie Amaolo has located a brief notice of his death in the online files of the *Globe and Mail*. It gives his full name as Owen Thomas Campbell Jones, notes his death as occurring January 7, 2005, “in his 79th year,” gives his wife’s name as Ann, and adds this much: “He had a strong love of the outdoors from skiing at Osler, Collingwood to cottaging in the Georgian Bay. As a CA [chartered accountant] and partner, he had a longstanding career with Johnson, Stewart Borne & Brown and related firms.” The funeral was held at St. Clement’s Anglican Church.

“I have only one other incident to record upon this tempestuous and melancholy day,” as Watson wrote in *The Hound*. It takes us back to 1951, two decades before the Bootmakers were even thought of (although the Baker Street Squires were presumably at the height of their glory), and to London, the centre of Sherlockian yearning and memory. The Sherlock Holmes Society that had briefly flourished there in the mid-1930s was dissolved and nearly forgotten, but talk of Sherlock Holmes was springing up anew with preparations for a magnificent exhibition as part of the Festival of Britain. Five enthusiasts got together in a pub and decided to organize a new society, and on March 16, 1951, the inaugural meeting of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London was held at the St. Marylebone Children’s Library.

Roger Johnson, writing in the *Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual* for 1951, quotes Tony Howlett, who subsequently became the great old man of the SHSoL, in a recollection of the 10 people who were present for that founding — one of whom is named as “Owen T. C. Jones (of Toronto.)” He gives no indication of how Jones happened to be at the meeting, or even to be on the eastern side of the Atlantic.

Jones was not in London for long, or so it appears from a letter he wrote in mid-April 1951 to Jack Thorne, the Marylebone librarian who was organizing material to be shown in the exhibition. The letter is now in the files of the Sherlock Holmes Collection at the City of Westminster Library

System. Jones had been back in Toronto for two weeks, he reported, and was busy with work “at the University.” (That was presumably the University of Toronto, as there weren’t many alternatives in 1951. Aged 25 at the time, Jones may have been working on his professional qualifications in accountancy.) He promised to provide Thorne and his fellow organizers with some material about the Baker Street Squires for the exhibition’s display about Sherlockian societies worldwide.

Owen Jones continued to be a member of the SHSoL as late as 1975, according to its published membership lists, but lots of people who seldom or never crossed the Atlantic from Canada or the USA also maintained that status. What is distinctive about him is that he apparently was a founder of the Squires in 1949, of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London in 1951, and of the Bootmakers of Toronto in 1972. Not a bad record for a Sherlockian who has been largely forgotten in our records!

We must make sure that in some form, at least when the story is being retold, Owen Jones is remembered. And perhaps some day a little more will be discovered about who he was, what he did, and what he thought about it all. I am grateful to Roger Johnson and Catherine Cooke of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London for their advice on this investigation and their willingness to consult the records, and particularly Catherine’s discovery of the letter from Owen Jones to Jack Thorne.

Diary Notes continued from page 9

Steve, a Sherlockian since his mid-teens, is a member of several Sherlockian societies including the BSI and The Illustrious Clients of Indianapolis, and is co-author of *Sherlock Holmes for Dummies*.

Steve spoke of several Scion Societies, mostly those in the US and some around the world.

Kathy Burns introduced the next speaker, long-time Bootmaker Barbara Rusch.

Starting with “The Mazarin Stone” Barbara spoke of the various jewels which appear in the Canon, such as those in the Great Agra Treasure.

Co-Presenters Donny Zaldin and Hartley Nathan both spoke of references to Canada in the Canon and of Conan Doyle’s visits to our country including, of course, Toronto.

Karen Campbell presented her quiz of the meeting story, won by Susan Dallinger with a perfect score of 20 out of 20.

Doing double duty, Karen Campbell next entertained us with *I am Woman*, based on the Helen Reddy song of the same name.

Mike introduced Jack Winn, who gave us an interesting wrap-up of “The Mazarin Stone.”

– David Sanders M.Bt

Mummy's the Word: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Influence on the Horror Genre

By Nancy Holder, BSI

Nancy Holder, ASH, BSI, is a Bootmaker and member of several other societies. She has written Sherlockian material for publications such as The Baker Street Journal and the Green Bag's Baker Street Almanac. Also, pastiches, comic books, and the online game The Unsolved Cases of Sherlock Holmes (Storium™). She is a New York Times bestselling author and the recipient of the Horror Writers Association Lifetime Achievement Award.

Sherlockians are experts at examining every aspect of the Sacred Writings down to what non-Sherlockians would regard as an astonishing level of minutiae. So it is with horror writers, from those who dissect the genre into multitudinous subgenres (“psychological horror,” “gothic horror,” “splatterpunk,” “nonsupernatural horror,” to name but a few) to others who insist that there is no such thing as a horror genre at all—but whose work is devoured by gatekeeping horror readers nonetheless. Laying aside this preoccupation with cubby-holing, there is no counterargument to the demonstrable fact that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle profoundly influenced the entire horror genre, and continues to do so to this day.

Here are some reflections by contemporary writers of horror/weird fiction about Conan Doyle's influence on their work:

Joe R. Lansdale, multiple-award winning horror author (1) and a co-founder of the Horror Writers Association (2), says of Conan Doyle's style:

Doyle for me was such a natural storyteller, and in many ways a voice ahead of his time for modern storytelling. He wrote cleanly and developed characters swiftly. That was the main thing I tried to steal from him. Natural unfolding of stories and quick sketch characterization that had depth. (3)

Leigh Blackmore is the former president of the Australian Horror Writers Association, of whom the Melbourne University Press *Encyclopedia of Australian Science Fiction and Fantasy* says, “His name is now synonymous with Australian horror” (4). He offers this:

...Doyle was a master storyteller who pitted his heroes’ wits against the unexplained, the mysterious and the oft-times horrific, and the gripping nature of his narratives exerted a profound influence on my own writing.... Contemporary horror writers can learn many lessons from Doyle’s masterful plot construction, techniques of narrative suspense and concise characterisation, as well as from his skillful deployment of tense mood and atmosphere.” (5)



Leigh Blackmore

Wearing my own hat as a horror writer, I point to Conan Doyle’s skillful use of ambiguity as his influence on my work. Traditionally, while the goal of fiction is to engage the reader at some level, the aim of horror fiction is to unsettle, frighten, horrify or terrify the reader. Ambiguity is one of the most effective tools a writer can use to throw the reader off balance and keep them there by withholding answers and/or closure.

