



Canadian
Holmes

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Cover: Enokoro Koubou of Japan created this wonderful picture of Peter Cushing as Sherlock Holmes. You can see more of her art through Twitter at [@enokoro1999_e](https://twitter.com/enokoro1999_e)

Canadian Holmes

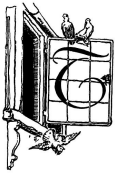
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One-hundred fifty-fifth issue

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RACES OF BOOTPRINTS

It's the friendships

The Sherlockian community has grown immensely in the past dozen years, not only in the number of people participating but also in the ways to join the conversation. Local clubs around the country and around the world are always a good place to start, but the online world beckons for many.

Since becoming editors of this journal, our Sherlockian circle has grown by leaps and bounds. We recently had the pleasure of hosting Fran Martin, from *The Stormy Petrels* of B.C., for a few days, showing her around the province and the city. We have also hosted Sherlockians from the U.S. and Australia, always enriching our lives with their friendship. It is through this community that we reach out to others, shake hands, catch up, mourn our losses and make connections which link us all like parts of a chain.

Years ago when I took my first few tentative steps into this community I was lucky enough to stumble across John Bennett Shaw, the Johnny Appleseed of Sherlockians and societies. He encouraged me to not only start my own club, now going strong for over 35 years, but also reach out to the wider community through the post in those days.

No one ever asked me if I had studied the Canon, knew the colours of Holmes's dressing gown or preferred Rathbone over Brett. Instead, I was encouraged to read the stories, the writings on the writings, and enjoy friendships this hobby creates.

This issue has articles and reviews by people we have met and want to meet but consider them all friends and members of our community.

We kick off this edition with Barbara Rusch's Bow Window look at the Prince Albert Chain. Next up is Doug Wrigglesworth, who examines what we know about Watson, followed by an article by your co-editor Mark, on Robert Barr, a Scottish-Canadian author and friend of Doyle's. After this short biography is a Sherlockian pastiche by Barr, first published in 1892. Another far more recent pastiche follows Barr's, this one by regular *Canadian Holmes* contributor Michael Duke. We then have a toast to Sherlock Holmes by Richard Brown, and round off the issue with some reviews and of course, Diary Notes. Enjoy the issue created by friends near and far.

The view from the bow window

Barbara Rusch explores various aspects of Victorian and Edwardian life as they relate to the canonical tales.



From the reign of Charles II in the 17th century onwards, the pocket watch became an increasingly popular form of timepiece. By the mid-19th century, the proliferation of the railroads had made it an essential tool for conductors and other employees who required an accurate means of telling time. At first, a leather strap helped secure the watch to a waistcoat, lapel or belt to avoid it being accidentally dropped and broken. A chain specially devised for that purpose made its debut at the Great Exhibition of 1851, where it was immediately adopted by Prince Albert, Consort to Queen Victoria, who was the inspiration for the fair. The chain became inextricably “linked” to the man who had done so much to popularize it.

The watch was tucked inside a hidden pocket of the waistcoat, to which the Prince Albert chain was hooked to a small clasp and slipped through a buttonhole with a T-bar, thus allowing the chain to be draped in either one or two elegant loops. Though generally made of either gold or some baser alloy, an unusual chain in my own collection is made of woven hair from someone who might have been dear to its wearer.

There are three references to the Prince Albert chain in the Canon. Jabez Wilson sported a “heavy brassy Albert chain.” In *A Study in Scarlet*, the litter of objects upon the stairs near the body of Enoch Drebber includes a “gold watch and Albert chain, very heavy and solid,” and in “A Case of Identity,” Mary Sutherland describes Hosmer Angel as wearing one. Though the Prince Albert chain was intended as a hallmark of distinction and prestige, it is clear that no accessory, however fashionable, can turn a villain into a gentleman.



Queen Victoria and Prince Albert wearing his eponymous chain, 1861

Dr. John H. Watson – Friend, amanuensis and admirer of women

By Doug Wrigglesworth

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What do we know about Watson, “That One Fixed Point in a Changing Age”?

For those who study the Sherlockian Canon, there are many mysteries and puzzles, often due to Watson’s casual attitude toward continuity (and to the failure of his Literary Agent to draw his attention to it). One such mystery we are driven to contemplate is this: Just who are Sherlock Holmes and his flatmate, Dr. John Watson? Neither the chronicler, nor his literary agent, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, deign to give us many clues as to their backgrounds, their early lives, or the genetics and environmental factors that gave us these two champions we so admire.

This article will attempt to clarify some of the facts we know about Watson, as well as some of the well-considered conjectures that attempt to fill in the gaps in the Canon. In addition, included will be some historical facts about the aspects of the Victorian era that formed the character of Watson.

Erudite articles abound purporting to provide insights into Watson’s life. *The Universal Sherlock Holmes* (1) lists some 372 entries for references to Watson’s life. My primary sources of Watson biographies are those compiled by S. C. Roberts. (2) In 1931, he published a slim pamphlet titled “Doctor Watson: Prolegomena to the study of a biographical problem, with a bibliography of Sherlock Holmes.” (3) In 1953, this was revised and expanded into a small book, *Holmes and Watson: A Miscellany*. (4) It is from these excellent publications I have drawn my inspiration for much of what follows.

Origins

The only evidence that we have about Watson’s early life comes from two sources, his education and his memories of “Tadpole Phelps.” (5)

Roberts suggests his birthdate was likely 1852 (on August 7, as other sources suggest), and his MD awarded in 1878. His medical training at the University of London implies that Watson’s family had the resources, and the resolve, to support such an education. Watson’s attitude towards London, “that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers are irresistibly drained,” hints at a more rural upbringing, given his poetic description of the countryside in several stories.

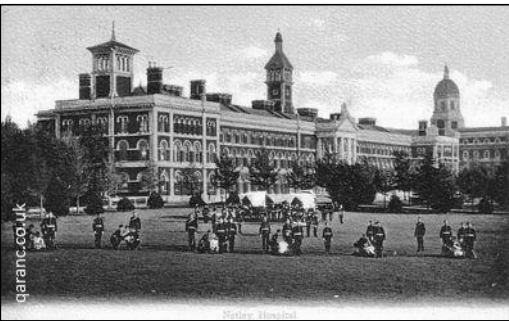
A recent article by Catherine Cooke (6) provides a detailed description of the complex and lengthy process through which Watson had to go to achieve the degree “Doctor of Medicine” at the University of London in 1878.

Australia may also have been a part of his childhood. As he stands with Mary Morstan in the grounds of Pondicherry Lodge, (7) he reminisces scenes of his childhood “on the side of a hill near Ballarat.” If he and Tadpole Phelps were “small boys together,” and at a cricket-playing school, Watson may have had an early education in Australia, or possibly Watson had been sent ‘home’ (8) to school as child.

The only relative of whom we are aware is an older brother; a rather sad case. The accurate description of his brother’s sad life that Holmes elicited from the examination of a 50-guinea watch caused a shocked Watson to accuse his friend of prying into his personal life. (9)

As the younger brother, and given the likely drain on the family resources of his older brother, it is not so surprising that Watson turned to the Army Medical School at Netley to pursue his future career.

Netley Hospital



The Royal Victoria Hospital, or Netley Hospital, was a large military hospital in Netley, near Southampton. Construction started in 1856 at the suggestion of Queen Victoria but its design caused some controversy, chiefly from Florence

Nightingale.

From its construction until 1902, Netley Hospital served as the home of the Army Medical School, training civilian doctors for service with the army. As many patients were suffering from tropical diseases, the hospital was also used for medical research.

Early patients arriving from campaigns taking place all over the world during the expansion of the British Empire had an uncomfortable journey to the hospital, either having to be transferred to a shallow-draft boat if landing at the pier or transported from Netley station to the hospital if arriving by rail.

The railway and pier were also used for Queen Victoria’s frequent visits to the hospital; she often arrived at the pier having been conveyed in the royal yacht from her residence on the Isle of Wight, Osborne House. She awarded three Victoria Crosses to patients at the hospital.

