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Cover: Vojtěch Cinybulk (1915 – 1994) was a Czech graphic artist, illustrator, puppeteer, and a keen pipesmoker. He was a popular creator of numerous “ex libris” (bookplates), mainly wood engravings or lithographies. On the cover is a wood engraving of Sherlock Holmes which was commissioned in the late 1970s by Aleš Kolodrubec.

Canadian Holmes

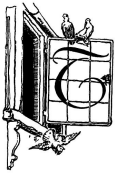
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One-hundred eightieth issue

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Graces of Bootprints

Collections, collectors and collecting were well represented at July's Sherlock Holmes@50 conference in Minneapolis. That's no surprise, given that the event celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota Libraries.

In her presentation, Rebecca Romney, well known to Bootmakers for her 2020 Cameron Hollyer Memorial Lecture, probed the current state of Sherlockian collecting as younger enthusiasts bring a fresh face to the field.

Emily Miranker shared her experience growing up in a family of collectors and reinforced the ways Sherlockians form friendships through common interests. Ira Brad Matetsky, speaking at the annual meeting of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, highlighted the serendipity of making a scholarly find when and where you least expect it.

Denny Dobry gave a pictorial tour of his 221B sitting room, and conference attendees made time on a busy weekend to visit A Festive Fifty, an exhibition that showcased treasures in the Minnesota collection.

Canadian Sherlockians and Doyleans are also passionate about collecting, and the Toronto Public Library is home to the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, which celebrated its golden anniversary in 2022.

This issue is full of unique and rare finds, including Barbara Rusch's Bow Window column on Victorian weddings. Steve Mason is having fun and games while John Gehan looks at the Rathbone film *The Scarlet Claw* on its 80th anniversary. We print a posthumous article by Don Redmond. Ron Levitsky tells us about Conan Doyle's time as a candidate for Parliament and G. Benjamin White is in search of Mycroft. Derrick Belanger, who was at the Minnesota conference along with your editors, takes a new look at baritsu. Erica Fair makes her *Canadian Holmes* debut with a toast she presented in Minneapolis, and we wrap up this autumn issue with Mark Jones's column and a tribute to David Stuart Davies.

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.



Wedding traditions have varied amongst diverse cultures and religions throughout recorded history, though certain practices have remained constant. The earliest known wedding took place 4,350 years ago, before which families were formed around groups of about 40 people and shared partners. From Mesopotamia, marriage rituals spread through the ancient world, from the Egyptians to the Romans and Greeks. Rings, signifying the groom's ownership of the bride, were braided and woven from reeds or leather, though the wealthy fashioned them from precious metals, including gold. The fourth finger upon which the ring was placed was believed to contain a vein, the *vena amoris*, leading straight to the heart. The best man was selected for his superior strength and skills in combat, to ensure that the bride did not escape during the wedding ceremony and to protect her from robbers and kidnappers, while the bridesmaids guarded her from ever-lurking evil spirits, also giving rise to the use of the wedding veil.

By the 19th century, many of these traditions were deeply encoded. Customs surrounding the wedding ceremony were exhaustive and intended to be strictly observed. *Martine's Hand-book of Etiquette*, published in 1866, offered specific instructions that, "the bride goes to church in the same carriage with her parents, while the groom attends separately, showing his gallantry by handing her down ... The wedding cake, tastefully decorated with orange blossoms, occupies the centre of the table at the breakfast held at the bride's home following the ceremony ... Throwing an old shoe after the bride is highly reprehensible. ... On such festive occasions, all appear in their best attire and assume their best manners ... It is implicitly understood that the good breeding of the family may be somewhat compromised by neglect in small things."

A fashion-forward Queen Victoria initiated some of the wedding traditions that became hallmarks of the era to which she lent her name. When she chose to don a white gown at her own nuptials, illustrations in magazines and on sheet music created a sensation, whereupon white

quickly became the sole acceptable bridal colour. Her three-tiered wedding cake, standing 14 inches high and 10 feet wide, and weighing in at 300 pounds, might well have broken the table on which it was placed!

Within the Canon, weddings are rarely events to be celebrated, nor are Martine's rules of etiquette strictly observed. Perhaps out of a paucity of beefy best men to prevent the bride from escaping, Hatty Doran flees the wedding breakfast following the ceremony to Lord Robert St. Simon, her gown later found floating in the Serpentine. While James Windibank, disguised as Hosmer Angel, gets into a carriage, he neglects to hand Mary Sutherland down from hers, abandoning her at the door to the church. Worse still are the forced marriages – Lucy Ferrier's to Mormon Enoch Drebber, which results in her death, and Violet Smith's, the eponymous solitary cyclist, abducted and held at gunpoint in a fraudulent marriage to Jack Woodley. Nefarious plots are perpetrated by greedy fathers and step-fathers, with the object of depriving daughters of their rightful inheritance. Grimesby Roylott condemns Julia to a brutal death by serpent, weeks before entering into holy matrimony, while on her betrothal, sister Helen is about to suffer the same fate. Jephro Rucastle holds Alice hostage in order to prevent her from taking her vows with fiancé Mr. Fowler, which happily come to pass despite her father's best efforts. Baron Gruner's plot to wed Violet de Merville is thwarted with the discovery of his little black book, and the upcoming nuptials of Lady Eva Brackwell to the Earl of Dovercourt are spared with the disposal of the incriminating letters that had found their way into the hands of the odious Charles Augustus Milverton. Sadly, he does manage to derail the ceremony of the Honourable Miss Miles to Colonel Dorking, called off two days before it is to take place. A happier outcome awaits the three couples entering into matrimony in "A Scandal in Bohemia": Watson to Mary Morstan, Irene Adler to Godfrey Norton (to which Holmes serves as witness), and the hereditary King of Bohemia, who presumably realizes his union with the daughter of the King of Scandinavia.

We are left with Sherlock Holmes's own deceitful engagement to Agatha the housemaid, a blatant breach of promise which he excuses as the ends justifying the means. But one thing is clear: Holmes would never find himself beneath a wedding canopy. "Love is an emotional thing," he observes, "and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment."

The Scarlet Claw, Sherlock Holmes in Canada?

By John Gehan

John Gehan has been a Sherlock Holmes fan almost his entire life. Retired now, he spends his time mooning over his wife, being proud of his two sons and adoring his grandson. Any spare time is spent reading anything pertaining to Holmes he can get his hands on.

Eighty years ago, on May 26, 1944, the latest Sherlock Holmes film from Universal Studios premiered in Canada. At last, our fabled duo were coming to Canada, or were they?

This was the sixth Holmes film produced by Universal, and the eighth starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce if you count the two films from Fox Studios.

As with the two previous films in the series, the Second World War is not the focus. Instead, Holmes and Watson are attending an Occult Conference in Quebec.

Roy William Neill was directing for the sixth time and producing for the fifth. Along with Neil, the screenplay was written by Paul Gangelin and Edmund Hartmann. Hartmann had previously worked on the screenplay for *Sherlock Holmes and the Secret Weapon*. The screenwriters seemed to have one thing in common; a total ignorance of Canada in general and the province of Quebec in particular.

The Scarlet Claw is set deep in the francophone province of Quebec. We have an English Lord in residence and the local officer of the law has a Scottish accent you could cut with a knife. With minimal changes this story could very easily have been set in Britain. Frankly, it would have made more sense.

All this aside, *The Scarlet Claw* is, in my opinion, one of the best of the Universal series. Rathbone, as always, is the personification of our hero. Bruce is the personification of the blundering nincompoop who is Holmes's staunch and loyal friend.

The story in many ways is reminiscent of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, with a monster on the loose and an escaped convict.

The cinematographer George Robinson does a superb job of giving many scenes a feeling of dread and impending danger. Robinson had

worked on several of the Universal Horror series, including *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) starring Rathbone.

Once again Neill gets the most out of a limited budget and a tight production schedule. In many ways he is as responsible as Rathbone and Bruce for the success of the series.

Another contributing factor to this success was the wonderful stable of Universal contract players who appeared throughout.

This film had one of the best examples in a Welsh actor named Gerald Hamer. Hamer would appear in five of the films. This one might well be his crowning achievement. He plays the killer who uses various disguises to further his murderous plans. Hamer was a fine actor who deserves far more recognition than he gets.

The Scarlet Claw is an enjoyable and entertaining film. On this, the 80th anniversary of its Canadian premiere, get a beverage and join our heroes in La Mort Rouge.



Two movie posters from the 1944 Rathbone and Bruce movie *The Scarlet Claw*. On the left is a rarely seen Swedish one-sheet (27.5" x 39.5") while on the right is the more familiar poster for the North American release.

What do I get for Landing on Free Parking?