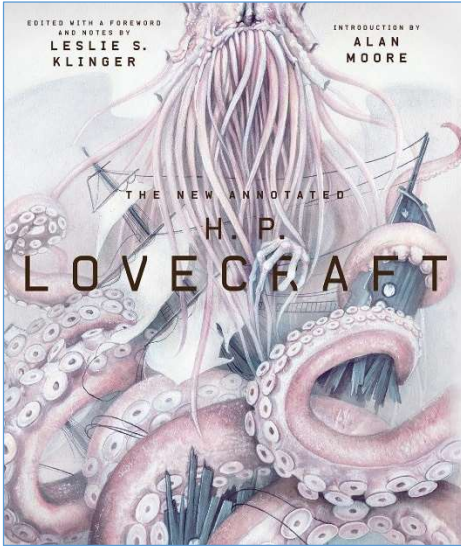
Non-Canonical stories such as “The Captain of the ‘Polestar’” and “John Barrington Cowles” are two examples of Conan Doyle’s superb ambiguity brinksmanship, inviting the reader to form their own

conclusions about the supernatural nature of the stories’ mysterious antagonists. These two weird tales have been categorized numerous ways in anthologies, collections, and lists. Both have been labelled as vampire stories. “Polestar” has also been called a ghost story and “Cowles” has been held up as an excellent werewolf story.

Much has been written about Conan Doyle’s influence on H.P. Lovecraft. Lovecraft is a towering figure in horror literature, and his influence on contemporary horror cannot be overstated. There is a

publishing cottage industry of mashups setting Holmes in Lovecraftian settings (of which I am a part) and includes many Sherlockians such as Neil Gaiman, Charles Prepolec, James Lovegrove, and Peter Cannon.

Lovecraft (1890-1937) is best known as the creator of a universe of “cosmic horror” usually shorthand as the Cthulhu Mythos. His work is steeped in an atmosphere of pervasive, unrelenting dread; his main characters are outsiders confronted with weird, supernatural beings known as the Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones. Sherlockian Leslie S. Klinger has annotated two enormous volumes of Lovecraft’s fiction. (6)



Lovecraft said: “I used to write detective stories very often, the works of A. Conan Doyle being my model so far as plot was concerned.” (7) And from a letter to August Derleth dated June 16, 1929: “In those days I got a real shudder out of things like “J. Habakuk Jephson,” “John Barrington Cowles,” “The Ring of Thoth,” & so on.... [H]e is a good author for young readers, & I can see why he impressed me so strongly in the golden age of the 90s and early 1900s.” (8)

Numerous essays by Sherlockian scholars have scrutinized Lovecraft’s “modelling” of the Canonical works in theme, characterizations, and language. Martin J. Swanson is regarded as the first to codify the many passages in Lovecraft’s “The Hound” that duplicate those in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. (9) Leigh Blackmore also presented findings on the subject in a presentation to the Sydney Passengers. (10) Gavin Callaghan (11) points to numerous parallels in Canonical stories and Lovecraft’s works, including *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, “The Five Orange Pips,” “A Case of Identity,” “The Yellow Face,” “The Red-Headed League,” and “The Six Napoleons,” and takes special note of Peter Cannon (12) and Philip A. Shreffler’s work (13) on the subject regarding “Copper Beeches.”

From “Copper Beeches”:

You look at these scattered houses, and you are impressed by their beauty. I look at them, and the only thought which comes to me is a feeling of their isolation and of the impunity with which crime

may be committed there.... It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside.

From “The Thing on the Doorstep” by H. P. Lovecraft:

Most horrible of all sights are the little unpainted wooden houses remote from travelled ways, usually squatted upon some damp, grassy slope or leaning against some gigantic outcropping of rock. In such houses have dwelt generations of strange people, whose like the world has never seen.... By necessity practical and by philosophy stern, these folks were not beautiful in their sins. Erring as all mortals must, they were forced by their rigid code to seek concealment above all else; so that they came to use less and less taste in what they concealed.

I have found that Conan Doyle’s non-Canonical supernatural stories “The Horror of the Heights” and “The Terror of Blue John Gap” prefigure Lovecraft’s work very closely in both theme and writing style. Here are passages from Conan Doyle’s “The Horror of the Heights” and Lovecraft’s “From Beyond,” both describing monsters that float high above the earth.

First, Conan Doyle:

I knew that it meant mischief. Every purple flush of its hideous body told me so. The vague, goggling eyes which were turned always upon me were cold and merciless in their viscid hatred.

And Lovecraft:

You see them? You see the things that float and flop about you and through you every moment of your life? You see the creatures that form what men call the pure air and the blue sky?

These influences on the horror field are certainly significant, but perhaps not as surprising as Conan Doyle’s creation of the Mummy as we know him in popular culture. While it’s true that other writers of the time of publication were writing about mummies (Egyptiana being in vogue), Conan Doyle wrote two mummy stories, “The Ring of Thoth,” (1890) and “Lot No. 249” (1892) that together introduced all the basic elements of familiar mummy lore: the vengeful, immortal mummy who kills off those who have crossed him (in “Lot No. 249”); the bereft lover seeking to

reunite with his beloved through the use of a mystical potion (“The Ring of Thoth”). Early writers from H. Rider Haggard to Sax Rohmer have used his mummy mythology. (14)

As M. Grant Kellermeyer, publisher of Oldstyle Tales Press, says:

His virtual creation of the mummy genre alone would secure his reputation, for what Stoker, Shelley and Stevenson are to vampires, monsters, and werewolves, Doyle is [to] the malevolent mummy—a trope that didn’t exist prior to his penning “Lot No. 249.” (15)

Anyone who reads “The Ring of Thoth” and watches the superb 1932 film *The Mummy* starring Boris Karloff will see that the film is an extremely close take on Conan Doyle. As Susan D. Cowie and Tom Johnson observe in *The Mummy in Fact, Fiction and Film*, “There is so much of “The Ring of Thoth” in Universal’s mummy film starring Boris Karloff that it is strange that Conan Doyle’s contribution is not acknowledged.” (16)



The Mummy, 1932, with Boris Karloff and Zita Johann.

From “The Ring of Thoth”:

“Your flower shall then be unwithered, Atma,” I said. “Other things may pass away, but you and I, and our great love for each other, shall outlive the tomb of King Chefru.”