Watson’s Military Career



Watson in Field Order dress of the Royal Army Medical Corps

At the end of his course at Netley, Watson was duly posted to the Northumberland Fusiliers as Assistant Surgeon. “With what zest may we picture him opening his account with Cox & Co. at Charing Cross, and purchasing his tin trunk, pith helmet, and all the equipment necessary for Eastern service; with what quiet satisfaction must he have supervised the painting of the legend JOHN H. WATSON, M.D., upon his tin dispatch box!” (10)

But events were moving quickly; before Watson could join his regiment, the Second Afghan War had broken out. It was in the spring of 1880 that Watson embarked, in company with other officers, for service of Britain’s Indian dominion.

At Bombay, he received intelligence that his corps “had advanced through the passes and was already deep in the enemy’s country.”

The Second Anglo-Afghan War was a military conflict fought between the British Raj and the Emirate of Afghanistan from 1878 to 1880, when the latter was ruled by Sher Ali Khan, the son of former Emir Dost Mohammad Khan. This was the second time British India invaded Afghanistan in response to the threat of Russian intervention. The war ended after the British emerged victorious against various Afghan forces, and the Afghans agreed to let the British attain all of their geopolitical

objectives from the Treaty of Gandamak. Most of the British and Indian soldiers withdrew from Afghanistan. The Afghan tribes were permitted to maintain internal rule and local customs, but they had to cede control of the area's foreign relations to the British, who, in turn, guaranteed the area's freedom from foreign military domination as a buffer between the British Raj and the Russian Empire.



Badge of the North-umberland Fusiliers

Anyone who is at all familiar with the current history of Afghanistan, and the response of its inhabitants to those who would attempt to interfere in their country, will find Watson's experience and those of his fellow soldiers disturbingly familiar. It would seem that no one has learned from that troubled history, and we see the same fatal errors still being made in the 21st century.

At Kandahar, which had been occupied by the British, Watson joined his regiment but it was not with his own regiment that he was destined to go into action: "The Fifth marched back to Peshawar, and from there to Lawrencepore; and ... in September they

received orders for home. . . . So, they turned their backs on the tragedy of Maiwand." (11)

To Watson, however, the battle of Maiwand, fought on July 27, 1880, was to become only too vivid a memory. He was removed from his own brigade and attached to the Berkshires (the 66th Foot), the story of whose heroic resistance at Maiwand has passed into military history. (12)



Badge of the 66th Royal Berkshires

The Fateful Battle of Maiwand, July 27, 1880 (13)

The Battle of Maiwand was one of the principal battles of the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Under the leadership of Ayub Khan, the Afghans defeated a much smaller force consisting of two brigades of British and Indian troops under Brigadier-General George Burrows, albeit at a high price: between 2,050 and 2,750 Afghan Pashtun warriors were killed, and

probably about 1,500 wounded. British and Indian forces suffered 969 soldiers killed and 177 wounded.

On the afternoon of July 26, information was received that the Afghan force was making for the Maiwand Pass, a few miles away. The Afghans numbered 25,000, including Afghan regular troops and five batteries of artillery, including some very modern Armstrong guns. The Afghan guns gradually came into action and a three-hour artillery duel ensued at an opening range of about 1,700 yards, during which the British captured smoothbore guns on the left, expended their ammunition and withdrew to replenish it. This enabled the Afghans to force the left-hand battalion back. The left flank, comprising Indian infantry regiments, gave way and rolled in a great wave to the right. The 66th Regiment, as a result of this pressure, was swept away by the pressure of the Ghazi (14) attack.

The 66th Berkshire Regiment, known as the “Biscuit Boys” after the Reading biscuit firm of Huntley and Palmers, was considered a steady mainstream infantry regiment. The regiment fought hard to repel the Afghans, several officers and soldiers dying defending the regiment’s colours. The Afghans were impressed by the courage of the men who fought it out in Khig and particularly by the determination of the 11 who shot down numbers of their attackers and, when ammunition was exhausted, charged with the bayonet to their deaths.

The lone survivor of that last stand was Bobbie, a small mongrel who belonged to Lance-Sergeant Peter Kelly of the 66th Regiment of Foot (the Berkshire Regiment).



The 66th at Maiwand - Last Stand

On July 3, 1880, a column of some 2,700 troops under Brigadier George Burrows set out from Kandahar. Bobbie accompanied the troops.

Eventually, the British force was surrounded and attacked by a much larger Afghan force. Along with a line of Indian regiments and cavalry, the 66th Foot made a determined stand while the guns were evacuated, Bobbie barking furiously at the attackers. The British were overrun, and in the confusion, Bobbie got lost, but the following day, survivors making their way back to the fort spotted him trying to catch up, though he was wounded. He was reunited with his owner, who was also on the wounded list.

Upon arrival back in England, Bobbie was presented to Queen Victoria, along with several soldiers of the regiment, who received Distinguished Conduct Medals.

A year later, Bobbie was accidentally run over and killed by a hansom cab in Gosport. He was stuffed and can be seen today at the regimental museum in Salisbury, decorated with an unknown soldier's Afghan War medal.

The battle dampened morale for the British side but was also partly a disappointment for Ayub Khan, Governor of Herat and commander of the Afghans in this battle, because he had lost so many men to gain a small advantage. Ayub Khan did manage to shut the British up in Kandahar, resulting in General Frederick (Bobs) Roberts's famous 314-mile (505 km) relief march from Kabul to Kandahar in August 1880. The resulting Battle of Kandahar on September 1 was a decisive victory for the British.

The loss of the Queen's Colour and Regimental Colour of the 66th (Berkshire) Regiment of Foot at the Battle of Maiwand, following so soon upon the loss of the Colours of the 1st/24th (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment at the Battle of Isandlwana (January 22, 1879) during the Anglo-Zulu War, resulted in colours no longer being taken on active service.

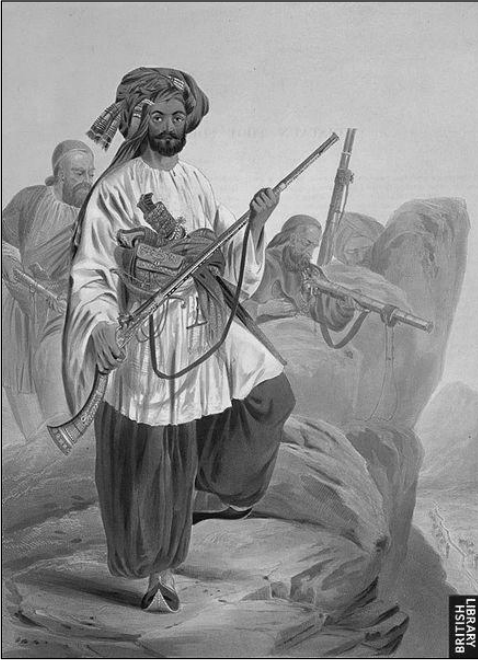
Watson's Wound(s)

Watson tells us that "I was struck on the shoulder by a Jezail bullet, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery." The historical record of the Battle lists as wounded a "Surgeon-Major Preston." (15)

"I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Ghazis had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Murray, my orderly, who threw me across a pack-horse, and succeeded in bringing me safely to the British lines." Further he describes his encounter with "enteric fever. That curse of our Indian possessions."

Poor Watson, the medical officer who now suffered the agonies of the many patients he had met at Netley – as well as in his regimental role.

Struck by Jezail Bullet



Afghan Tribesman and his Jezail

The classic weapon of the Ghazis was a simple, cost-efficient and often handmade muzzle-loading long arm commonly used in British India, Central Asia and parts of the Middle East. Unlike typical military firearms that adhered to strict standards in construction, Jezails were usually handcrafted and therefore could vary widely in craftsmanship. For their creators or users, a Jezail could be a markedly personal weapon and therefore richly decorated to one's artistic tastes. In spite of this variance in design, Jezails still generally shared common elements and mechanics, such as their trademark deep curve in the gunstock.