By Steve Mason

Steve Mason has considered himself a Sherlockian since the first time he found his father's copy of The Hound of the Baskervilles at seven years of age... imagine if it had been a copy of Playboy. He is currently head of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star, chair of the Communications Committee for the Beacon Society, and co-founder of the Baker Street Elementary comic strip.

It should be a safe assumption that most, if not all, Sherlockians have enjoyed playing a game, be it a board game, or an outdoor activity such as hide and seek, tag, or Red Rover. Games are mentioned in the Canon several times, breathing further life into those stories.

In January 1897, while awakening Dr. Watson from a restful sleep, Holmes uttered the famous: “The game’s afoot,” revealing his affinity with games and pastimes. One wonders if that was his first time using the phrase, or had it been said many times before, but just not chronicled by Watson.

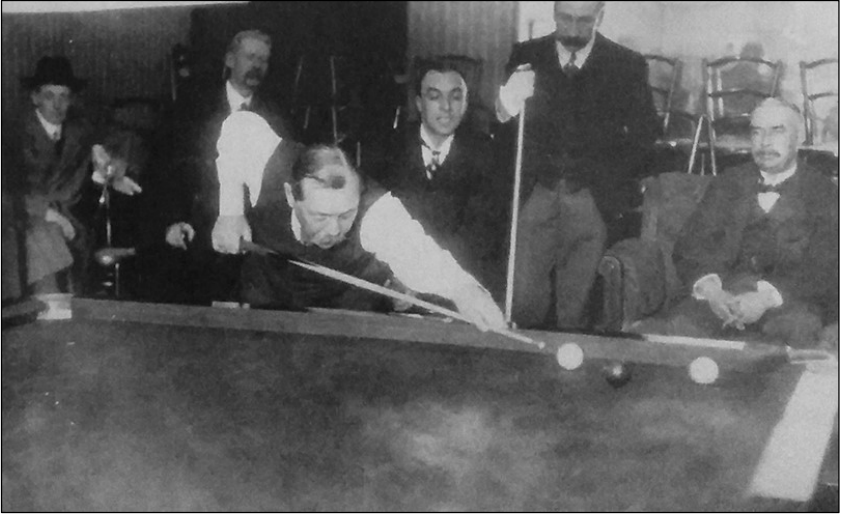
Additionally, in “The Dancing Men,” Holmes correctly deduced Watson had been playing billiards with his friend, Thurston, at the club the previous night.

Card games are mentioned several times throughout the Canon, including:

Major Sholto, Captain Morstan, and Lieutenant Bromley Brown would constantly lose to the civilians during their tenure in Agra, as explained by Jonathan Small in *The Sign of Four*.

In “The Five Orange Pips,” John Openshaw is referred to Holmes by Major Prendergast, who had been helped by Holmes in the Tankerville Club Scandal, in which Prendergast was wrongfully accused of cheating at cards.

Evidence from an inquest at the beginning of “The Empty House” indicated Ronald Adair was fond of cards, particularly whist. He indulged in the game the evening of his murder at the Bagatelle Card Club.



Dr. Watson's literary agent, Arthur Conan Doyle, was an excellent billiards player. In this picture he is playing in the 1913 Amateur Billiards Championship.

In “The Devil’s Foot,” Mortimer Tregennis indicated he had been playing cards with his siblings, Owen, George, and Brenda, before leaving the house.

When he returned the next morning, the trio were still around the dining table, with the cards spread in front of them.

It’s apparent that if you played cards during one of the Canonical adventures, the ending was less than pleasant for you.

The blossoming of Sherlockian scholarship, known as “the Great Game,” grew rapidly in the 1930s and 1940s, when many of the basic “writings on the writings” appeared. This followed the initial Sherlockian criticism of Monsignor Ronald Knox and his 1912 essay “Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes.” Basic rules for the game were soon established:

- Holmes and Dr. Watson truly lived, and the adventures contained in the 60 stories reflect events that did occur;
- Arthur Conan Doyle is merely the literary agent for Watson’s writing efforts;
- Participants in the game attempt to rectify the errors in dates, locations, and other facts within the Canonical adventures.

Interestingly, various societies and Sherlockian individuals have developed their own “neighbourhood” rules when it comes to the “Great Game,” such as:

- Watson always tells the truth.

Variant: Watson did change vital information of those involved in many cases to protect the identity of victims and other innocent people, such as names, descriptions, and locations. Dates were also changed.

Since the *The Times of London* has never carried his obituary, Holmes must still be alive.

Sherlockians love playing the “Great Game” – though they have learned to be slightly judicious in dealing with new – or non-Sherlockians (a few neophytes have walked away, gently shaking their head and muttering to themselves).

Mia Stampe, in *The Baker Street Journal*, when discussing the game, explained:

There is, however, a problem, which seems insignificant today, but only because the majority of the stories took place over a hundred years ago. One has to stand on the borderline of the game to observe objectively. I dare to claim that the research results obtained while playing the game in most cases are more convincing, and “safer,” if they are not contradictory to facts and events viewed from outside the game. I am tempted to say that the fine results ought to remain valid when watched through the great-game relativistic glasses. (1)

While Dorothy L. Sayers believed the game “must be played as solemnly as a county cricket match at Lord’s: the slightest touch of extravagance or burlesque ruins the atmosphere,” (2) many other Sherlockians have suggested being a little more flexible while enjoying our pastime.

Several years ago, I decided to create two of my own “neighbourhood” rules as it applies to the “Game” we all enjoy participating in. Like the game of solitaire, most of the time I play these rules by myself. Alternate rule #2 may be considered ‘heretical’ by most Sherlockians. I do try to adhere to rule #1, which applies directly to #2.

Alternate rule #1: Both Watson and Holmes live in the real world, so they must follow the same basic rules as all other living humans. Thus, they eat, drink, breathe air, get around London in traditional transportation (no jumping tall buildings in a single bound), and must earn money to survive in 1895 London. This “rule” can come in handy when discussing moral and ethical considerations in the Canon. Holmes and Watson lived

over a century ago – when mores and customs were a little different than those we live in today. In the literary world of the Victorian period, as it is now, the person writing a story was known as the *author*, signed the agreement with the publisher, was listed on the narrative as the *author*, and was paid the agreed upon amount between the *author* and the publisher. And I can only imagine even in Victorian times, if someone wrote a piece of literature, only to see it published under someone else’s name (and that other person received the proceeds), a cause of plagiarism would be initiated. Consequently...

Alternate rule # 2: Holmes conducted investigations on approximately 1,500 cases (based on his estimate of over 1,000 at the time of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*). Watson accompanied Holmes on hundreds of these adventures in between *A Study in Scarlet* and “His Last Bow” (and maybe

more after). Watson would take notes during the proceedings, and then add to those notes once the case was concluded. He would also compile the notes and take them to a friend and fellow physician, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Conan Doyle would take the notes, ask pertinent questions of Watson, and then would develop the actual account, adding wonderful descriptions of the characters involved in the adventure, tighten up the dialogue while retaining the Sherlockian quotes we all love and recite at



If Sherlockians are playing “The Great Game,” then Holmes and Watson may have played this Sherlock Holmes card game produced by Parker Brothers in 1904.

will, and paint a full picture of the story in a concise manner that survives over 125 years later. Conan Doyle would then submit the latest adventure to *The Strand Magazine*, it would be published with Conan Doyle as the *author* (rightly so), and Conan Doyle would be paid the negotiated amount (i.e., £25 for *A Study in Scarlet*, £195 for the first six stories in *Adventures*, and then £1000 for the stories comprising *Memoirs*). To complete this alternate rule, I accept both Conan Doyle and Watson were honourable gentlemen, so I do not doubt Conan Doyle shared the proceeds of the stories with his writing partner.

In conclusion, even the most popular board game in history, *Monopoly*, has its traditional rules, but the game's manufacturer, Parker Brothers, has published alternate rules since the game was introduced, which many players enjoy, such as putting money in a kitty to be paid for the player who lands on Free Parking. Other players allow the Monopoly "banker" to be paid an extra \$50 each time they pass GO as a benefit for taking on the task of doling out the monies. Parker Brothers has even issued alternate rules to help speed up the game.

Major League Baseball must have taken note of this concept when they modified baseball rules in 2023, shortening the length of games, as well as other rule changes to "improve" the product on the field.

While I do not expect Sherlockians to jump on my band wagon in droves, I hope at least a few might be willing to play the "Great Game" with my alternate rules when they visit my neighborhood, where it is always "a beautiful day."

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The Irish, The Valley and The Man with No Face

By Donald A. Redmond

This essay by Don Redmond, MBt, BSI, has not previously been published. It was written about 1988 to be number XXII in his series “Sherlockian Plotnotes,” which appeared over several years in the journal Baker Street Miscellanea. The series came to an unexpected end when BSM ceased publication in 1994. Typescripts for several of the essays have now been found in the late author’s files.