From *The Mummy*:

Your soul is in a mortal body, renewed many times since we loved in Thebes of old. But that love is not for us again until the great change.

This film inspired later writers such as Anne Rice (*The Mummy, or Ramses the Damned*) and, as it happens, Joe R. Lansdale (17) —and filmmakers who have resurrected the Mummy in films, more recently those starring Brendan Fraser and Tom Cruise.

It is no surprise to Sherlockians that Conan Doyle's vast and varied body of work is overshadowed by the Canon. But the horror genre owes him a profound debt for his impact on writers in the field, his influence on H.P. Lovecraft, and his creation of the Mummy.

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My thanks to Peter Cannon, Leigh Blackmore, and Leslie Klinger for their generous assistance in the writing of this piece. All errors, of course, are my own.

Why I Don't Like The Three Students

By Rich Krisciunas

Editors's note: This tongue-in-cheek poem was first presented to the Bootmakers at a June 2021 meeting.

The Canon's stories have been rated and ranked
By Conan Doyle, Sherlockians and the rest.
In Watson's retelling of the adventures
This one's definitely not close to the best.

A half chapter of Thucydides copied. That's all?
There's no murder, no blackmail or ransom to pay.
No vampire, snake bite or secret society.
No one's kidnapped or poisoned. There's no foul play.

No Irene's or Violets. No ladies at all.
No client climbs the seventeen steps at Baker Street.
No hasty rides on trains or hansom cabs.
The weather's fine. Not even a threat of fog or sleet.

No hiding in the dark or an amputated thumb.
No ladies found in coffins to heighten the suspense.
No secret papers stolen or wrongs to avenge.
There's not a single shooting done in self-defence!

Let's peruse the story a little more closely.
Somebody has eyeballed the tutor Soames's test.
Holmes's plan to study early English Charters
Was cut short so he could try what he does best.

The three suspects were living on the floors above.
However, we barely heard any of them speak.
There's no interaction. Few details about them.
Admit it, their character development's weak.

There's the Indian; "inscrutable and quiet."

There's rude Miles McLaren who won't open his door,
A guy named Gilchrist who doesn't have a first name!
Why couldn't we have learned just a little bit more?

But the biggest flaw in Watson's storytelling
Is the question of why Holmes got involved?
If he'd just remained back at the library.
This is a case that would still have been solved.

While Holmes spied a pencil and sawdust from a shoe,
The butler correctly identified the examination cheat.
The thief confessed and packed his bags to Rhodesia,
Way before Holmes's investigation was complete.

I thank you all for listening patiently.
Hopefully you're convinced and I think you'll agree,
Watson's other stories are all so much better.
Any way you read it, this one's all Greek to me.

A Sherlock Holmes Competition

Set by A. CONAN DOYLE

£100 Cash Prize and 100 Autographed Copies of "Memories and Adventures"

In the following article Sir A. Conan Doyle makes the interesting announcement that from the forty-four Sherlock Holmes stories already published in book form in four volumes he has selected the twelve stories which he considers the best, and he now invites readers to do likewise. A sealed copy of this list is in the Editor's possession, and a prize of £100 and an autographed copy of Sir A. Conan Doyle's "Memories and Adventures" is offered to the sender of the coupon which coincides most nearly with this list. In the event of ties the prize of £100 will be divided. The actual order of the stories will not be regarded. Autographed copies of "Memories and Adventures" will also be awarded to 100 readers submitting the next nearly correct coupons.

An illustration from each of the stories is here given. Each illustration being numbered, competitors need only state on the coupon (which will be found on page 68 of the advertisement section) the numbers of the stories selected.

The four volumes of stories, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," "The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes," "The Return of Sherlock Holmes," and "His Last Bow," are published by Messrs. John Murray in two-shilling editions and may be obtained from all booksellers.

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES TO HIS READERS

By A. CONAN DOYLE

I FEAR that Mr. Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences. This must cease and he



1.—A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA.

must go the way of all flesh, material or imaginary. One likes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of imagination, some strange, impossible place where the beaux of Fielding may still make love to the belles of Richard-

son, where Scott's heroes still may strut, Dickens's delightful Cockneys still raise a laugh, and Thackeray's worldlings continue to carry on their reprehensible careers. Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla, Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated.

His career has been a long one—though it is possible to exaggerate it.



2.—THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE.

ACD's Baker Street dozen

By Mark Alberstat

Mark Alberstat is Co-editor of Canadian Holmes, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars and has written and edited many articles on Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle for a variety of publications. He has also spoken on his favourite topic of Conan Doyle and sports across North America and England.

What is your favourite story of the Sherlockian Canon? Most readers of this question will have heard it before and have an answer ready. What are your favourite 12 stories? Now, that is a question that might take some time to ponder.

It was just such a question that readers of *The Strand Magazine*, in the March 1927 edition were asked. After consideration they could submit a list of their 12 favourite Sherlock Holmes adventures. The contributor whose answer came closest to Conan Doyle's list of 12 favourites would win £100 and an autographed copy of his *Memories and Adventures*.

The astute Sherlockian will note that this issue is just one edition before the last of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories, "Shoscombe Old Place," published in the April 1927 edition. For today's readers we would imagine 60 stories in our favourite Canon. However, at the time, readers were to choose from the first 44 stories that had been published in book form; this contest did not include *The Case Book* and the four novels.

The contest was advertised on the cover of the March 1927 edition and began on page 281. The contest opened with three paragraphs describing the rules and prizes and was followed by an 870-word essay by Conan Doyle. This essay is interesting as it gives some insight into Conan Doyle's thoughts on Holmes at the time, just three years before the author's death.

The essay opens with Conan Doyle's fear that Holmes: "like one of those popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences." He then goes on to remind readers that Holmes is a literary creation like "Dickens's delightful Cockneys" and will be consigned to some type of "fantastic limbo" like other "children of imagination." He also opens the field saying that while Holmes and Watson are in "some humble corner of such a Valhalla," the stage is open for another detective and comrade to take their place.