While not manufactured for professional European armies, they were still weapons built for war and as such, possessed long barrels and chambered large calibres. Ammunition was also versatile, for aside from usual shot, the Afghans would also load their Jezails with nails and pebbles. All in all, their often handmade origin belies their deadliness; depending on the skill of the gunsmith, Jezails could rank among the most powerful and accurate long guns of the 18th century. In Afghanistan today, handmade weapons still proliferate – likely knock-off AK 47s, rather than Jezails.

Enteric Fever

Known today as Typhoid fever, it is a type of enteric fever along with paratyphoid fever. The cause is the bacterium *Salmonella typhi*, also known as *Salmonella enterica* serotype Typhi, growing in the intestines and blood. Typhoid is spread by eating or drinking food or water contaminated with the feces of an infected person.

During his service in South Africa during the Boer War, Arthur Conan Doyle was an early proponent of the new anti-Typhoid vaccine. It certainly

saved his life during his work in Langman Hospital in Bloemfontein. Unfortunately, side effects of the vaccination deterred many from accepting it, resulting in continuing carnage.

Hospital at Peshawar

The government became increasingly concerned with the health of the army after the Crimean War, as troop numbers had been severely depleted, leading up to the Rebellion of 1857. The result of this was thorough examination and monitoring of the sanitary and medical arrangements for both British and native troops. Following the Royal Sanitary Commission report of 1863, it was realized that troops were dying from four major diseases – fevers, dysentery / diarrhoea, cholera and liver diseases.

It was imperative that troops were acclimatized and subsequently kept healthy, particularly as the Indian climate intensified disease. Placement of cantonments was determined by water, soil, air and elevation. Troops were segregated from the insanitary environment into more controlled conditions. However, severe outbreaks of disease often originated from troop movements and pilgrimages. These epidemics claimed many lives – the 1861 cholera epidemic killed one in 10 soldiers.

Invalided Home:

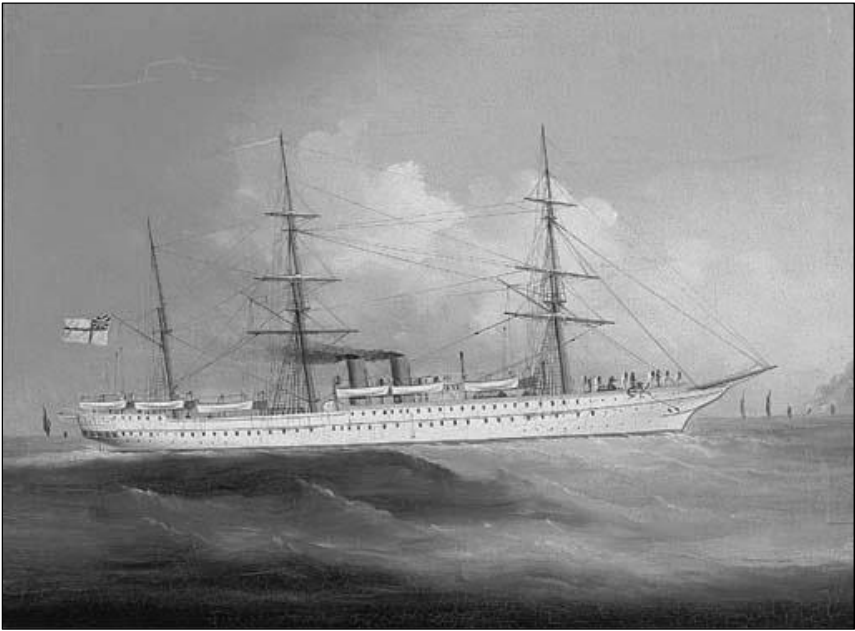
Happily, Watson survived his hospital stay – a sure sign of his strong and determined character. He would be pleased to sail home to England on the troopship *HMS Orontes*. His wounds precluded furthering his military career, and he landed at Portsmouth with a wound pension of 11s. 6p. a day (about \$50 CAD today.)

Given his account of “leading a comfortless, meaningless existence,” we might well question whether his experiences in India might today be recognized as a form of PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Happily, for Watson and for us, he decided that “[he] must make a complete alteration in [his] style of living.”

Watson’s Later Years with Holmes

Watson’s role as chronicler of their adventures together have provided us all with timeless literary treasures that continue to brighten our days. However, the ever self-effacing Watson continues to keep his personal life hidden.

Apart from his apparent gambling habit: “By the way, Watson, you know something of racing? I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension,” (16) we learn of his experiences with the fairer sex.



HMS Orontes was a 19th-century troopship of the Royal Navy

Watson refers to “an experience of women which extends over many nations and three separate continents” – clearly Europe, India, Australia. If we accept an account in an apocryphal document such as *Angels of Darkness*, Watson also had experiences in 19th-century America.

So, in spite of involvements with women that would tempt us to characterize him as a ‘ladies’ man,’ we know he fell in love with and married his true love, Mary Morstan. Subsequently, he apparently left 221B Baker Street to set up a home and practise medicine. Sadly, the lovely Mary died sometime during Sherlock’s Great Hiatus, i.e. between 1891 and 1894. (17)

Sherlockian scholars have long postulated on whether Watson stayed true to Mary or just how many wives Watson had during his life. As many as five or even six marriages have been attributed to Watson by scholars who have picked through the Canon with their various fine-toothed combs. There are some of us, however, who are quite happy to leave John and Mary as a happy couple whose idyll ended far too soon.

Epilogue

Perhaps one of the most poignant scenes in all of the Canon takes place as the clouds of war gather and Watson and Holmes meet at the home of Von Bork, the German spymaster.

“It was nine o’clock at night upon the second August [1914] – the most terrible August in the history of the world. One might have thought already that God’s curse hung heavy over a degenerate world, for there was an awesome hush and a feeling of vague expectancy in the sultry and stagnant air.”

Once Holmes, again with Watson’s assistance, brings Von Bork to justice, and saves the Empire once more, the two old friends meet upon the terrace:

“Stand with me here upon the terrace, for it may be the last quiet talk that we shall ever have.” ... Holmes pointed back to the moonlit sea and shook a thoughtful head. “There’s an east wind coming, Watson.” “I think not, Holmes. It is very warm.” “Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age.

There’s an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it’s God’s own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared.”



Holding either arm, the two friends walked him very slowly down the garden path.

Ave atqua vale, Watson. Hail and farewell friend.

*You are indeed the steadfast and true chronicler
of a historic time and place.*

Endnotes

- (1) De Waal, Ronald B. *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*. Toronto: Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library, 1994 (in five volumes, also available digitally)
- (2) Sir Sydney Castle Roberts (1887–1966) was a British author, publisher and university administrator. He was a well-known and popular figure around Cambridge throughout his life. He was an author, publisher and biographer and a noted Sherlockian, being president of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. According to some, Roberts is responsible for the popularization of the grand Sherlockian game of criticism. He was knighted in 1958.
- (3) Roberts, S. C. *Doctor Watson: Prolegomena to the Study of a Biographical Problem, with a Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes*. London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1931. 32 p. (Criterion Miscellany, No. 28)
- (4) Roberts, S. C. *Holmes and Watson: A Miscellany*. London: Oxford University Press, 1953 (137 pp)
- (5) “The Adventure of the Naval Treaty”
- (6) Cooke, Catherine “Making Bricks without Clay: The Medical Training of Dr. Watson,” *Nerve and Knowledge: Doctors, Medicine and the Sherlockian Canon*. New York, The Baker Street Irregulars Press, 2017.
- (7) *The Sign of Four*
- (8) i.e. ‘home’ to England from life in a Colony.
- (9) *The Sign of Four*
- (10) Roberts 1931.
- (11) Roberts 1931 p 14. Quoting Walker: *History of the Northumberland Fusiliers*.
- (12) Maxwell, Leigh *My God Maiwand!: Operations of the South Afghanistan Police Force, 1878-80*. London: Leo Cooper, 1979.
- (13) An excellent and well-illustrated account may be found at www.britishbattles.com/second-afghan-war/battle-of-maiwand/ (last accessed 15 January 2018)
- (14) Ghazi (warrior), an Islamic term for one who participates in religious warfare.
- (15) Petre, F. Loraine *The Royal Berkshire Regiment (Princess Charlotte of Wales's): 49th & 66th of Foot. Volume 1, 1743-1914*. Reading Barracks: Butler & Tanner, 1925.
- (16) “Shoscombe Old Place”
- (17) Roberts (1931) p 24

Robert Barr – No Idle friend

By Mark Alberstat

Mark Alberstat is a long-time Bootmaker and co-editor of Canadian Holmes. He is also Colonel of the Spence Munros in Halifax.