The *Valley of Fear* shares the structure of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* — division into two major parts, the second being a lengthy flashback. The major action involving Sherlock Holmes is complete as the first part ends; an extensive minor action develops in the flashback. Complaints have often been made that this separation into two “movements” detracts from the novels. It might rather be regarded as the novelistic equivalent of the symphony, save that the musical form is usually in three movements (or four in other musical forms), the best-known work in only two movements therefore being dubbed “unfinished.”

The concluding sections in these novels are hardly long enough to be distinct “movements;” they are rather “codas.” That in *The Valley of Fear* is titled “Epilogue,” that in *A Study in Scarlet* is rather tamely “Conclusion;” the very brief passage in *The Sign of Four* is merely tacked to the end of the flashback without being a separate entity. This format makes difficulties for dramatists or scriptwriters making functionally effective stage or screen adaptations — among many other problems of translating from medium to medium.

But the format works. While *A Study in Scarlet* Part II suffers from the young author’s inexperience of his American subject matter, and is reminiscent of the influences upon his youthful reading, particularly “Captain” Mayne Reid and R.M. Ballantyne, its action is as vivid as anything in Reid or Ballantyne at their best, and less patronizingly prolix than Reid or Ballantyne at their worst. The action and atmosphere are there; and plot and atmosphere (or should these be reversed in priority?) are primary in Conan Doyle’s style.

The central themes of *The Valley of Fear* are multiple, like those in distinct musical movements, though they may recur or be echoed in

epilogue or coda. That in Part 1, “The Tragedy of Birlstone,” is the Holmes theme, or what could be called (if it were a separate Holmes tale) “the man with no face.” That in Part 2, “The Scowrers,” has always been identified by Sherlockian analysts as the secret society itself, the original of which is the Molly Maguires. I suggest that it is more, or less, than the Scowrers or Molly Maguires in general; it is the Birdy Edwards theme.

Just as the central theme of *Micah Clarke* is the Monmouth Rebellion seen through the eyes and feelings of one man; as *The White Company* is an incident in history seen as the adventures and reactions of Alleyn Edricson, or the Indian Mutiny is seen through the eyes and in the words of Jonathan Small, the Vermissa Valley and the Scowrers (or Molly Maguires) are background to the courage and peril of the Pinkerton detective. Indeed, this is how Conan Doyle had learned about the labour struggles in Pennsylvania: through the eyes and from the lips of William J. Burns, the great American detective.

The Birdy Edwards theme is more than this, whether the details be fact or even a yarn spun to Conan Doyle — there is some suspicion that Allan Pinkerton’s own tales of the exploits of Pinkerton detectives are not free of imagination or embroidery. It is the theme of the entrapment of an underground society, a criminal group because of their offences against property and person, by an informer who infiltrated the group and became



a trusted ringleader in it. Here as elsewhere, dramatic surprise is Conan Doyle's strength. The most dramatic incident in the stage version of "The Speckled Band" is not its conclusion, but the sudden first entrance of Holmes as he leaps onto the stage through a window at Stoke Moran. The now-forgotten melodrama of a certain 19th-century predecessor of Holmes is memorable only for the sudden revelation of the character — "I am Hawkshaw, the detective!" The single most dramatic line in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* occurs at the end of Chapter 2: "Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!" In that tradition, the most memorable line in *The Valley of Fear*, as Carr pointed out in his biography of Conan Doyle, is the fellow-Scowrer Jack McMurdo answering Boss McGinty: "Birdy Edwards is here. I am Birdy Edwards!"

I suggest that Conan Doyle remembered, when he commenced to write this last of his long Holmes stories in the days just before the First World War, a story which appeared more than 20 years previously in a periodical with which he was very familiar, and to which he and many of his literary friends had contributed: *The Idler*. His own stories collected as *Round the Red Lamp* had been in *The Idler* in 1892 to 1894, and *The Stark Munro Letters* would be in it a little later. As well, *The Idler* had had a caricature of Dr. Doyle and an interview with him. In a leaflet titled "The Lost Engine and the Lost Special" (1982), I suggested that W.L. Alden's story "The Lost Engine" in *The Idler*, Volume 6, in which "The Stark Munro Letters" ran, was one source of the much later Sherlockian apocryphon "The Lost Special" — its theme of a railway engine (and train) which disappears completely from its own rails; Conan Doyle has merely changed quicksand into an abandoned mine, and added a suspenseful plot to account for the train's existence and sabotage.

In Volume 2 of *The Idler*, 1892, Frank Mathew contributed a short story called "At the Rising of the Moon." The setting is the Irish land troubles endemic in the 18th and 19th centuries; the narrator is an Irish peasant; the theme is entrapment by an informer who had become a trusted ringleader of a group in the underground society of Irish peasants. In this case the narrator is one of the victims, who had fled to England to escape capture by the police, rather than the principal figure being the informer. But the informer theme is exactly parallel to the Birdy Edwards theme. The underground Irish society was of course the original Molly Maguires, named for their practice of using women's clothes as a disguise, in the 1840s. S. B. Liljegren's "The Irish Background of The Valley of Fear" (*Irish Essays and Studies*, VII, 1964) discusses the whole parallel. Indeed, the Birdy Edwards theme is hardly fiction; the reality of McFarland the Pinkerton operative is almost exactly parallel save for that climactic

capture scene and the magnificent line: "I am Birdy Edwards!" Liljegren stresses the transatlantic connection: that the Molly Maguires took their basis in the New World from the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Irish society which appears in *The Valley of Fear* as the Ancient (or Eminent) Order of Freeman, and maintained their rituals by that transatlantic link. This does not appear in Conan Doyle's plot, but the final plot element is transatlantic in the reverse direction: the flight (like that of the fleeing peasant in Mathew's story) to England of the man called McMurdo, or Edwards, or now Douglas. And the further twist, the further flight to South Africa in vain, is Conan Doyle's customary sharp final note. The major theme in Part 1: "The Tragedy of Birlstone," is Holmes's solution of the murder: of the man with no face. The presumption is (as Jack Douglas has intended it to be) that the body is that of Douglas himself. The denouement is of course that Douglas is alive, that his would-be murderer is dead. The clear parallel occurs three years earlier than the Irish peasant's story in *The Idler*, a French crime reported not only in the London papers but in the local newspapers which Conan Doyle read in Southsea. The heading in the *Portsmouth Evening News* of 14 June, 1889 was "The Chantilly Murder:"

The trial of [Hippolyte] Hoyos, accused of being the author of the Chantilly murder, commenced yesterday before the Beauvais Assize Court. The case is creating all the greater sensation because the murdered man was, in the first instance, supposed to be Hoyos himself, who is now charged with the crime. The body of a man was found on the railway, near Chantilly, with his face so thoroughly disfigured with horrible wounds as to make recognition impossible. Nevertheless, by certain articles found about the body it was supposed to be that of Hoyos, formerly the steward of a large estate in the neighborhood. The inquiry which was instituted led to the discovery that Hoyos's mistress, a woman named Figue, was preparing to demand large sums of money of several insurance companies at which Hoyos's life had been insured in her favour. This fact awakened suspicion, and in a short time Hoyos was discovered to be alive, and going under the name of Louis Baron. It was quite impossible to admit that, with all the sensation the murder at Chantilly had made, he should not have been aware that he was supposed to be dead, so he was arrested, and it was then discovered that the real victim was no other than Louis Baron, whose name Hoyos had assumed.

The Evening News of the next day added, “When the policies were effected, he looked out for somebody he could kill, and when dead pass off as himself, and he hit upon a poor outcast Belgian, Louis Baron, who was rather like himself.” The story is also in *The Times* (London) of June 17, 1889, and *Le Temps* of Paris headlined the crime as the “Phenix” (Phoenix) murder in stories from March through the execution in August. Conan Doyle’s adaptation of the crime was of course the substitution of a would-be murderer, and seeker of revenge upon the informer, for the innocent victim Baron. Jay Finley Christ in Vol. 2 (Old Series) of *The Baker Street Journal* mentioned Daniel Defoe’s *Tales of Piracy, Crime and Ghosts* as background to the Canon, noting that Holmes recommended that Inspector MacDonald in *The Valley of Fear* read the life of Jonathan Wild, the 18th-century thief turned thief-taker. Christ adds that Defoe used the phrase “commuting a felony,” a phrase which (or one much like it) occurs in half-a-dozen Holmes cases, and goes far to corroborate Holmes’s declaration that “there is nothing new under the sun. It has all been done before.” (*A Study in Scarlet*) Perhaps this is Conan Doyle’s own tongue-in-cheek admission that in plot elements for fiction, too, there is nothing new under the sun.



etter to the Editors

Dear Sir and Madam,

It seems that my article in the Summer edition (“The Problem of the Bootmakers’ Motto,” Vol. 47, No.3) generated some interesting and lively email exchanges among a few leading Canadian Sherlockians.