Although for Sherlockians it is always 1895, the essay shows that Conan Doyle felt he kept Holmes moving with the times. "He began his adventures in the very heart of the later Victorian Era, carried it through the all-too-short reign of Edward, and has managed to hold his own little

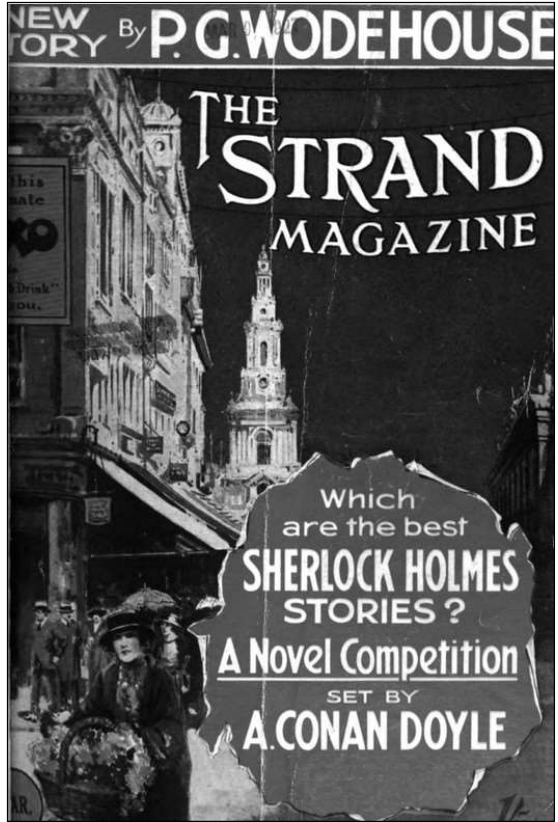
niche even in these feverish days. Thus it would be true to say that those who first read of him as young men have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine. It is a striking example of the patience and loyalty of the British public.”

Conan Doyle reiterates that he felt writing the Holmes stories took him away from concentrating on better things, but, in this retrospective essay he admits that: “I have never regretted it [resurrecting Holmes], for I have not in actual practice found that these

lighter sketches have prevented me from exploring and finding my limitations in such varied branches of literature as history, poetry, historical novels, psychic research, and the drama.”

By the late 1920s, the Sherlockian game was being played and commentary and criticism of the stories had begun. Clearly Conan Doyle was aware of the criticism that the later stories were not as strong as those at the beginning and in response he wrote: “Let me preserve the hope that he who in days to come may read my series backwards will not find that his impressions are very different from those of his neighbour who reads them forwards.”

The results of the competition were announced in the June 1927 edition. The two-page article opened with a three-paragraph note about the winner, a short introduction to Conan Doyle’s article “How I Made My List,” and the announcement that the first six of these stories would be republished in “The Grand Magazine,” beginning in July of that year.



The contest was won by Mr. R. T. Norman of Spring Hill, Wellingborough, Northants. Norman named 10 of the 12 stories chosen by Conan Doyle. Seven people chose nine stories correctly and “a great number” chose eight correctly. Autographed copies of *Memories and Adventures* were sent out to 100 competitors.

Conan Doyle admits that when he was first asked to create the list, he thought it would be “the easiest thing in the world...In practice I found that I had engaged myself in a serious task.” He goes on to say that he had to re-read the stories with some care to consider the challenge.

Near the end of the essay, Conan Doyle lists nine stories for the final two spots. He writes that “The racing detail in “Silver Blaze” is very faulty so we must disqualify him.” The final spot is given to “The Reigate Squires” since “on the whole Holmes himself shows perhaps the most ingenuity” in all the stories available to choose from.

Conan Doyle concludes the essay, and thus the contest, by writing: “It is proverbially a mistake for a judge to give his reasons, but I have analysed mine if only to show any competitors that I really have taken some trouble in the matter.”

Conan Doyle’s list:

The Speckled Band
The Red-Headed League
The Dancing Men
The Final Problem
A Scandal in Bohemia
The Empty House

The Five Orange Pips
The Second Stain
The Devil’s Foot
The Priory School
The Musgrave Ritual
The Reigate Squires



Hunted or Hunter?: Watson's Surreptitious Diagnosis

By Robert S. Katz, MD, BSI

Robert Katz is a retired physician, specializing in Pathology, and resides in Morristown, New Jersey. He is a member of The Baker Street Irregulars (“Dr. Ainstree”), has been the Co-Publisher of BSI Press, and currently serves as the Cartwright of the BSI. He is a member of various scion societies, has been active in public speaking and publishing, and is delighted to be appearing again in Canadian Holmes.

There has always been something unsettling about the Holmes/Moriarty confrontation. While it has constantly been presented as a veritable clash of titans, an Armageddon between the intellectual forces of good and evil, a few things just do not ring true about the events. In fact, a careful analysis of the events of the Reichenbach Falls shows that Doctor Watson may have more to do with the triumph of Sherlock Holmes than previously recognized.

Among the pleasures of the Canon are the many remarkable descriptions that the words of Holmes and the pen of Watson provide to the reader. Perhaps no other section is more evocative than the description that Holmes offers of Moriarty to Watson in “The Final Problem.” We read those few well-chosen words and come away with a very precise image of Moriarty. Yet, Holmes perhaps forgets that he is speaking not only to a gifted writer but also to a trained physician.

In a remarkably brief commentary, Holmes tells Watson five things about Moriarty. He has rounded shoulders. His face protrudes forward. His head oscillates in a peculiar manner. He sits motionless. His eyes are described as deeply sunken and puckered.

While it is important to note that nearly everything we know about Holmes is what Watson chooses to tell us about him. In this instance, what he chooses not to tell us is even more important. Watson, with his medical education and experience of practice, would immediately recognize that Moriarty is suffering from an advanced form of Parkinson’s disease.

Each of the five phrases used by Holmes is immensely significant. Parkinsonism is, to keep matters simple, a neurologic disorder of

movement and muscular action. The interested reader can find useful resources about this condition throughout the internet. This article will focus on those of relevance to this story.

First, patients with Parkinsonism have stooped, or rounded, shoulders. This reflects diminished upper body muscular activity and control.

Second, and as a result of the shoulder repositioning, the face and head protrude forward.

For Moriarty, these two changes would alter his centre of gravity. In normal activity, having an appropriate center of gravity enables us to stand erect and avoid falling. The stooping/rounding of shoulders renders the centre of gravity forward, affecting balance and, subsequently, the ability to avoid falling. Falls represent a major problem for people with this diagnosis.

An added issue here is what is known as paucity of gait. Individuals with this illness often move in small, shuffling steps, slowly and with difficulty. Compounding the problem is cogwheel rigidity. Movements of the limbs usually proceed in a single, fluid manner. Patients with Parkinsonism move their limbs in a slow, jerky fashion, similar to the actions of a cogwheel. All of these combine to limit mobility, speed, and balance in this disorder.