“I found him playing the violin with a look of sweet peace and serenity on his face ...”



These few words could be part of the opening scene of almost any Sherlockian pastiche. However, when this one goes on to add: “which I never noticed on the countenances of those within hearing distance,” you know you are in for something different.

These lines come from “Detective Stories Gone Wrong: The Adventures of Sherlaw Kombs,” by Scottish-born Canadian, Robert Barr and published in the first edition of the *The Idler* magazine, May 1892. (The story is reprinted, beginning on page 18)

For today’s Sherlockians and mystery readers another pastiche or parody is nothing new. To readers then, a parody of the newly minted consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes, was relatively original. Only a year before this, “A Scandal in Bohemia” was published, the first of the Holmes short stories, and one of the early steps on Doyle’s road to literary fame. It would be nice to think that a Canadian wrote the first-ever Sherlockian pastiche. However, that honour most likely goes to J.M. Barrie, who wrote “My Evening with Sherlock Holmes,” which appeared in *The Speaker* magazine on November 28, 1891.

Barr was born on September 16, 1849, in Glasgow, Scotland, the son of Robert and Jane Barr. The Barr family emigrated to



Robert Barr

Upper Canada in 1854 and settled on a farm in Muirkirk, Ontario.

Barr became a teacher and eventual headmaster of the Central School of Windsor, Ontario. During this time, he began to write short stories for a variety of publications, including *The Detroit Free Press*, a paper founded in 1831 and still running today. In 1876, Barr quit his teaching position and became a staff writer at that newspaper; he was later joined there by his brothers James and John. At the time, Barr used the pseudonym “Luke Sharp.”

An 1895 article, titled “A Glimpse of Robert Barr” by C. Stan Allen, in *The Canadian* magazine reports that “Barr’s first story was the result of an accident.” During Barr’s teaching stint in Walkerville, Ontario he and a friend, Alex McNeill, took a trip in a small boat to Buffalo during the summer holidays. The plan was to sail to Buffalo along the south side of Lake Erie and return by the north shore. However, in Buffalo their small boat was wrecked by a canal boat and the trip came to a premature end. Barr



Image from McClure’s Magazine, 1894. “Barr and Doyle at Dr. Doyle’s house, South Norwood. From a photograph by Fradelli & Young, 246 Regent Street, London, W.

saw the humour in the story and wrote up the incident as “A Dangerous Journey,” which was soon printed in *The Detroit Free Press*.

The Free Press’s editor, William Quinby, enjoyed the story so much he asked for more. The success of his writing gave Barr the impetus to quit teaching and become a member of the *Free Press’s* reporting staff.

Allen states:

“His nom de plume, “Luke Sharp,” is a familiar one to all newspaper readers. His adoption of this pseudonym takes one back to the time when he was attending school in Toronto. Near his boarding house was a sign which he saw daily, and which conjured up many funny ideas because of

the curious combination. It read, “Luke Sharpe, Undertaker,” and the young student had many a quiet laugh at the incongruous and unique appellation.” (1)

In 1881, Barr moved to England to start a weekly British edition of the *Free Press*, based in London. In 1892, Barr founded *The Idler* with author, journalist and humourist Jerome K. Jerome, who was then famous in literary circles for *Three Men in a Boat*, published to great acclaim three years earlier.

“Jerome was an industrious character, yet his writings extolled the life of a daydreamer, above all in his collection of humorous essays “Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow.” (2) Barr could not imagine a better colleague at *The Idler*. Jerome thought himself a rather dull person, and he was certainly shy, yet his humor had reached a large audience, making him an influential author. In the year following the publication of *Three Men in a Boat*, the number of registered private boats on the Thames increased by 50 per cent, and the river became a major tourist attraction in its own right.

Jerome wrote in his 1925 autobiography, *My Life and Times*, that the journal was “Barr’s idea. But the title was mine. Barr had made the English edition of *The Detroit Free Press* quite a good property; and was keen to start something of his own. He wanted a popular name [to run the journal with him] and, at first, was undecided between Kipling and myself. He chose me—as, speaking somewhat bitterly, he later on confessed to me—thinking I should be the easier to “manage.” He had not liked the look of Kipling’s jaw. Kipling had been about two years in London, and had just married his secretary, a beautiful girl with a haunting melancholy in her eyes that still lingers.” (3)

The Idler was a monthly, which proved to be instantly popular. Initially, in England, each issue was sixpence and in America it sold for 25 cents or \$3.00 for a yearly subscription. The journal contained serialized novels and tales, travel sketches, sporting reports, short fiction and interviews. With Jerome and Barr at the helm, the magazine attracted such contributors as Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, Israel Zangwill, pioneering female Canadian journalist Sara Duncan – who wrote under the name Garth Grafton – and, of course, Conan Doyle. ACD’s first contributed in March 1892 with “De Profundis” and then again “The Los Amigos Fiasco” in December that same year.

“De Profundis” is a melodrama featuring coffee exporters from Ceylon visiting London, a quarantined ship and a ghostly apparition. “The Los Amigos Fiasco” is an odd story about the carrying out of a death sentence on a prisoner using electricity, differing views of its effectiveness for this

task and a bizarre twist in the tale. Neither story could be considered among Doyle's better works.

Despite, or maybe because of, Barr's early Holmes pastiche, Doyle and he became friends as they travelled in the same literary circles. Mattias Boström points out in *From Holmes to Sherlock*: "Even before Robert Barr established his magazine, many of his soon to-be-colleagues socialized at the Idlers' Club, which would later lend its name to the publication. It was at such a dinner that Conan Doyle found out just who [J.M. Barrie] had parodied him so skillfully" (4) with "My Evening with Sherlock Holmes."

Many years later in 1924, when Doyle wrote his *Memoirs and Adventures*, he recalled Barr, who had died a dozen years earlier, as "a volcanic Anglo- or rather Scot-American, with a violent manner, a wealth of strong adjectives, and one of the kindest of natures underneath it all. He was one of the best raconteurs I have ever known, and as a writer I have always felt that he did not quite come into his own."

Doyle even mentioned Barr in the preface to *Rodney Stone*: "I am also much indebted to my friends Mr. J. C. Parkinson and Robert Barr for information upon the subject of the ring."



(Original photo caption from McClure's Magazine, 1894)
Robert Barr Miss Doyle Conan Doyle Robert McClure

This picture was made in the summer of 1894 in front of Conan Doyle's house in Surry, near London. Miss Doyle later became Mrs. Cromarsh, and is herself an author.

It seems that in private Doyle had some doubts about Barr's editing ability. On September 14, 1895 Doyle wrote to his mother and in part said: "Just as to Jerome you do him an injustice. He surrendered the Editorship entirely to friend Barr about a year or more ago (who certainly let it decline). Jerome has now (last month) taken it over again, and you

will, I think, see it go up.”

In July 1895 Barr gave up the editorship of *The Idler*. From August 1895 to November 1897, Jerome was the sole editor. From May 1899 to August 1900 Arthur Lawrence was the editor and from then until January 1901 Sidney Sime was at the helm. The journal seems to have languished until October 1902 when Barr revived the magazine and remained the editor until the journal ceased publication in March 1911.

During his *Idler* hiatus, one of the articles Barr wrote was a two-part essay, titled “Literature in Canada,” for *The Canadian Magazine* in 1899. Barr used this platform to chastise Canadians for not caring enough about their locally grown writers and said the “average citizen . . . loves whiskey better than books.”