Chris Redmond, one of those involved in the email string, says that he was once told that the t in *crepitam* was an obscure joke.

Well, here’s one possible obscure solution: *crepitare* means “to creak,” so *crepitam* could mean “I creak,” with the final m taken to be the Indo-European first person singular ending (which survived, for example, in Latin *sum* “I am,” and in English *am*). And note that “decrepit” is from the same root. So maybe it was a joke about the advanced years of some of the members.

As Cliff Coldfarb said in one of his emails, there were giants in those days. (Cf. Genesis 6:4.[There were giants on the earth in those days])

—Don Roebuck

Arthur Conan Doyle, Candidate for Parliament

By Ron Levitsky

Ron Levitsky is a retired educator and mystery writer. He is a member of several Chicago-area Sherlockian societies.

Arthur Conan Doyle had gained so much renown as the creator of Sherlock Holmes it is sometimes forgotten that he was a polymath. He authored fiction in genres other than mystery, wrote military histories, advocated various reforms, campaigned for human rights, travelled extensively, and was an ardent sportsman. Although never a soldier, he served courageously as a physician during the Second Boer War. That experience led him to accept one of the greatest challenges of his life – standing twice for Parliament. His two political campaigns not only revealed critical aspects of Conan Doyle’s character but also may have impacted the stories of his 1905 collection, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

The Second Boer War broke out in 1899. In February 1900, Conan Doyle sailed to South Africa as part of a volunteer medical team. In the midst of a bloody British offensive he heroically fought a deadly typhoid epidemic. In July he sailed home to Great Britain while working on his history of the war.

By that time, the British Army seemed on the verge of victory. In September, the leaders of the Conservative government decided to take advantage of the favourable military situation by calling a general election, to be held on October 24, 1900. This political contest was nicknamed the Khaki Election, after the colour of the British soldier’s uniform.

As a young man, Conan Doyle had considered himself a Liberal. Traditional Liberal philosophy advocated reducing the powers of both monarch and Church of England, social reform to expand personal liberty, lowering taxes, and an opposition to empire building.

However, in 1886 a split occurred in the Liberal Party, causing Conan Doyle to become “... a Liberal-Unionist, that is, a man whose general position was a Liberal, but who could not see his way to support ... Irish [Home Rule] Policy.” (1) This policy would have permitted the Irish some

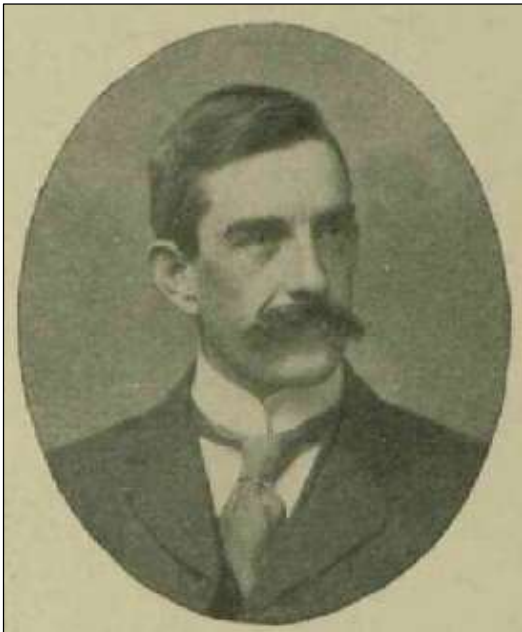
degree of self-government. Conservatives and their Liberal Unionist allies saw Home Rule as initiating the dissolution of the British Empire.

Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, a Liberal Unionist, was perhaps Great Britain's leading proponent of empire building. Chamberlain thought the Boer War was effectively over in 1900, and that only "a guerrilla business" remained. Yet, this "guerrilla business," carried out by the Boer enemy, would take two more years of bitter conflict to reach a resolution. (2)

The Election of 1900

Both Conservatives and Liberals wanted Conan Doyle as a parliamentary candidate. An advocate of carrying the Boer War to its conclusion, he chose the Liberal Unionists, who had aligned themselves with the Conservatives. A year before he entered the election, he gave an almost mystical reason to his mother for considering politics: "I am of the opinion that our careers are marked out for us and that Providence gets the greatest good out of a man at the right time." (3)

Conan Doyle was offered a safe seat but, given his competitive nature, preferred a contested one. Party leaders decided that he would contest



George Mackenzie Brown (1869 – 14 July 1946)

Central Edinburgh. Although he had lived there as a boy, the seat was the "premier Radical stronghold of Scotland" and routinely returned Liberal candidates. (4) Ironically, his Liberal opponent was Canadian-born George Mackenzie Brown, who worked for Thomas Nelson and Sons, one of Conan Doyle's publishers.

Conan Doyle did not consider Brown to be a "formidable opponent" but feared that the opposing "party machine" was. He also realized that Scotsmen were loath to change their voting habits,

which tended to be Liberal or even Radical. (5) In addition, Edinburgh was an overwhelmingly Presbyterian city, while he, although not Catholic, had been born into a Catholic family.

The key issue of the general election was whether or not to fight the Boer War to its conclusion. Conservative governments were unblushingly imperialistic. By building the world's greatest empire, Great Britain had gained enormous wealth, military power, and international prestige. With their gold, diamonds, and strategic location helping to maintain control of India, the Boer Republics would make exceptional additions to the Empire.

Conservatives also rode a wave of popular culture celebrating "... the special genius of the Anglo-Saxon race, that is the British..." (6) Such examples of popular culture were the historical novels of G.A. Henty, Kipling's "The White Man's Burden," music hall jingoistic songs, and the many adventure magazines aimed at school boys. "By 1880 a generation had passed into manhood with an outlook which made them ideally suited to govern the empire and fight in wars." (7)

One of that generation was Conan Doyle. When he was a child, his mother read to him stories brimming with medieval knights and acts of chivalry. Years later, he identified his favourite author as Sir Walter Scott, whom he emulated by writing historical novels.

Given his love of chivalry and fair play, it is not surprising that Conan Doyle defended the Boer War for a reason other than empire – at least initially. British *uitlanders* (Boer for "outlanders" or "foreigners") had entered the Boer republics searching for gold and other economic opportunities. The Boer government denied these *uitlanders* the franchise and other political rights, fearing their growing numbers would overwhelm the existing population. Conan Doyle explained to his mother that a British victory "...will give them [Boers] all those political rights which they denied to us and so we will conciliate them and give them a Constitutional outlet for their discontent."

However, in this same letter, he advanced the more common view of his party. "Without war South Africa would have gone & South Africa is the keystone of the Empire." (8)

Regardless of the reason, Conan Doyle was decidedly partisan. Even before he had accepted the offer to run, he identified the Conservative/Liberal Union coalition as the "patriotic party." This supported the position of Joseph Chamberlain, who, when considering how to address his anti-war opponents, stated, "I was going to say those traitors, but I will say instead these misguided individuals." (9)

The war's opponents included writer and editor W.T. Stead, who in 1888 had published Conan Doyle's *Mystery of Cloomber* and later became a fellow spiritualist. Stead founded the Stop the War Committee. In addition, welfare campaigner Emily Hobhouse led a woman's branch of the South African Conciliation Committee and in June 1901 (after the election) published a fact-finding pamphlet on the British Army's use of concentration camps. Meetings by opponents were frequently broken up and those who distributed anti-war pamphlets beaten. (10)

Admitting that he and his opponent agreed on social matters, Conan Doyle emphasized their differences regarding the war. Speaking with the fervor of one who recently had participated in the conflict, he emphasized the need to support the troops as they risked their lives for Queen and country.

A series of letters written to his mother during September and October of 1900 demonstrated how Conan Doyle approached his own campaign, likening it to the sport of boxing. He relished the idea of being the underdog, anticipating how thrilling an upset victory would be not only for himself, but for his party as well.

He wrote to his mother saying:

Doing very well, fighting very hard, keeping very well. 10 meetings in 2 days. Last night's speech was a huge success. ... I may lose, but it's a great fight.

My hand is black with the hands I have shaken. Everyone says if I win it will be the greatest political thing done in Scotland in our time.