Third, and hugely important, is Moriarty's head oscillation. The tremor, or shaking, so often seen here usually involves the hands or other extremities. However, the head can be affected and something resembling oscillation can be one type of abnormal head movement characteristic of the diagnosis.

Fourth, as Parkinson's disease is a matter of limited and slow movement, a state of what is known as akinesia can sometimes occur. This indicates a total absence of movement, with an abrupt episode leaving the patient motionless. Moriarty may sit motionless in the centre of his web, but critical is the fact that he sits motionless.

Fifth, and perhaps more subtle, is the odd nature of Moriarty's eyes. In Parkinsonism, the movement of all parts of the body is diminished, including those of the eyelids. There simply is not enough blinking. This forces the eyes to become dry and the eyelids can become inflamed, a condition known as blepharitis. This can cause redness and swelling. In some cases, the eyelids are so dry that they become stuck together. The irritated and inflamed appearance of Moriarty eyes can lead to their description as sunken and puckered.

Parkinson's disease was described long before Watson received his medical education. As a result, the eloquent and graphic word picture painted by Holmes would lead to an almost reflexive diagnosis by Watson.



This illustration is one of three by French artist Martin Van Maële. Van Maële illustrated many Sherlockian stories for the Société d'Édition et de Publications.

But here is where what Watson does not tell us becomes massively important.

Physicians develop, rather early in their training, a unique worldview. Small, seemingly unimportant matters acquire much significance. Most doctors would, essentially as a knee-jerk reaction, blurt out that Moriarty had Parkinson's disease. Yet, for reasons that will soon become apparent, Watson omits this part of his dialogue with Holmes. Holmes, with his thirst for information, would quiz Watson at length about any and all aspects of this affliction. He might soon know more about Moriarty than Moriarty realized about himself.

Beyond discussing the five issues mentioned above, Watson does not tell us that he imparted an additional and key bit of information. Patients with Parkinson's Disease have what is known as an abnormal postural righting reflex. Unaffected people have the ability to stop themselves from falling if they should lose their balance; this process is known as "righting." We can regain balance and prevent an actual fall. In Parkinsonism, this ability is minimized or possibly absent altogether. Moriarty, with his rounded shoulders and protruding head offering an

inadequate center of balance, would be at risk of falling under any conditions. If he were to step on something or slip, his poor postural righting reflex would render him unable to pull himself back to an erect state, and a fall could promptly ensue.

Once he became armed with this information about Moriarty's neurologic issues, Holmes devised a remarkable plan to deal with his nemesis. Yet, the plan has a devious aspect and Watson would never, could never, reveal that his diagnosis, spoken to Holmes but not to us, started the process.

The flight of Holmes and Watson across the Continent, ending up in Meiringen, has been portrayed as the Sherlockian version of The Odyssey. The malevolent Moriarty, who is intent on killing Holmes, pursues our two heroes across Europe. The epic ends with Holmes

unselfishly allowing Watson to be lured away at the last minute and, apparently, gives his own life in the process of battling the Professor.

Much of this part of "The Final Problem" does not really hold up to scrutiny. In reality, the two put on an elaborate show, changing trains, abandoning luggage, and trekking across the Continent. But they determine the itinerary, not Moriarty. The Professor is not actually in hot pursuit. He is being lured, effectively following the two, as opposed to chasing them and constraining their movements. Holmes chooses to



Professor Moriarty as illustrated by Sidney Paget in The Strand Magazine, December 1893.

conclude his journey at the Reichenbach. Moriarty has no option but is compelled to go there as well.

One might, at this point, ask why Moriarty reacted this way. After all, he was the Napoleon of Crime. But in advanced Parkinson's disease, there can be an impairment of cognition and it must, at a minimum, if this once great mind was now in reduced condition, be affecting his judgment and allowing Holmes to always have the upper hand. The field of battle was not a coincidence.

In addition, Holmes was supremely aware of his own reputation. For Sherlock Holmes (as the world's first Consulting Detective, as a man who could not resist a touch of the dramatic, and as someone who would have made a fine actor), a certain element of pride and ego was involved. To become a superhero, it is necessary to defeat a foe of equal or even greater strength. An early example of this would be David versus Goliath. To establish his own place in posterity, Holmes needed to defeat the Napoleon of Crime, even if his impairment were kept secret, in order for Holmes to become the Napoleon of Detection. Intriguingly enough, the effects of this battle reverberated throughout future literature. Would Batman have been as impressive had it not been for The Joker?

Holmes dealt with Moriarty and created his own myth. Knowing that Moriarty was seriously disabled, Holmes could not engage him in a public or witnessed fight. The world would perceive this as unfair. How could The Master take advantage of someone with such profound limitations?

Aware of Moriarty's circumstances, Watson needed to be out of the way when the ultimate confrontation occurred. Even the most juvenile of readers would recognize the note received by Watson calling him back to the hotel to tend the sick Englishwoman as a patent ruse. The impression, fostered by Holmes, is that this was the work of Moriarty. But the only evidence of this is what Holmes divulges. Perhaps Holmes himself perpetrated the hoax to keep Watson away from the mountaintop.

Why, then, does the contest end on a cliff by a waterfall? Holmes knew that he needed to fight Moriarty in a place where no one would see them and realize it was an unequal contest. He also wanted to be at a place where an adversary who moved slowly, had an inadequate center of gravity, might have had swollen eyelids and blurred vision, and had really poor balance would be at great risk. The top of a mountain where a topple would be fatal is clearly the ideal place. And to make it an even more certain victory, the presence of a nearby waterfall would make the ledge wet and slippery, leading someone with Parkinson's Disease even more likely to lose equilibrium and plummet to a certain death.

Holmes had to invent his use of Baritsu to make the story of the fight believable. He had no use of arcane Japanese martial arts. All he had to do was give Moriarty one good push, and The Professor would lose balance and topple over the cliff. It was a fight to the death, but because of Watson's diagnostic skill, the issue was never in doubt. And since it was never in doubt, even after the return of Holmes in "The Empty House," Watson would understand that he could not reveal the implications of his clinical acumen. By then, Holmes was a world figure and, far from dead, had returned to the world stage. Watson's reflexive blurting out of "this man has Parkinson's disease" changed both their lives but had to remain a deep secret, as it would put so much about Holmes into a different frame of reference.