Barr wrote over 20 novels and many short pieces of fiction, critiques and essays. A few of his novels were set in Canada, including *In the Midst of Alarms* (1893) and *The Measure of the Rule* (1907). The later was a satirical fictional memoir about his experiences at the Toronto Normal School.

In the Midst of Alarms tells the story of a New York journalist in need of a vacation shortly after the end of the American Civil War. The journalist travels to Ontario and is joined by an old schoolmate, a professor at University College Toronto. During a camping trip the pair find romance, adventure and rural Canadian characters. They also find Irish Americans – the Fenians – who have come to Canada to attack British troops to protest British rule of Ireland. Barr, as a teenager, joined a group of volunteers in St. Thomas, Ontario, which formed to watch for Fenian raids and disturbances.

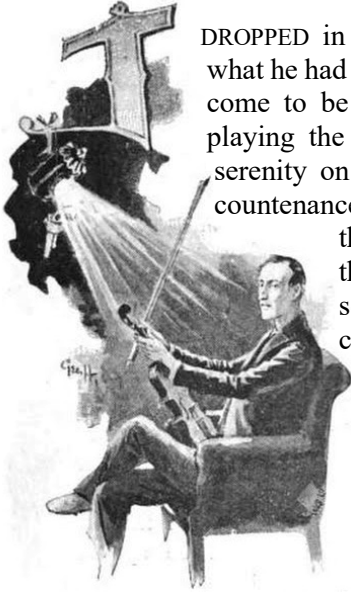
Barr died from heart disease on October 21, 1912, at his home in Woldingham, a small village to the southeast of London; he was 62.

Notes

- (1) Allen, C. Stan, 1895. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. *The Canadian Magazine*, Vol. IV, November, 1894 to April. 1895 (<https://books.google.ca/books?id=calOAQAIAAJ&pg>)
- (2) Boström, Mattias, 2017. New York. *From Holmes To Sherlock*. p. 74.
- (3) Jerome, K. Jerome. *My Life and Times*. (<https://books.google.ca/books?id=w4x9CgAAQBAJ&pg>)
- (4) Boström, Mattias, 2017. New York. *From Holmes To Sherlock*. p. 74.

The Great Pegram Mystery

(With apologies to Dr. Conan Doyle, and our mutual and lamented friend the late Sherlock Holmes.)



DROPPED in on my friend, Sherlaw Kombs, to hear what he had to say about the Pegram mystery, as it had come to be called in the newspapers. I found him playing the violin with a look of sweet peace and serenity on his face, which I never noticed on the countenances of those within hearing distance. I knew this expression of seraphic calm indicated that Kombs had been deeply annoyed about something. Such, indeed, proved to be the case, for one of the morning papers had contained an article, eulogizing the alertness and general competence of Scotland Yard. So great was Sherlaw Kombs's contempt for Scotland Yard that he never would visit Scotland during his vacations, nor would he ever admit that a Scotchman was fit for anything but export.

He generously put away his violin, for he had a sincere liking for me, and greeted me with his usual kindness.

"I have come," I began, plunging at once into the matter on my mind, "to hear what you think of the great Pegram mystery."

"I haven't heard of it," he said quietly, just as if all London were not talking of that very thing. Kombs was curiously ignorant on some subjects, and abnormally learned on others. I found, for instance, that political discussion with him was impossible, because he did not know who Salisbury and Gladstone were. This made his friendship a great boon.

"The Pegram mystery has baffled even Gregory, of Scotland Yard."

"I can well believe it," said my friend, calmly. "Perpetual motion, or squaring the circle, would baffle Gregory. He's an infant, is Gregory."

This was one of the things I always liked about Kombs. There was no professional jealousy in him, such as characterizes so many other men.

He filled his pipe, threw himself into his deep-seated arm-chair, placed his feet on the mantel, and clasped his hands behind his head.

"Tell me about it," he said simply.



"Old Barrie Kipson," I began, "was a stockbroker in the City. He lived in Pegram, and it was his custom to—" "COME IN!" shouted Kombs, without changing his position, but with a suddenness that startled me. I had heard no knock.

"Excuse me," said my friend, laughing, "my invitation to enter was a trifle premature. I was really so interested in your recital that I spoke before I thought, which a detective should never do. The fact is, a man will be here in a moment who will tell me all about this crime, and so you will be spared further effort in that line."

"Ah, you have an appointment. In that case I will not intrude," I said, rising.

"Sit down; I have no appointment. I did not know until I spoke that he was coming."

I gazed at him in amazement. Accustomed as I was to his extraordinary talents, the man was a perpetual surprise to me. He continued to smoke quietly, but evidently enjoyed my consternation.

"I see you are surprised. It is really too simple to talk about, but, from my position opposite the mirror, I can see the reflection of objects in the street. A man stopped, looked at one of my cards, and then glanced across the street. I recognized my card, because, as you know, they are all in scarlet. If, as you say, London is talking of this mystery, it naturally follows that he will talk of it, and the chances are he wished to consult me about it. Anyone can see that, besides there is always—Come in!"

There was a rap at the door this time.

A stranger entered. Sherlaw Kombs did not change his lounging attitude.

"I wish to see Mr. Sherlaw Kombs, the detective," said the stranger, coming within the range of the smoker's vision.

"This is Mr. Kombs," I remarked at last, as my friend smoked quietly, and seemed half-asleep.

"Allow me to introduce myself," continued the stranger, fumbling for a card.

"There is no need. You are a journalist," said Kombs.

"Ah," said the stranger, somewhat taken aback, "you know me, then."

"Never saw or heard of you in my life before."

"Then how in the world——"

"Nothing simpler. You write for an evening paper. You have written an article slating the book of a friend. He will feel badly about it, and you will condole with him. He will never know who stabbed him unless I tell him."

"The devil!" cried the journalist, sinking into a chair and mopping his brow, while his face became livid.

"Yes," drawled Kombs, "it is a devil of a shame that such things are done. But what would you? as we say in France."

When the journalist had recovered his second wind he pulled himself together somewhat. "Would you object to telling me how you know these particulars about a man you say you have never seen?"

"I rarely talk about these things," said Kombs with great composure. "But as the cultivation of the habit of observation may help you in your profession, and thus in a remote degree benefit me by making your paper less deadly dull, I will tell you. Your first and second fingers are smeared with ink, which shows that you write a great deal. This smeared class embraces two sub-classes, clerks or accountants, and journalists. Clerks have to be neat in their work. The ink-smear is slight in their case. Your fingers are badly and carelessly smeared; therefore, you are a journalist. You have an evening paper in your pocket. Anyone might have any evening paper, but yours is a Special Edition, which will not be on the streets for half-an-hour yet. You must have obtained it before you left the office, and to do this you must be on the staff. A book notice is marked with a blue pencil. A journalist always despises every article in his own paper not written by himself; therefore, you wrote the article you have marked, and doubtless are about to send it to the author of the book referred to. Your paper makes a specialty of abusing all books not written by some member of its own staff. That the author is a friend of yours, I merely surmised. It is all a trivial example of ordinary observation."

"Really, Mr. Kombs, you are the most wonderful man on earth. You are the equal of Gregory, by Jove, you are."

A frown marred the brow of my friend as he placed his pipe on the sideboard and drew his self-cocking six-shooter.

"Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

"I do not—I—I assure you. You are fit to take charge of Scotland Yard to-morrow——. I am in earnest, indeed I am, sir."

"Then Heaven help you," cried Kombs, slowly raising his right arm.

I sprang between them.

"Don't shoot!" I cried. "You will spoil the carpet. Besides, Sherlaw, don't you see the man means well. He actually thinks it is a compliment!"

"Perhaps you are right," remarked the detective, flinging his revolver carelessly beside his pipe, much to the relief of the third party. Then, turning to the journalist, he said, with his customary bland courtesy—

"You wanted to see me, I think you said. What can I do for you, Mr. Wilber Scribbings?"

The journalist started.