This contest is going to be historical. If things go on I shall not only carry the Central Division but all Edinburgh for the other candidates. That is really a fact for it is a delirium of excitement. It is curious but I am as cool as ice myself. The people for two nights have followed me – a thousand at least – from my meeting, and block Princes Street until I wish them goodnight. They crowd round me to touch me ... It looks as if I were sweeping all before me – but there are still 3 days. (11)

For a political novice, Conan Doyle grew adept at negotiating the rough and tumble campaign trail. During a speaking engagement, he likened the noisy heckling to “feeding time at the zoo.” Yet, *The Scotsman* noted “...his ready and straight replies being received with loud cheers.” However, his overriding concern for the war left him ill-prepared to discuss local issues, such as trout fishing. (12)

Conan Doyle's comment, "...but there are still 3 days," was prescient. For all his energy and dedication, his campaign was derailed by a dirty political trick. On the night before the election, an anti-Catholic organization led by a man named Jacob Plimmer put up 300 posters throughout the district accusing Conan Doyle of being a "Papist conspirator" and "Jesuit emissary." Denouncing the posters, as did his opponent George Mackenzie Brown, Conan Doyle threatened legal action, but in the end decided not to sue.

He lost by 569 votes, receiving 2,459 (45% of the vote) as opposed to Brown's 3,028 (55%). Although defeated, he did far better in the district than had his party's candidate during the previous election. (13)

And he had maintained his sense of decency. Early in the campaign, Conan Doyle wrote his mother about having in his possession "...a letter absolutely damning my opponent's character on public grounds." His opponent's grandfather had embezzled public money, and the grandson refused to make restitution. Conan Doyle stated, "I don't want to use it – but it is very interesting." Ultimately, he refused to make the letter public, because – again using a favourite boxing analogy, "It is below the belt." (14)

Election of 1906

Politics may have left a bad taste in Conan Doyle's mouth. However, believing that the Empire was endangered, within a few years he was back in the political fray.

How ironic that, at the turn of the 20th century, with their imperialism triumphant throughout much of the world, the British should feel uneasy. Although eventually victorious in South Africa, for three years British soldiers had been humiliated by the much smaller Boer army. The empire's rivals – France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and the United States – were growing more powerful militarily and economically. They were building their own empires and, consequently, eliminating free trade in favour of protectionism.

In addition, there was a pervasive fear that the physical strength and moral fibre of the populace was weakening. British soldiers appeared sickly compared to colonial troops. In addition, so-called "inferior races," like the Irish and Jews, had "swamped" the nation, taking away jobs and corrupting the native population. (15) How could the British Empire survive?

Joseph Chamberlain believed he had the answer and put forth, in 1903, a plan which would end the country's traditional free trade policy in favour of "tariff reform." This plan would tax foreign imports, while all imperial

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE,

M.D., D.L., LL.D.



**Unionist and
Tariff Reform Candidate.**

1906 campaign poster.

products would be admitted duty-free. Such a policy would lead to an imperial federation with Great Britain's colonies. In addition, revenue collected from tariffs would be used for defence, as well as for the social reforms "...needed to create a robust imperial race." A stronger state would be required to improve the lives of children – providing better education, health care, and nourishing meals at school. With such improvements, these children would grow up able to serve the British Empire well. (16)

The next general election was scheduled for 1906. Chamberlain personally asked Conan Doyle to stand again as a Liberal Unionist allied with the Conservatives. He contended for the parliamentary seat of the Scottish Border Burghs, which included the towns of Hawick, Galashiels, and Selkirk, and which like Edinburgh were considered strongly Liberal.

His opponent was Tommy Shaw who, according to Conan Doyle, "...is a pro-Boer and a skunk but a clever one. His seat was thought to be beyond the reach of attack. We will see." (17) Shaw had won four previous elections as a supporter of Irish Home Rule and an opponent of the Boer War. Conan Doyle might have called him a skunk, but in the 1900 election, mobs attacked Shaw and his home for his courageous anti-war speeches.

Tariff reform was the key issue of the election, and it proved a disaster for the Conservatives and their Liberal Unionist allies. Free trade was a long-standing economic policy that had helped Great Britain to prosper. Liberals, who by nature favoured laissez-faire economic and social policies, opposed tariff reform. They cleverly campaigned for working-class votes, warning that tariffs on foreign grain would raise the price of bread. Indeed, domestic wheat production could only feed about 25% of the British people. (18) Liberals called themselves the "Big Loaf" party, denigrating their opponents as the "Little Loaf."

In contrast, Conan Doyle grew more committed to tariff reform, proceeding with his usual moral certitude. In a 1903 letter to the editor of *Hull Daily Mail*, he wrote, "I have approached the question with at least one advantage, which is a perfectly unbiased mind and no prejudices. I have read all I could find on both sides of the question – your own articles included – and the result has been to turn me into a protectionist..." (19)

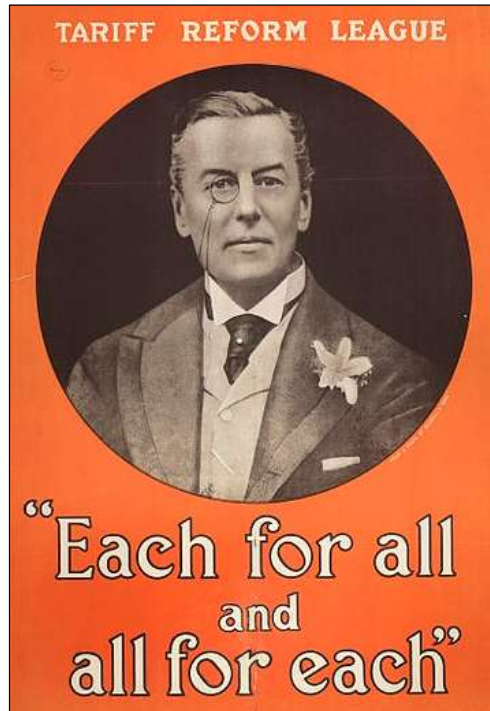
That same year, while still a "prospective" candidate, he gave several reasons for his position. Foreign competition made tariff reform not a political question, but one above party politics. He added that this policy would help "...hold the scattered branches of our race together." (20) In a letter that year to his mother, he also asked, "Why should we conquer one fifth of the world ... and then get us no good out of it?" (21)

In 1905, he stated that he took up tariff reform for the same reason he supported the Boer War – “that of patriotism.” He went on to say that Great Britain’s “...source of wealth and greatness was threatened.” Using yet another boxing analogy, he added “...that the coming contest should be fought fairly and squarely – as hard as they liked, but with no ill-feeling.” (22)

In many ways, Conan Doyle found this campaign more difficult than that of 1900. The Scottish Border Burghs were solidly Liberal, so much so that his opponent, Shaw, did not bother to campaign. The area’s many workers in the woolen industry were concerned what a tariff might do to the price of bread. And since the parliamentary seat consisted of three small towns, Conan Doyle often found himself consumed by travel and having to give the same speech three times.

He also found himself in the uncomfortable position of defending the use of “coolie labor.” The British government had permitted the importation of 50,000 Chinese indentured workers to work the Transvaal (South Africa) gold mines. Living conditions for these workers were horrendous, pay was minimal, and flogging was a common punishment. Liberals attacked this policy as barbaric.

In contrast, Conan Doyle defended the government’s policy. He denied that the treatment of these workers was a breach of moral law. Rather, he emphasized the benefits that gold would bring to the British economy. Besides, no one else would do the work. Regarding the Chinese workers, Conan Doyle said, “They seem to be healthy and well-behaved.” Now that the mines were back in production, he was heartened that more white families would move to South Africa. (23)



Tariff Reform League poster, featuring Joseph Chamberlain

The overall result of the general election of 1906 was the opposite of 1900. This time the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists suffered a crushing defeat, as the Liberals took power. Liberal policies would lead to a more active role by the government and the beginning of the British welfare state.

As for Conan Doyle, he lost his election by 681 votes. While he remained engaged in public affairs for the rest of his life, he never again walked the campaign trail. Instead, perhaps, the campaign trail meandered down to Baker Street.

A Weakening Empire

As mentioned above, despite imperial successes, the two general elections that had included Conan Doyle reflect a deepening fear for the future of the British Empire. “The Golden Pince-Nez,” brings Russia’s anti-tsarist activities to London with tragic results. *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* (1905) reflects this fear. In “The Second Stain,” a foreign spy uses blackmail to obtain a top-secret document from a British diplomat’s wife. Criminal organizations spread from both the United States (“Dancing Men”) and Italy (“Six Napoleons”) to corrupt the lives of innocent Englishmen and women. Perhaps the most depressing story in the collection is “The Missing Three-Quarter,” in which the star of a rugby team – that most manly of sports – is reduced to helplessly weeping at the bedside of his deceased young wife. Is he a symbol for his nation weakening before the troubles it faced?

A political campaign, gruelling both physically and mentally, can bring-out the best and worst in a candidate. Conan Doyle gamely accepted – even relished – the role of challenger and underdog. He ran a clean campaign, refusing to use a private letter compromising his opponent’s character. And he engaged the voters energetically with respect and good humour.