Watson's contributions to the life and works of Holmes are many and varied. He was friend, biographer, physician, and partner to Holmes for so many years. Had he not put pen to paper, we would not have the wonderful record of his accomplishments and their adventures together. But Watson's diagnosis of Moriarty's neurological ailment had to remain unreported. Just this once, Watson was both biographer and enabler. As such, the complete story would lack the heroic qualities of the other tales if we, the readers, knew that Holmes merely had to throw, perhaps just nudge, a disabled man over a cliff. But it was Watson, trained physician that he was, who provided the information that allowed Holmes to turn from being the hunted to the hunter.

Author's Note – This article represents a revived, updated, and expanded version of an article that originally appeared in *The Watsonian*, Volume 2, Number 1, Spring 2014. The current version was delivered as a presentation to The Bootmakers of Toronto at a meeting held on February 25, 2023.

The Story of the Reichenbach Falls

By John Linsenmeyer, BSI

John Linsenmeyer has been an investitured Baker Street Irregular for 52 years, and is also a member of The Bootmakers of Toronto and The Five Orange Pips. He formerly edited The Baker Street Journal and is a retired commercial barrister. He lives in Riverside, Connecticut.

The events involving Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson, Holmes's great adversary Moriarty and tangentially Col. Sebastian Moran are described in some detail in "The Final Problem," and later in "The Empty House." Watson reports that the sinister Moriarty had visited their rooms in Baker Street – apparently meeting Holmes *tete-a-tete* for the first time. He was there to complain that Holmes was inconveniencing his criminal schemes, and to demand that Holmes desist. This demand was followed by threats, which Holmes brushed off.

Promptly thereafter came three bumbling attempts on Holmes's life: he was almost run down by a speeding two-horse van; someone tossed a brick at him from a roof; and he was assaulted by a ruffian whom Holmes knocked down and turned over to the police.

Skiping incidental details, Holmes and Watson then crossed the Channel and headed for Switzerland and the tourist attraction of the Reichenbach Falls.

To understand the full events of their Reichenbach meeting as reported by Holmes to Watson in "The Empty House," we are told that both men were *unarmed!* – on the cliff next to the 656-foot drop into a churning cauldron of water. They grappled; Holmes tossed Moriarty off the cliff but then decided to pretend that he was dead and departed for three years on his Great Hiatus.

Though Watson was deceived, reportedly Moriarty's chief lieutenant Moran was not. Observing Holmes climb carefully down the steep rocks, this battle-hardened soldier and famous big game shot from India attempted to do Holmes in...by tossing rocks at him. Please!

This story of an arch-criminal's encounter with the great detective simply will not stand scrutiny. We can begin with the ridiculous tale that the Napoleon of Crime would meet his pursuer unarmed with a plan to do him in by tussling over a cliff. Imagine a 19th century version Mafia Don Corleone meeting his main rival on the Brooklyn Bridge for a fistfight — loser to be tossed into the East River. For that matter, imagine Holmes,

who had ready access to firearms from his best friend, going to encounter his arch-enemy without borrowing Watson's ever-reliable service revolver in case Moriarty or his gang came equipped, as any sensible gangster would be, for a serious encounter.

But the story gets even sillier. Holmes claimed that Moriarty's chief henchman, a retired Indian Army colonel with a stellar combat record who was moreover a famous hunter, was in the neighbourhood, apparently to back up his boss. Did Moran bring his deadly hunting rifle (which would attract no attention in Switzerland if Moran claimed he brought it for some chamois or other mountain hunting) or even his service revolver? No indeed; the story was that Moran's equipment for backing up his boss was limited to any rocks he might pick up.

Suffice it to say that Holmes's story of events at the Reichenbach Falls was simply a canard. I have no doubt that he somehow did Moriarty in, but as to why he concocted this tale of his own death followed by three years absence, I have no idea. Fine pastiche authors have suggested that he wished to conceal the fact that he was going somewhere on the Continent, Vienna perhaps, to get expert help with his cocaine addiction –which disappeared after the Reichenbach tale.

It's even possible that Mycroft and Her Majesty's Government had commissioned some ultra-secret job – who knows what? Maybe Holmes was off solving the mystery of the ship Matilda Briggs' association with the giant rat of Sumatra. In fact, such a secret mission is more likely, at least following his cure for cocaine addiction, which would hardly last three years.

I respectfully submit, however, that whatever was going on, it was not the patently fictitious story of Reichenbach which he fed to the adoring Watson.



The Great Falls of the Reichenbach
by Joseph Mallord William Turner
(1775–1851)

Conan Doyle's other work for The Strand Magazine: "The Story of the Club-Footed Grocer"

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.

John Maple is surprised when, out of the blue, his estranged uncle, a former grocer of ill-repute, requests he join him in the North of England. Although Uncle Stephen insists the long journey will be worth it, the stout lad becomes suspicious when he is told to leave his train one stop early and await collection. Despite his better judgement, John makes the trip and meets his agitated uncle at a remote farmhouse, only to find the small party besieged by a mysterious band of visitors, intent on exacting revenge...

"The Club-Footed Grocer," first published in the November 1898 edition of *The Strand Magazine*, has the feeling of being a compilation of scenes and motifs from various Conan Doyle stories, many of which had only recently been penned. The setup is reminiscent of "The Beetle Hunter," which shares an evocative train journey into the wild English countryside, while Uncle Stephen's dark secret has a touch of "The Sealed Room" about it. There is a shade too of *The Sign of the Four* (and *The Moonstone*) in the pursuit of stolen gemstones (had Jonathan Small retrieved the Agra treasure, one wonders if his wooden leg wouldn't have made a good hiding place). The story also pre-figures what was to come with angry sailors, cheated of a fortune, finding their echo in "Black Peter" (a story also foreshadowed by last issue's "The Black Doctor") and the family rift and mysterious request for aid which was upcycled with finesse for "The Norwood Builder."