"How do you know my name?" he gasped.

Kombs waved his hand impatiently.

"Look inside your hat if you doubt your own name?"

I then noticed for the first time that the name was plainly to be seen inside the top-hat Scribbings held upside down in his hands.

"You have heard, of course, of the Pegram mystery——".

"Tush," cried the detective; "do not, I beg of you, call it a mystery. There is no such thing. Life would become more tolerable if there ever was a mystery. Nothing is original. Everything has been done before. What about the Pegram affair?"

"The Pegram—ah—case has baffled everyone. *The Evening Blade* wishes you to investigate, so that it may publish the result. It will pay you well. Will you accept the commission?"

"Possibly. Tell me about the case."

"I thought everybody knew the particulars. Mr. Barrie Kipson lived at Pegram. He carried a first-class season ticket between the terminus and that station. It was his custom to leave for Pegram on the 5.30 train each evening. Some weeks ago, Mr. Kipson was brought down by the influenza. On his first visit to the City after his recovery, he drew something like £300 in notes, and left the office at his usual hour to catch the 5.30. He was never seen again alive, as far as the public have been able to learn. He was found at Brewster in a first-class compartment on the Scotch Express, which does not stop between London and Brewster. There was a bullet in his head, and his money was gone, pointing plainly to murder and robbery."

"And where is the mystery, may I ask?"

"There are several unexplainable things about the case. First, how came he on the Scotch Express, which leaves at six, and does not stop at Pegram? Second, the ticket examiners at the terminus would have turned him out if he showed his season ticket; and all the tickets sold for the Scotch Express on the 21st are accounted for. Third, how could the murderer have escaped? Fourth, the passengers in the two compartments on each side of the one where the body was found heard no scuffle and no shot fired."

"Are you sure the Scotch Express on the 21st did not stop between London and Brewster?"

"Now that you mention the fact, it did. It was stopped by signal just outside of Pegram. There was a few moments' pause, when the line was reported clear, and it went on again. This frequently happens, as there is a branch line beyond Pegram."

Mr. Sherlaw Kombs pondered for a few moments, smoking his pipe silently.

"I presume you wish the solution in time for to-morrow's paper?"

"Bless my soul, no. The editor thought if you evolved a theory in a month you would do well."

"My dear sir, I do not deal with theories, but with facts. If you can make it convenient to call here to-morrow at 8 a.m. I will give you the full particulars early enough for the first edition. There is no sense in taking up much time over so simple an affair as the Pegram case. Good afternoon, sir."

Mr. Scribbings was too much astonished to return the greeting. He left in a speechless condition, and I saw him go up the street with his hat still in his hand.

Sherlaw Kombs relapsed into his old lounging attitude, with his hands clasped behind his head. The smoke came from his lips in quick puffs at first, then at longer intervals. I saw he was coming to a conclusion, so I said nothing.

Finally he spoke in his most dreamy manner. "I do not wish to seem to be rushing things at all, Whatson, but I am going out to-night on the Scotch Express. Would you care to accompany me?"

"Bless me!" I cried, glancing at the clock, "you haven't time, it is after five now."

"Ample time, Whatson—ample," he murmured, without changing his position. "I give myself a minute and a half to change slippers and dressing gown for boots and coat, three seconds for hat, twenty-five seconds to the street, forty-two seconds waiting for a hansom, and then seven at the terminus before the express starts. I shall be glad of your company."

I was only too happy to have the privilege of going with him. It was most interesting to watch the workings of so inscrutable a mind. As we drove under the lofty iron roof of the terminus I noticed a look of annoyance pass over his face.

"We are fifteen seconds ahead of our time," he remarked, looking at the big clock. "I dislike having a miscalculation of that sort occur."

The great Scotch Express stood ready for its long journey. The detective tapped one of the guards on the shoulder.

"You have heard of the so-called Pegram mystery, I presume?"

"Certainly, sir. It happened on this very train, sir."

"Really? Is the same carriage still on the train?"

"Well, yes, sir, it is," replied the guard, lowering his voice, "but of course, sir, we have to keep very quiet about it. People wouldn't travel in it, else, sir."

"Doubtless. Do you happen to know if anybody occupies the compartment in which the body was found?"

"A lady and gentleman, sir; I put 'em in myself, sir."

"Would you further oblige me," said the detective, deftly slipping half-a-sovereign into the hand of the guard, "by going to the window and informing them in an offhand casual sort of way that the tragedy took place in that compartment?"

"Certainly, sir."

We followed the guard, and the moment he had imparted his news there was a suppressed scream in the carriage. Instantly a lady came out, followed by a florid-faced gentleman, who scowled at the guard. We entered the now empty compartment, and Kombs said: "We would like to be alone here until we reach Brewster."

"I'll see to that, sir," answered the guard, locking the door.

When the official moved away, I asked my friend what he expected to find in the carriage that would cast any light on the case.

"Nothing," was his brief reply.

"Then why do you come?"

"Merely to corroborate the conclusions I have already arrived at."

"And may I ask what those conclusions are?"

"Certainly," replied the detective, with a touch of lassitude in his voice. "I beg to call your attention, first, to the fact that this train stands between two platforms, and can be entered from either side. Any man familiar with the station for years would be aware of that fact. This shows how Mr. Kipson entered the train just before it started."

"But the door on this side is locked," I objected, trying it.

"Of course. But every season ticket-holder carries a key. This accounts for the guard not seeing him, and for the absence of a ticket. Now let me give you some information about the influenza. The patient's temperature rises several degrees above normal, and he has a fever. When the malady has run its course, the temperature falls to three-quarters of a degree below normal. These facts are unknown to you, I imagine, because you are a doctor."

I admitted such was the case.

"Well, the consequence of this fall in temperature is that the convalescent's mind turns toward thoughts of suicide. Then is the time he should be watched by his friends. Then was the time Mr. Barrie Kipson's friends did *not* watch him. You remember the 21st, of course. No? It was a most depressing day. Fog all around and mud under foot. Very good. He resolves on suicide. He wishes to be unidentified, if possible but forgets his season ticket. My experience is that a man about to commit a crime always forgets something."

"But how do you account for the disappearance of the money?"

"The money has nothing to do with the matter. If he was a deep man, and knew the stupidity of Scotland Yard, he probably sent the notes to an enemy. If not, they may have been given to a friend. Nothing is more calculated to prepare the mind for self-destruction than the prospect of a night ride on the Scotch Express, and the view from the windows of the train as it passes through the northern part of London is particularly conducive to thoughts of annihilation."

"What became of the weapon?"

"That is just the point on which I wish to satisfy myself. Excuse me for a moment."

Mr. Sherlaw Kombs drew down the window on the right hand side, and examined the top of the casing minutely with a magnifying glass. Presently he heaved a sigh of relief, and drew up the sash.

"Just as I expected," he remarked, speaking more to himself than to me. "There is a slight dent on the top of the window-frame. It is of such a nature as to be made only by the trigger of a pistol falling from the nerveless hand of a suicide. He intended to throw the weapon far out of the window, but had not the strength. It might have fallen into the carriage. As a matter of fact, it bounced away from the line and lies among the grass about ten feet six inches from the outside rail. The only question that now remains is where the deed was committed, and the exact present position of the pistol reckoned in miles from London, but that, fortunately, is too simple to even need explanation."



"Great heavens, Sherlaw!" I cried. "How can you call that simple? It seems to me impossible to compute."

We were now flying over Northern London, and the great detective leaned back with every sign of *ennui*, closing his eyes. At last he spoke wearily:

"It is really too elementary, Watson, but I am always willing to oblige a friend. I shall be relieved, however, when you are able to work out the A B C of detection for yourself, although I shall never object to helping you with the words of more than three syllables. Having made up his mind to

commit suicide, Kipson naturally intended to do it before he reached Brewster, because tickets are again examined at that point. When the train began to stop at the signal near Pegram, he came to the false conclusion that it was stopping at Brewster. The fact that the shot was not heard is accounted for by the screech of the air-brake, added to the noise of the train. Probably the whistle was also sounding at the same moment. The train being a fast express would stop as near the signal as possible. The air-brake will stop a train in twice its own length. Call it three times in this case. Very well. At three times the length of this train from the signal-post towards London, deducting half the length of the train, as this carriage is in the middle, you will find the pistol."