On the other hand, he smugly asserted having “a perfectly unbiased mind” and labelled his colleagues and himself as the “patriotic party,” implying the other side was not. He called one of his opponents a “skunk,” even though the man had been physically attacked for his political views. Perhaps worst of all, Conan Doyle defended the cruel use of Chinese indentured labour in South Africa’s gold mines, because it would strengthen the empire and the white race that ruled it.

Ultimately, Conan Doyle’s “perfectly unbiased mind” led him as a candidate invariably to defend the British Empire and that “special genius” that was, like him, British.

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- (3) Lellenberg, op. cit., p410.
- (4) Stashower, Daniel, *Teller of Tales: The Life of Arthur Conan Doyle*, NY, Henry Holt & Co., 1999, p228.
- (5) Ibid., p461.
- (6) James, Lawrence, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1994, pp.196 and 205.
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- (8) Lellenberg, op. cit., p.448. Conan Doyle's mother took a far more anti-war stance. See p427.
- (9) Lellenberg, op. cit., p.426.
- (10) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_the_Second_Boer War#United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_the_Second_Boer_War#United_Kingdom)
- (11) Lellenberg, op. cit., pp. 462-464.
- (12) Stashower, op. cit., p.229.
- (13) Stashower, op. cit., pp. 229-231.
- (14) Lellenberg, op. cit., p.462.
- (15) Cannadine, David, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906*, NY, Viking, 2017, pp. 446-449.
- (16) James, op. cit., p.321.
- (17) Lellenberg, op. cit., p.520.
- (18) Cannadine, op. cit., pp. 448-449.bb
- (19) "Unbiased – and No Prejudices," *Hull Daily Mail*, Wednesday 08 July 1903, p.6
- (20) Sir A. Conan Doyle Opens His Campaign," *Edinburgh Evening News*, Thursday 10 December 1903, p. 6.
- (21) Lellenberg, op. cit., p.521.
- (22) "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Selkirk," *Southern Reporter*, Thursday 07 December 1905, p.3.
- (23) "Sir A. Conan Doyle and Chinese Labour," *Southern Reporter*, Thursday 02 February 1905, p. 3. Compare this to Conan Doyle's later position regarding King Leopold and the Congo.

The Adventure of the Missing Mycroft Holmes

By G. Benjamin White

G. Benjamin White (PhD) is a project assistant professor at China Medical University (Taiwan). His English classes included the reading of “The Blue Carbuncle” and “The Speckled Band.”

The readers of *The Strand Magazine* and *Harper’s Weekly* in 1893 must have been as shocked as Watson had been in “The Greek Interpreter” to learn that Sherlock Holmes had an older brother. The issue is that we only get to meet Mycroft in a handful of stories, which is odd given how interesting of a character he is.

When Watson is told that he will accompany Sherlock to the Diogenes Club to meet Mycroft, he tells his friend that he has never heard of the club. In response, Sherlock says, “The Diogenes Club is the queerest club in London, and Mycroft one of the queerest men.” Later in “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” we learn that Mycroft is very important to the British government and, at times is, “the British government.” Outside of these two stories, the mysterious Mycroft is only seen briefly in “The Final Problem” and then only mentioned in “The Empty House.”

The issue is that Mycroft should have been involved in other stories but wasn’t. In fact, “The Greek Interpreter” does not involve the British government. Melas, the Greek interpreter, “lodges on the floor above” Mycroft, hence the reason that Mycroft becomes aware of the bizarre story. As a result, the question becomes: Where is Mycroft in the other stories, the ones that affect the British government?

The Appearance of Mycroft

Before discussing the missing Mycroft, I would like to make some observations on his appearance in the Canon. Again, Mycroft makes an appearance in three stories and is mentioned in an additional one. Interestingly, in the three stories he makes an appearance, Mycroft does not, as Sherlock told Watson in “The Bruce-Partington Plans,” keep to “his rails.” In all three, he leaves his beloved Diogenes Club to help his brother. We are also told by Sherlock, through Watson, in “The Empty House” (the last mention of Mycroft) just how important Mycroft is to Sherlock. Without his brother’s help, he would not have been able to maintain 221B

Baker Street or get the money necessary to allow his escape. It is Mycroft's importance to Sherlock that makes his absence in the other stories so intriguing.

Missing Mycroft

Let's now look at the other stories in which Mycroft should have appeared but did not. For the discussion, I will use both the ideas of "The Game" using William S. Baring-Gould's (1) dating of the stories and Arthur Conan Doyle's publication order. This way, we can see how the stories with Mycroft missing fit into the ones in which he appears or is mentioned. Below is the outline of the stories in both formats, with the years the stories take place (The Game) and the years they were published (Conan Doyle). I have bolded the stories with Mycroft.

The Game

"The Second Stain" (1886)
"A Scandal in Bohemia" (1887)
"The Greek Interpreter" (1888)
"The Naval Treaty" (1889)
"The Engineer's Thumb" (1889)
"The Final Problem" (1891)
"The Empty House" (1894)
"The Bruce-Partington Plans" (1895)
"The Three Garridebs" (1902)
"The Mazarin Stone" (1903)
"His Last Bow" (1914)

Conan Doyle

"A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891)
"The Engineer's Thumb" (1892)
"The Greek Interpreter" (1893)
"The Naval Treaty" (1893)
"The Final Problem" (1893)
"The Empty House" (1903)
"The Second Stain" (1904)
"The Bruce-Partington Plans" (1908)
"His Last Bow" (1917)
"The Mazarin Stone" (1921)
"The Three Garridebs" (1924)

Interestingly, the four stories with an appearance or mention of Mycroft occur in the same order on both lists.

Taking the idea of "The Game" first, what stands out is that "The Second Stain" occurred two years before "The Greek Interpreter." This story occurred one year before "The Naval Treaty," which itself occurred six years before "The Bruce-Partington Plans." It would seem that if, by "The Greek Interpreter," Mycroft had already made a name for himself, he and not Lord Bellinger and Trelawney Hope would have contacted Sherlock in "The Second Stain." In addition, it would seem quite natural for Sherlock to consult Mycroft over the loss of the naval treaty. However, neither of these two items occurred.

If we look at Conan Doyle's publication of the stories, "The Naval Treaty" and "The Second Stain" both occur after "The Greek Interpreter"



Dr. Watson meeting Mycroft Holmes for the first time. This illustration first appeared in The Boston Globe, on October 13, 1930, when that newspaper serialized several Sherlock Holmes stories.

and before “The Bruce-Partington Plans.” As a result, similar issues discussed above are also seen here. Again, in regards to “The Second Stain,” at the very least, Mycroft should have accompanied Lord Bellinger and Trelawney Hope to 221B Baker Street, or probably more likely, had invited Sherlock to the Diogenes Club as he had done in “The Greek Interpreter.”

The issue with “The Second Stain” is that it is likely that Mycroft would be able to solve it on his own. As he tells Sherlock in “The Bruce-Partington Plans:”

Give me your details, and from an armchair I will return you an excellent expert opinion. But to run here and run there, to cross-question railway guards, and lie on my face with a lens to my eye—it is not my *métier*. No, you are the one man who can clear the matter up.

“The Second Stain” deals with an important missing letter. Since Mycroft knows all the foreign agents working in England, he could have probably figured out what had happened to the letter. (2) Similar to Sherlock, he would have easily connected the death of Eduardo Lucas with the missing letter and would probably also know of Lucas’s *modus operandi* of using blackmail to gather intelligence, something that Sherlock only learns later in the story. (3)

“The Naval Treaty” is similar to “The Second Stain” in that Mycroft, from an armchair, would be able to piece together the details of what had happened. He would know that Joseph Harrison was supposed to call on Percy Phelps the evening that the treaty went missing. Further, he would know that the treaty had not left England and, similar to Sherlock, discover that Harrison’s finances were in dire straits. Putting all of these items together would give him enough details to have the police search the house for the treaty, avoiding the need to contact Sherlock.

Two additional stories deal with potential scandals for a British ally (“A Scandal in Bohemia”) and for England itself (“The Mazarin Stone”). Again, in neither story does Mycroft either appear or, as we would expect, at the very least be mentioned. Taking the stories in order as written by Conan Doyle, we know that “A Scandal in Bohemia” is the first short story published. As such, it is likely that Conan Doyle was still in the process of working out the characters and style of the short stories. However, as this story occurs shortly before “The Greek Interpreter” on both lists of stories, we again have a question as to why Mycroft is not at the very least consulted. As for “The Mazarin Stone,” it is difficult to give a clear reason why Mycroft is missing. (4) Furthermore, this issue remains whether we look at the stories from the perspective of “The Game” or from the order in which Conan Doyle wrote them.