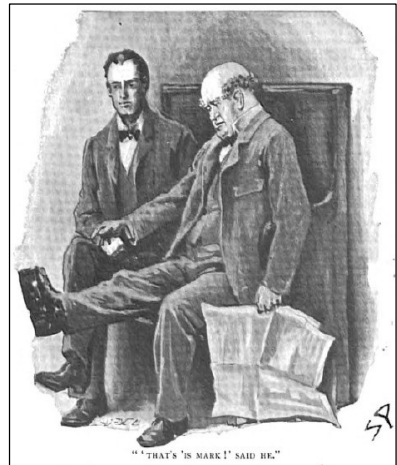
In fact, all these stories flow from the mainspring that is Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Pavilion on the Links" (1880), a short story Conan Doyle cited as the best in English, and which he appreciated so deeply as to have a preference between published variants. "Links" centres on a siege in a similarly remote landscape, with a mystery that hinges on the past life of one of the Pavilion's occupants. As well as these plot

similarities, the sailors in “Grocer” escape in a strange cutter that sails the coast, in a mirror of the arrival of the peculiar party on the Scottish border coast in “Links.”

The foreboding and lonely setting, while borrowing from “Links” and numerous other gothic tales, owes much to a real-life locale, Masongill in North Yorkshire, where Conan Doyle’s mother and sisters lived with the former family lodger, Bryan Charles Waller, for 35 years. Congleton Station can easily be seen as the real-life Ingleton, two miles south-east of the Masongill estate, where the Midland Railway would have deposited Conan Doyle on family trips to the north. Arthur’s fractious relationship with Waller plays out in the description of the “bleak and sad and stern” landscape: “In all England, there is no harsher or more impressive scenery... It was a depressing country, and my heart grew heavier and heavier as I neared my journey’s end.” Similar descriptions can be found in “Uncle Jeremy’s Household” (1887) and “The Surgeon of Gaster Fell” (1890), both set in proxies of Masongill.

On a lighter note, one wonders why Conan Doyle had it in for cockney grocers! In “Selecting a Ghost,” Silas D’Odd is a pompous *nouveau riche* grocer from the East End of London who gets his comeuppance at the hands of a fraudster. Here, Stephen Maple is from the same area (Stepney Highway, neighbourhood of the Bar of Gold and Dorak’s shop) and boasts a “villainous accent,” while in *The Firm of Girdlestone* (1890) there is a grocer’s man who looks “so pompous and inflated in his gorgeous attire that his own cabbages would hardly have recognized him.” Over-charged for the weekly shop? Perhaps.

While not a notable entry in Conan Doyle’s *oeuvre*, “Grocer” has its moments. The set up is suitably intriguing, particularly the hurried change of instructions to young John, and there is some typically snappy character description and dialogue (Uncle Stephen’s eyelashes like the legs of a woodlouse!) The revelation is nicely handled too, with enough casual references to the club-foot to misdirect the casual reader, if not the more attentive. But kudos to Conan Doyle for laying the solution in the title – a bold move if ever there was one.



One of eight Sidney Paget illustrations from The Strand Magazine, November 1898.

Strictly Personal

Where a Canadian Sherlockian goes under the microscope.

Name: Jim Ballinger

Age: Born 100 years after Sherlock Holmes

Birthplace: Women's College Hospital, Toronto.

Occupation: Retired after 31 years as radiopharmaceutical scientist in Canada and Britain.

Current city of residence: Toronto; recently returned after 24 years away, which included 14 years living 10 km south of 221B Baker Street.

Major accomplishments in life: Writing 60 songs about the Sherlock Holmes stories, introducing them at Bootmaker and Spence Munro meetings, and making them more widely available through print and video.

Goal in life: To get out of it alive.

In school I excelled at: Recess.

A great evening for me is: Any time spent with Deborah and a glass or two of wine.

Favourite dining experience: Though I have recovered after 15 years as a pescatarian, I still particularly enjoy swordfish or sea bass.

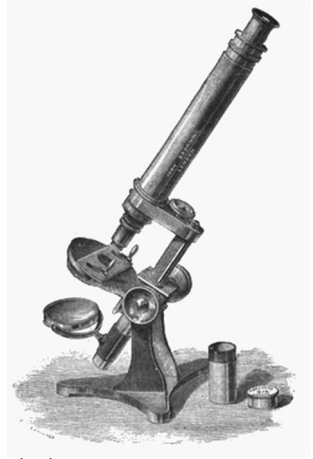
Other hobbies and interests: I've participated in a variety of musical activities over the years.

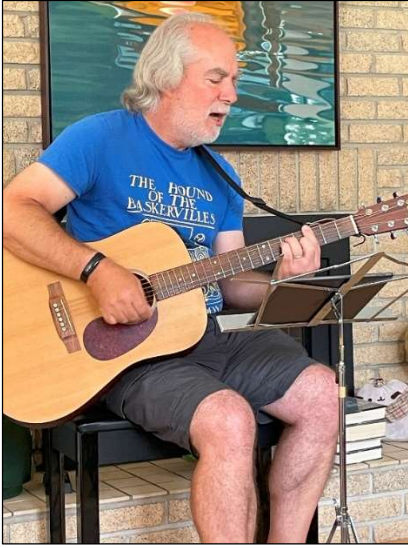
I'm currently working on: Version 2 videos of the 60 songs, an audiobook, and a website.

Three favourite canonical tales: The Red-Headed League, The Empty House, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Three least favourite Canonical tales: *The Valley of Fear*, The Lion's Mane, The Red Circle

Favourite non-Sherlockian reading: Contemporary mysteries, particularly Canadian, British, and Scandinavian.





Favourite Sherlockian movie: *The Hound* (1939)

Favourite non-Sherlockian movie: *Mon Oncle Antoine* (1971)

Most prized possession in my Sherlockian collection: Photocopy of “A Baker Street Song Book” by Harvey Officer, given to me by Cameron Hollyer

If I could live at anytime in history, it would be: London, 1895

First learned of The Bootmakers: I grew up in Leaside, which was annexed by East York, whose mayor was True Davidson, a founding

Bootmaker. Any news story about her mentioned her quirky pastime. My parents encouraged me to join.

I would like my epitaph to read: Not dead yet

My last words will be: Here, let me help you lift that grand piano.

What question do I wish I would have been asked: Where can one buy copies of *Sherlock Holmes in Song* by Jim Ballinger, edited by Mark Alberstat? Answer: www.mxpublishing.com

“Holmes gave me a brief review”

The term “podcast” is a portmanteau of “iPod” and “broadcast.” It was coined in 2004 by journalist Ben Hammersley in an article for *The Guardian* newspaper. At the time, Apple’s iPod was gaining popularity as a portable media player, and the emergence of RSS feeds and audio content distribution on the internet led to the creation of what we now know as podcasts. While the iPod has gone the way of the dodo, the term podcast persists, leading to a rather vague generic term for all audio (and video) content.