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"Commonplace," he murmured.

At this moment the whistle sounded shrilly, and we felt the grind of the air-brakes.

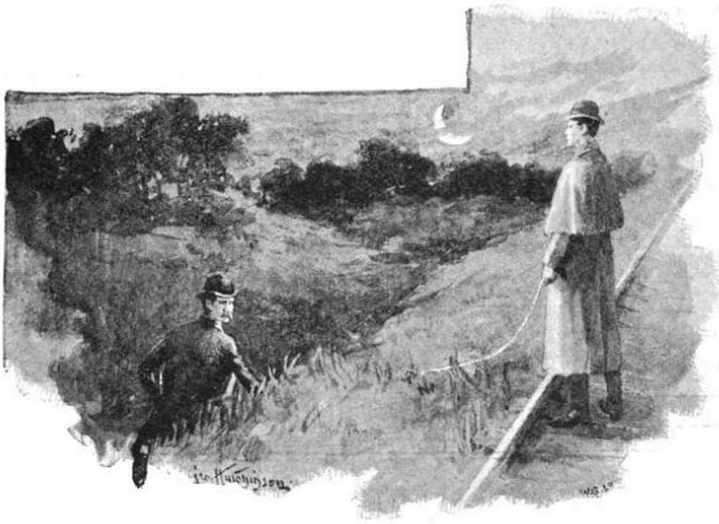
"The Pegram signal again," cried Kombs, with something almost like enthusiasm. "This is indeed luck. We will get out here, Watson, and test the matter."

As the train stopped, we got out on the right-hand side of the line. The engine stood panting impatiently under the red light, which changed to green as I looked at it. As the train moved on with increasing speed, the detective counted the carriages, and noted down the number. It was now dark, with the thin crescent of the moon hanging in the western sky throwing a weird half-light on the shining metals. The rear lamps of the train disappeared around a curve, and the signal stood at baleful red again. The black magic of the lonesome night in that strange place impressed me, but the detective was a most practical man. He placed his back against the signal-post, and paced up the line with even strides, counting his steps. I walked along the permanent way beside him silently. At last he stopped, and took a tape-line from his pocket. He ran it out until the ten feet six inches were unrolled, scanning the figures in the wan light of the new moon. Giving me the end, he placed his knuckles on the metals, motioning me to proceed down the embankment. I stretched out the line, and then sank my hand in the damp grass to mark the spot.

"Good God!" I cried, aghast, "what is this?"

"It is the pistol," said Kombs quietly.

It was!!



Journalistic London will not soon forget the sensation that was caused by the record of the investigations of Sherlaw Kombs, as printed at length in the next day's *Evening Blade*. Would that my story ended here. Alas! Kombs contemptuously turned over the pistol to Scotland Yard. The meddling officials, actuated, as I always hold, by jealousy, found the name of the seller upon it. They investigated. The seller testified that it had never been in the possession of Mr. Kipson, as far as he knew. It was sold to a man whose description tallied with that of a criminal long watched by the police. He was arrested, and turned Queen's evidence in the hope of hanging his pal. It seemed that Mr. Kipson, who was a gloomy, taciturn man, and usually came home in a compartment by himself, thus escaping observation, had been murdered in the lane leading to his house. After robbing him, the miscreants turned their thoughts towards the disposal of the body—a subject that always occupies a first-class criminal mind before the deed is done. They agreed to place it on the line, and have it mangled by the Scotch Express, then nearly due. Before they got the body half-way up the embankment the express came along and stopped. The guard got out and walked along the other side to speak with the engineer. The thought of putting the body into an empty first-class carriage instantly occurred to the murderers. They opened the door with the deceased's key. It is supposed that the pistol dropped when they were hoisting the body in the carriage.

The Queen's evidence dodge didn't work, and Scotland Yard ignobly insulted my friend Sherlaw Kombs by sending him a pass to see the villains hanged.

The Adventure of the Frozen Pigeons

By Michael Duke

Michael Duke is an Australian psychiatrist who became enthralled with Sherlock Holmes when he was given William Baring-Gould's Annotated for his thirtieth birthday. He has contributed articles to journals in six countries over four continents and published one book, Victorian Holmes, in 2011.



It was an unusually cold November. Sleet rattled the windows of 221B and the wind sobbed like a lost child in the chimney. Baker Street was covered with frozen cab tracks and pedestrians were few. The watery sunshine was fading as our fire crackled, providing some welcome warmth against this bitter weather. I sat curled up with one of Charles Reade's fine novels while Sherlock Holmes conducted one of his chemical experiments. Eventually he watched a beaker's contents turn mauve as he titrated a few drops into it. "Ha, the purple stain of murder," he observed, and scribbled a note. He rang for Billy and told him to send off a telegram immediately from the Wigmore Street Post Office to Athelney Jones of Scotland Yard. He threw himself into an armchair and pulled his legs up in his characteristic way.

"You may recall I had just discovered an infallible technique for detecting blood when we first met," he said.

"I am unlikely to forget it," I replied. "You perceived I had recently been in Afghanistan, puzzling me greatly at the time".

"The police have not taken the method up, although they often call for my opinion on crimes where it would be invaluable. That telegram will send a man to the gallows as certainly as if we had found him with a smoking revolver standing over a corpse riddled with bullets. I expect my forthcoming book, *The Science of Detection*, will revolutionize the solution of such cases. Bertillon will be seen as a veritable novice with his skull measurements."

He steepled his fingers and I was expecting one of his erudite discourses when the doorbell rang below. We heard Mrs. Hudson walk to the door and the mutter of voices raised against the wind.

Holmes sat up: "Hallo, a client at this hour and in this weather – no, two of them," as his quick ear detected the number of feet on the steps.

"Come in Mrs Hudson," he called as they reached the landing, and two people were shown in.

One was Wiggins of the Baker Street Irregulars and the other was a woman looking very distressed and cold. She was of middle height, thin and dressed in clothes inadequate for the night. Her satin skirt and light boots were splashed with mud and her blouse and jacket of the poorest quality. She clutched her shawl around her lean shoulders and shuddered as the sleet melted in her hat and slid down her neck.

Holmes was by her side in an instant. "Please come by the fire and sit in this armchair. Watson, some brandy for the lady; Mrs. Hudson, some tea and muffins please, and quickly. Madam, you must have had a terrible walk in this weather." Holmes had a way of putting people at their ease and the new client smiled at him.

Wiggins spoke up as Holmes flashed him a glance.

"This 'ere's Mrs. Darrow. Her 'usband 'as just died and she reckons 'e's been killed. The police aren't interested because 'e's a burglar and 'as a record, and been in The Scrubs. I know'n 'er and 'er son Bob before I met you, Mr 'Olmes."

The woman spoke for the first time: "Wiggins 'as the right of it, Mr. 'Olmes. Me Clarrie 'as been killed. He came 'ome from a job yesterday with a stomach ache and just went straight to bed. I looked in on 'im and 'e was groaning terrible, rolling around and clutching 'is belly, sweating even though 'e'd thrown the blankets off. 'Is hands and feet were all blackened. Then 'e just died. The police came and took him away to the Mortuary at Whitechapel Hospital."

Holmes turned to Wiggins: "Take this note to Lestrade at the Yard and ask him to refrain from authorizing burial for Mr. Darrow. Madam," he said, turning back to Mrs. Darrow, "Where did your husband carry out his last robbery?"

"I don't know. I tried not to in case the police ask me things. I've brought some of the takings, though" and she turned out her handbag onto our table. A small stream of diamond studs, brooches, pearls in chokers, bracelets and earrings cascaded out and finally an engraved plate. Holmes was onto this last with his magnifying glass instantly. It was about nine inches across and slightly discoloured. It appeared to be silver.