Another two stories, “The Engineer’s Thumb” and “The Three Garridebs,” involve counterfeiting. Counterfeiting would seem to be very important for the British government. (5) As a result, the lack of Mycroft either making an appearance or Sherlock consulting him is rather

interesting. It is possible that, due to Mycroft's focus on international affairs, he would not be involved in these cases. (6)

"His Last Bow" really stands out as the most singular for not having Mycroft involved. As "the British government," Mycroft would be very interested in the capture of a German spy at the beginning of the First World War. However, given how elderly Sherlock and Watson must have been ("Good old Watson!"), it's likely that Mycroft, who was older, has passed away. (7) Nevertheless, even if he were dead, he should have at least been acknowledged in passing. For example, Sherlock could have told Watson, "I wish my brother were still here; perhaps he could have kept the 'east wind' from coming."

In this little piece I have not discussed the stories with a foreign connection that did not pose a direct threat to the British government. For example, in "The Golden Pince-Nez," the issues the case had for Russia and for justice are only known at the end of the story. Since Sherlock could easily deal with them without going to his brother, there is no need to involve Mycroft. In addition, I did not discuss "The Illustrious Client," since even though it is likely that a member of the royal family is the "Illustrious Client," the story deals with love. It is unlikely that Mycroft would take the time to be involved, happily letting Sherlock deal with it. Of course, it might have been Mycroft who told Sir James Damery to seek the assistance of Sherlock.

Conclusion

Like many of you, I have a special place in my heart for Mycroft. It is unfortunate that Conan Doyle did not include him in more stories. It is possible that since the two were very similar, having too much Mycroft could lead to issues between them. (8) Since Sherlock is the main character, it was important to keep Mycroft only for special occasions. There is also the fact that in several cases, Mycroft would be able to solve the case without even involving Sherlock and thereby Watson, meaning that we, the reader, would lose the ability to enjoy the adventures of the great detective and his trusted friend.

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- (2) In "The Bruce-Partington Plans," Sherlock wires Mycroft to send him "a complete list of all foreign spies or international agents known to be in England, with full address."

- (3) This is the second story from *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* that deals with blackmail and the need for women to avoid scandal. For a discussion on women and scandals, see Margaret Murray, “Victorian Female Reputation: ‘The Adventure of the Second Stain’ & ‘The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton,’” *Ideal and Real Female Experience in Sherlock Holmes’ Stories*, Lehigh University Scalar, 2016, <https://scalar.lehigh.edu/mame16---anthology/victorian-women--reputation> (accessed 13 Jan 2024).
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- (8) An interesting adaptation showing these two men working together is the 1994 Granada TV adaptation of “The Golden Pince-Nez.” In the scene from the professor’s study, Sherlock is slightly disheartened to learn that their father had given Mycroft his magnifying glass.

It's Baritsu NOT Bartitsu — On the Sherlock Holmes Style of Martial Arts

By Derrick Belanger, BSI

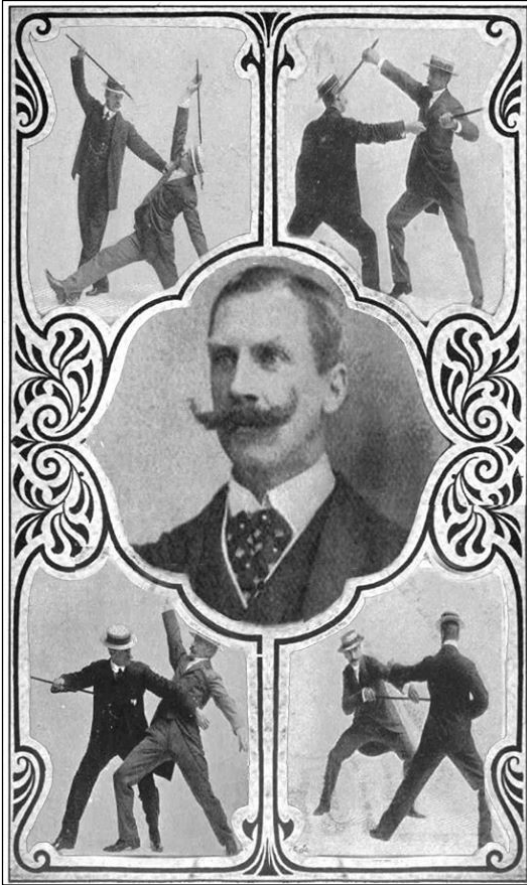
Derrick Belanger, BSI (“The Board Schools”) is an award-winning author, publisher, and educator most noted for his books and lectures on Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He currently resides in Broomfield, Colorado.

We tottered together upon the brink of the fall. I have some knowledge, however, of baritsu, or the Japanese system of wrestling, which has more than once been very useful to me. I slipped through his grip, and he with a horrible scream kicked madly for a few seconds, and clawed the air with both his hands.

— Sherlock Holmes, recounting his defeat of Moriarty to Watson in “The Empty House.”

As the above quote explains, it was Holmes’s use of baritsu which enabled him to defeat his arch nemesis, Professor Moriarty, at the cliff beside the Reichenbach Falls. But what exactly is baritsu, and if Holmes has some knowledge of it, why did it not previously appear in the Canon? The general belief among Sherlockian scholars is that Watson made a mistake in naming the fighting technique Holmes used during his final confrontation with the Professor.

In *The Encyclopedia Sherlockiana*, Jack Tracy explains that Watson misspelled the word bartitsu, which is a system of self-defence created by E.W. Barton-Wright to teach Victorians how to defend themselves on the streets of London. Tracy writes that “The Empty House” was published “in 1903 followed shortly by the first notice of “bartitsu” in *Pearson’s Magazine*...resulting in Watson’s commission of an anachronism.” (1) In *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Les Klinger recounts theories put forth that Holmes used jujitsu to defeat Professor Moriarty. Klinger writes that jujitsu is “a weaponless method of self-defense.” (2) While Holmes



Edward William Barton-Wright 1860-1951: British Martial Arts Pioneer

didn't use a weapon to defeat Moriarty, there are several examples in the Canon of Holmes being skilled with a variety of weapons. It seems highly unlikely that Holmes would be trained in a martial art that de-emphasized the use of arms.

So, if we eliminate the impossible (i.e. baritsu cannot be bartitsu since it was invented after the events in "The Empty House"), and eliminate the improbable (it is highly unlikely that Holmes learned jujitsu), then what remains as the truth? The answer may be quite simple — baritsu is just that, baritsu, a form of martial arts created by Sherlock Holmes. Then, why didn't Holmes ever use this technique earlier in the Canon? As a matter of fact, he did.

The Evidence of Baritsu in the Canon

In "The Adventure of the Three Gables," Holmes tells Watson: "Surely no man would take up my profession if it were not that danger attracts him."

Dangerous certainly describes the profession of the consulting detective. In various adventures, Holmes is attacked by thugs, shot at with bullets and poison darts, and even faces off against the deadliest snake in all of India. To ensure his own safety as well as the safety of others, the great detective had to be an expert in combat.

We see Holmes using various fighting techniques throughout the Canon, with the earliest example being in “The Speckled Band” when Dr. Grimesby Roylott shows off his strength to Holmes by bending his poker and hurling it into the fireplace. Holmes then picks up the poker and “with a sudden effort straightened it out again.” Fixing a bent sword blade was a common skill for sword fighters, and martial arts such as Ba Gua Zhang had a focus on metal bending. One can even find examples online of monks bending metal bars with their hands and their necks.

Another example is found toward the end of “The Naval Treaty” when Holmes tells Watson how he subdued Joseph Harrison. Holmes explains: “He flew at me with a knife, and I had to grass him twice, and got a cut over my knuckles, before I had the upper hand of him.” Holmes likely used locks and throws to subdue his opponent. This is a typical defence method of many martial arts styles.

These two examples could fit in with Jujitsu, but contrasting that is Holmes’s use of weapons in the Canon. As Watson writes in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes “is an expert singlestick player, boxer, and swordsman.” The weapon Watson noted as Holmes’s favourite was the weighted hunting or riding crop. A weighted crop is one with a “steel core, fully covered with braided leather with a lead-filled head (and) can also be used as an implement of self-defense.” (3) Some techniques used to strike opponents in singlestick combat and fencing could be applied to the riding crop. An example of this is when Holmes uses the crop to strike a gun from the hand of John Clay in “The Red-Headed League.”

Baritsu – The Law of the Place

With Holmes’s fighting techniques involving a multitude of forms, incorporating weapons in addition to the human body, one can conclude that Holmes had created his own form of martial arts. There doesn’t appear to be a martial arts style that blends all of these techniques outside of the one used by the Great Detective.