The two podcasts I am reviewing here are not what I would call podcasts—which I take to generally mean: interviews, reviews, opinions,

news, and chit-chat. These are professionally produced radio, or audio, dramas. Radio drama, after a decline with the advent of television, has had a remarkable resurgence with the internet, audiobooks, and podcasting.



I reviewed Audible’s *Moriarty The Devil’s Game* for the Summer 2023 edition of *Canadian Holmes* (V46N3). Continuing the series is *Moriarty: The Silent Order*, again by scriptwriter Charles Kindinger. Flipping the traditional Holmes story on its head, with Moriarty as the good guy and Holmes as the bad-guy, this time Moriarty and Holmes must work together to fight an even greater nemesis. This villain comes in the

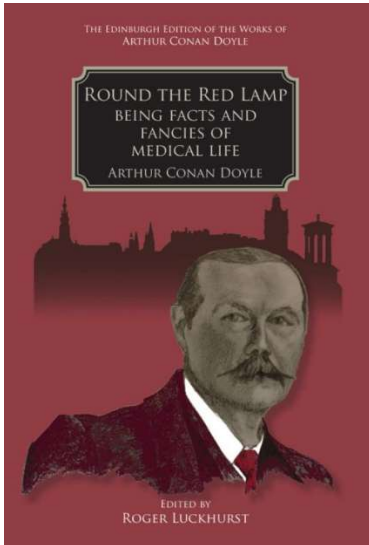
form of distinguished actor Dame Helen Mirren, portraying the devilish Lady Milverton. Dominic Monaghan (Moriarty) and Phil LaMarr (Holmes) return in their leading roles. Moriarty wants to track down the woman he loves but discovers that she is trapped in the web of a shadowy cabal of evil that’s growing stronger every day!

I found this installment a little more convoluted and harder to follow than the last one but the all-star cast’s performances, paired with a meticulously crafted sound design, make *Moriarty: The Silent Order* a truly electrifying audio experience. Season 2 ended with a setup for a Season 3, which I am certainly looking forward to.

Sherlock & Co. is a weekly “podcast,” i.e. audio drama, that turns the classic Conan Doyle Sherlockian Canon into modern-day adventures. The true crime podcast element, à la *Only Murders in the Building*, is what distinguishes it from BBC’s *Sherlock* and CBS’s *Elementary*. The listener follows novice podcaster Dr. Watson as he documents his and Sherlock’s adventures. The podcast device, along with a more pronounced “Oscar and Felix” type Holmes and Watson, also provide for much of the humour in the show. Paul Waggott, plays Watson, a former combat medic who teams up with the brilliant but eccentric Holmes, voiced by Harry Attwell.

Creator and writer Joel Emery’s intention was to bring Conan Doyle’s short story format back into the limelight, and to make Watson’s journey into crime-solving just as interesting as the cases themselves. Sometimes the exposition can be a little long and feel like filler to accommodate the 2- or 3-part episode format. But generally, I find the stories engaging and

the characters attractive and likeable. The production values are top-notch. One of the standout features is the fantastic theme music. From the moment you hit play, you're greeted by an evocative theme that sets the tone for the entire episode. *Sherlock & Co.* works hard at a naturalistic realism that makes you feel like you are experiencing the stories as they happen. It's a fun ride! – Mike Ranieri



Round the Red Lamp — Being Facts and Fancies of Medical Life by Arthur Conan Doyle, edited by Roger Luckhurst, Edinburgh University Press, 2024, \$130 USD.

This is a scholarly edition of Arthur Conan Doyle's collection of medical tales, first published in 1894 during the author's early years as a full-time writer. Conan Doyle had trained in medicine at Edinburgh University in the 1870s, and then spent eight years as a General Practitioner in Southsea and eye specialist in London, before deciding to become a professional author. The stories he collected in *Round the Red Lamp* are gathered from his medical

training and years in practice.

The 30-page introduction gives a solid background on Conan Doyle's medical training and years of practice, and also provides insight into the growing problem of the time of too many doctors graduating from a growing number of medical schools. The opening also looks at the hierarchy within the medical profession, one Conan Doyle tried to climb by opening his consulting practice in London.

Despite our own love of the Holmes stories, this collection was not praised by all critics but was generally considered a good collection if not a bit too graphic for medical realism. *The Freeman's Journal* from Dublin, Ireland, said: "Every page reveals the literary artist, the keen observer, the trained delineator of human nature, its weal and its woe." – Mark Alberstat

BOOTMAKERS' DIARY



Saturday, January 27, 2024 – *Sherlock Holmes Birthday Celebration and Annual Blue Carbuncle Awards*

The Bootmakers of Toronto met on Zoom on Saturday, January 27, 2024, to celebrate Sherlock Holmes's 170th Birthday and present our Annual Awards.

Mike Ranieri, as Meyers, called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. There were 58 people in attendance.

Mike showed a brief video about Sherlock Holmes's birthday.

Jim Ballinger sang a song *Happy 170th Birthday Sherlock Holmes*.

Cliff Goldfarb introduced and interviewed our special guest, Andrew Lycett. Andrew talked about his career in journalism; an assignment in northern Africa led him to write a biography of Muammar Gaddafi (he has also written biographies of Ian Fleming, Rudyard Kipling, Dylan Thomas, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Wilkie Collins). Andrew's latest book is *The Worlds of Sherlock Holmes: The Inspiration Behind the World's Greatest Detective*. At the end of the interview Andrew answered some audience questions.

Doug Wrigglesworth gave a toast to Conan Doyle's biographers.

Karen Campbell gave a Sherlock Holmes birthday quiz. The winners were: Joe Eckrich, Rich Krisciunas, Sandy Kozinn, Alan Barksdale, Donny Zaldin and Dennis Keiser.

John Gehan started his toast to Watson's Horse, but technical problems prevented him from finishing it.

Barbara Rusch and Kathy Burns presented the Emerald Tie-Pin Award for 2023 to Jim Ballinger and Karen Gold.

Mike Ranieri showed a video of the Blue Carbuncle Awards presentation.

The 2023 True Davidson Award for the Best Formal Paper was presented to Cliff Goldfarb for "ACD: The Egyptian Connection."

The Runner-up was Mimi Okabe for "Manga, Murder and Mystery."

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