If one draws this conclusion, the next question that needs to be answered is what does the word “baritsu” mean in Japanese? If one does a very rough translation, the first part “ba” can translate into “place” and the second part, “ritsu” can be translated as “law.” So, baritsu, roughly translates into the “law of the place.” That isn’t too far off from jiu jitsu which translates into “the gentle art”.

What exactly would the law of the place mean? It would mean that precise placement of form is crucial to defeating an opponent. While one might assume that is true of all fighting forms, that isn’t necessarily the case. Many forms of martial arts, such as Kung Fu, incorporate animal

forms and have a sense of beauty to the movement. Holmes would discard that, not caring what his form looked like, only that it was applicable to self-defence.

It is also important to note that several martial arts forms throughout history have developed from incorporating multiple forms of fighting. In more modern times, the most famous example is Jeet Kun Do, the form of martial arts created by Bruce Lee. He combined all the knowledge he had learned from various martial arts and blended them together to create his own unique form of fighting. That is precisely what Holmes did in crafting baritsu.

One might wonder why Holmes told Watson that baritsu was the Japanese form of wrestling. Most likely it was to simplify his story. It would have taken quite some time for Holmes to explain to Watson how he created a fighting form over the past decade. Also, one could surmise that Holmes had incorporated some jujitsu and possibly even sumo into his fighting form, and if so, then he wasn't being completely dishonest in his explanation to the doctor.

Baritsu – The Lost Art

Holmes retired to the Sussex Downs in 1903, after a career as a consulting detective spanning over 20 years. Regrettably, there is no evidence that Holmes ever recorded any of his fighting techniques in his writings. Perhaps he intended to in his opus, *The Whole Art of Detection*, but one can only speculate on that possibility since, to the best of our knowledge, it was never published and Holmes's work on the project seems to be lost.

Most likely Holmes always intended to keep the specifics of baritsu to himself, a secret of which only he had knowledge. After all, it is difficult to win a fight if they don't know the capabilities of their opponent. Regrettably, this means that Holmes took his knowledge of baritsu with him to the grave. We are left only with hints of the martial arts of Holmes through snippets in the Canon.

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A Toast to Watson's Second Wife

By Erica Fair

Delivered on July 27, 2024, to the Sherlock @ 50 Conference in Minneapolis

Of all the debates we enjoy, a classic is of course how many wives the handsome, sensitive, and steadfast Watson had, with speculation ranging from one to two to even six or more. Some of us here may doubt there was even a second wife at all, but of course that is preposterous. Not only can we prove the existence of the second spouse, but tonight, I intend to make a case for identity.

So, who had the privilege – or punishment – of being Watson's second choice, doomed to forever compete against Mary? I think we can draw some deductions. No doubt Watson needed someone who could offer an escape from the stress of daily life, but who was independent enough to appreciate time apart. Our lucky doctor also found someone both well-to-do and generous, who even financially supported him when his practice declined, a remarkable gesture even today. Yet despite this kindness, we don't see much for romance, so perhaps the union started from convenience rather than passion. Though Watson must have cared in order to make this lifelong commitment, it's also clear that his love for Mary was on a very different level.

But on the other hand, perhaps that professed devotion to Mary was tinged by guilt. Matrimony does seem a strange choice for Mr. "Three Continents." Instead, I submit that our good doctor was leading a second life, spending hours and even overnights in the company of another. If so, then that poor soul's decades of patience, loyalty, and gratitude for the smallest crumbs of attention that Watson could spare, sometimes at the strangest hours, form the final clue in tonight's analysis.

Therefore, to Watson's long-suffering better half, who accepted him as he was and sought him out time and again, forsaking all others, for better or worse, for emerald tie pins or for fees remitted entirely, in Tapanuli fever and in iron constitution, til Killer Evans dared to try do them part. To the *metaphorical* "second wife" of Dr. Watson, the first and only Sherlock Holmes.

Conan Doyle's non-Sherlockian works in The Strand Magazine – “The Story of the Japanned Box” (January 1899)

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.

Frank Colmore takes a position as private tutor to the sons of the recently widowed Sir John Bollamore of Thorpe Place, Evesham. Sir John is a formidable individual – “six foot three inches in height [and] majestically built” – and, though always courteous, his presence casts a dismal pall over his loyal and discreet household. As Frank settles into the Gothic crumbling pre-Norman house, the servants tell of Sir John’s dark past as ‘Devil’ Bollamore, a persona entirely out of keeping with the quiet and studious man he has encountered. But Frank is forced to reappraise his employer when he hears a woman’s pleading voice coming from Sir John’s turret room, the private chambers that are out of bounds to all, in which resides a peculiar large black japanned box...

As we have seen with many of the *Round the Fire Stories*, “The Japanned Box” shows Conan Doyles revisiting some favourite themes while toying with new variations. A case in point is the central character of Sir John Bollamore, a quiet and studious figure with a secret: if the Brazilian Cat is a forerunner of the demon Hound, then here we have our prototype for Hugo Baskerville. “The greatest rip and debauchee in England,” Sir John was once the leader of “the fastest set,” a bruiser, driver, gambler and drunkard in the model of the Regency bucks. Indeed, the moniker of “Devil” would later be applied to Sir John Hawker, the card-sharp at Watier’s in Conan Doyle’s excellent late vignette, “The End of Devil Hawker” (1930). With his intimidating height and “small, pointed Mephistophelian beard,” Sir John would have been the perfect part for Christopher Lee.

Sir John's change of character is explained by the story's *deus ex machina*, the titular japped box. Once a rogue, he found salvation in the woman who would become his wife, but "a fell disease" saw her taken from him. Before she died, she obtained a phonograph and recorded her personal entreaties to John to help him stay the moral course. Conan Doyle cleverly leads the reader to question whether the disembodied voice from the turret is that of a lover or a ghost, when in fact it is both. The persistence of the human spirit, albeit by mechanical means, makes this an interesting story from the perspective of Conan Doyle's interest in psychical research (there is a rational explanation) and his transition to spiritualism (communing with ghosts). Conan Doyle had previously employed the phonograph in "The Voice of Science" (1891) and would do so again in "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" (1921).

The heart of the story, as in so many of these tales, is a deep personal tragedy, and again Conan Doyle's narrative hits close to home. Sir John is another Charles Altamont Doyle, an alcoholic constantly in battle with the disease, while his wife is a "ministering angel" of the Mary Doyle type. The great sadness of the story is that, rather than the aggressive father in "The Doings of Raffles Haw" (1891) or the uncontrollable one in "The Surgeon of Gaster Fell" (1895), here we have a Charles Doyle who is lucid and controlled, but always teetering on the brink of relapse.

In truth, "The Japped Box" is less a study of alcoholism than its



*"Sir John Bollamore was sitting at his study table."
Image by Sidney Paget.*

attendant depression. Sir John has withdrawn from society and elected to keep himself apart, even from his children and servants who live in trepidation. His "hopeless-looking eyes, proud and yet pathetic" speak to his inner struggle, which he seeks to moderate with a fiercely maintained routine to help make it through each day. Looking on his past, he is filled with self-loathing – "I was a creature from whom my memory recoils." When the story closes, we hear he has recently passed away in a carriage accident that was not very unwelcome to him. Conan Doyle's sensitive observations of Sir John's self-regulating behaviour makes this story one of the hardest to read and certainly one of the most tragic.

David Stuart Davies Remembered *(1946-2024)*

I'm not generally much for Sherlockian hero worship, in that Starrett, Morley, Smith, Shaw sort of way, but I have my exceptions, and David Stuart Davies has always been first amongst them. That he happened to become a colleague and friend is part of what I love most about our shared hobby. As a newbie Sherlockian in the 80s, with an interest in television and film, David's survey *Holmes of the Movies* (1976) was one of the first 'Sherlockian' film books I bought. I suspect it was so for



many of us of a certain age. David was our proxy, a Sherlockian out meeting and commenting on Peter Cushing and then Jeremy Brett, delivering one of the best accounts on the latter with his book *Bending the Willow* (1996). He was a key player in the Northern Musgraves Society and in 1995 invested in the BSI as 'Sir Ralph Musgrave.' In the early 2000s Titan released two editions of *Starring Sherlock Holmes*, another of David's Sherlockian film books. By this time, he was also doing commentaries on various Sherlock Holmes DVD releases (and very recently Blu-rays). He also wrote numerous short stories and plays to much acclaim, both in and outside our Sherlockian field. He was a charming, warm, stylish and wonderfully witty human being. If you knew him, you loved him. David died in August 2024 from an incurable multiform glioblastoma cancer diagnosed before Xmas 2023. He was 78. David was, and remains, the consummate Sherlockian, and he's still my hero.

– Charles Prepolec



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