Holmes spoke aloud as he deciphered the small inscription: "To Colonel Merridew on the occasion of his retirement from the 9th Fusiliers 1885 – from his fellow officers."

He reached up to his untidy but extremely comprehensive index. "My collection of M's is a fine one, as I've remarked before. Here we are: Moriarty, of course, Moran, of the lethal airgun, Mathews, who knocked out my left canine in the waiting room at Charing Cross, Morgan the poisoner and .. yes, Merridew."

He quoted: “Colonel Theodore Merridew, second son of Lord Chevron, b Bucks, ed. Eton and Harrow, jned 9th Fusiliers, served Zulu campaign 1879, head wound, discharged 1885, m 2 chn, Whites, Travellers; res. Bramham Place, Wimbledon. Not such a salubrious address for the younger son of a peer of the realm.”

He sprang to his feet and disappeared into the bedroom, emerging moments later dressed for the cold night in his travelling cloak and deerstalker. “Mrs. Darrow, my extreme sympathy for you in your sorrow; I hope to discover more before morning and would ask you to attend here tomorrow at three in the afternoon.” He rang down again for Billy and pressed a sovereign into the young lad’s hand. “See the lady home safely. Watson, are you game for a visit to the wilds of Wimbledon?”

I donned my heavy clothes and followed Holmes downstairs. He hailed a hansom and we trotted in the cold night air towards the suburbs. As we bumped over the frozen road surface, Holmes leaned back and started to prattle of a monk called Mendel who, of all things, grew peas! I was preoccupied with the dark business at hand.

“It is a capital error to theorize without data, Watson,” he observed, noticing my drawn brows but lapsed into silence. We stopped some doors away from Bramham Place and Holmes asked the cabbie to remain. We walked not to the front door but to the rear garden. Holmes said: “Nonetheless, the key event here is not the burglary yesterday, but that it has apparently not been reported to the police. There was nothing in the newspapers today. That is most suggestive, Watson.”

In the rear garden the ground was covered in the ubiquitous sleet, but under the thin blanket some small birds had fallen from the trees and apparently frozen to death in the unseasonable weather. Holmes scooped up a brace of pigeons and put them in his overcoat pocket. “These birds could be the most important discovery we could make here.” I looked at him in bewilderment.

He strode ahead of me to the front gate and rang the bell. The door was opened by a white-faced young maid who had evidently just dressed again by the disorder of her clothes. Holmes handed her his card and said: “Good evening. Is the master of the house at home? We may have some news for him.”

A tall handsome dark-skinned woman came from the back of the house. “Mrs. Merridew, I presume,” said Holmes, raising his hat. She inclined her head and said in excellent, slightly accented English: “I am, but I do not have the honour of your acquaintance.”

A tall ruddy-faced man appeared behind her and pushed her out of the way. He had a livid scar across his forehead. He glared at us: “What the devil do you mean by turning up here in the middle of the night, Mr...

Holmes (glancing at the card he had taken from the maid) and you, whoever you are (looking at me). I've not called for you."

Said Holmes evenly "Someone in this house may be in danger." "Yes, and I know who," retorted the plethoric colonel, stepping forward. Holmes stood his ground for a moment but then turned away with a shrug. We retraced our steps towards the waiting cab. We did not return to Baker Street but hastened through the increasing fog to the Whitechapel Hospital. Holmes contented himself with humming some airs and waving his long fingers dreamily in time until we drew in under the hospital portal. Inspector Lestrade was at the mortuary, having had his curiosity piqued by Holmes's peremptory message, and the pathologist was just examining the body of the late Mr. Darrow. The corpse was of a thin, middle-aged man that was blackened on the hands and feet. He had a grimace, as if of pain, on his face.

"Mr. Holmes," said Lestrade, "What's this about? The late and unregretted Mr. Darrow has died and a lot of honest citizens can rest easier. Dr. Buchan has been dragged from his bed for this."

"And possibly one not so honest citizen is resting, Lestrade!" replied Holmes. "Doctor, what have you found?"

The pathologist looked up from his careful scrutiny of the body. He spoke in a slight Scottish burr. "Mr. Holmes, this man has not died naturally. I need to look at the internal organs and examine the stomach contents to be sure, but I suggest he has been given some powerful poison which constricted the arteries."

Lestrade was clearly discomfited by this. Holmes came forward eagerly. "Thank you, Doctor Buchan. I would be most interested in the results of your further researches. Lestrade, are you willing to suspend your usual inquiries in order to prevent a further crime?"

Lestrade was used, but not inured, to my companion's high-handed ways. "Well, I must admit you have been of use to the Yard in the past, and I'll make an exception," he said stiffly.

"Thank you, Lestrade, I'm certain more credit will accrue to you in this case," said Holmes striding towards the exit.

Baker Street was quiet under the fog- and sleet-covered roadway as we re-entered our quarters. I went to bed, but Holmes set about looking at the pigeons he had picked up from the Colonel's garden. I awoke to find the weather had cleared, although it was still extremely cold. Going down for breakfast, it was clear that Holmes had been up all night and was out. I sat and tried to concentrate on my book but my mind kept returning to the distorted face of the dead burglar, alternating with that of the fiery colonel.

At lunchtime, Holmes returned, although I scarcely recognized him at first under his disguise as a bibulous groom. He strode to the sideboard,

devoured a thick roast beef sandwich and rang for Mrs. Hudson to bring some tea. "Well," I asked impatiently, "what have you discovered? We're due to see Mrs. Darrow at three and it's already one."

"The pigeons' crops were full and they did not die of cold."

"But what of the case of Mr. Darrow?"

"That is the case of Mr. Darrow," he replied and I had to be content with that until the widow arrived promptly, accompanied by a solicitous Wiggins.

"Please be seated, Mrs. Darrow. I have discovered the cause of your husband's death and we await the imminent arrival of an important witness. I have invited him here today."

Thunderous knocking upon our door backed up his words. There was a rush of feet on the stairs and the Colonel burst in. He ignored the thin, terrified woman shrinking in the corner. "I received your message, Mr. Holmes, and am here under sufferance. I hope you have some explanation for this impertinent intrusion into my life."

"Please take a seat, Colonel," purred Holmes, who was entirely at his ease in the face of his powerful antagonist. "A man has died as a result of entering your house." The colonel started violently and at last regarded the woman in the other chair. "Who is this person?" he demanded "and why is she here?"

Holmes introduced them with great aplomb: "Colonel Merridew, Mrs. Clarence Darrow, the recent widow of the man who robbed you two nights ago, even if you chose not to report it. I advise you to hide nothing if you wish your wife and children to be safe."

The Colonel visibly sagged and drew a trembling hand across his face: "I suppose I should tell you everything. I have nothing to lose now."

"I was at Isandhlwana. My regiment didn't have a chance against 20,000 Zulus. I was wounded in the head and left for dead long enough to regain consciousness and get away. My men were cut to pieces by the murderous ruffians. I heard the screams. I hear them now.

"I was delirious and my life was despaired of for seven months. Eventually I recovered. My nurse was a Christian convert from the African tribes - Bernadette - who was the daughter of an African chieftain. We fell in love while I recuperated and I married her while still in Cape Town. We sailed home in 1882 but my family had been bitter ever since the news of the alliance. My father refused to see me and died shortly after our return. Percy, my older brother, inherited everything. Percy continued my father's instructions and never saw me. He, however, is unmarried and leads a dissolute life. He has no will, and if he did die, the laws of England are such that I would come into my inheritance and the estate, despite my father's wishes.

“Despite this, I have made no efforts to do anything nefarious – until recently, when my son Ben was rejected from Eton. I heard it had been on my brother’s wishes.”

“So, your anger was reborn and you decided to take the law into your own hands?” queried Holmes.

“Yes,” said the Colonel. “I sent Percy some sweetmeats for his birthday. He returned them unopened and I threw them away, leaving the servants to clear up.”

“I need to know where those sweetmeats came from, Colonel.” Holmes’s voice had been smooth and placid but the last words were an order whipped out.

“I bought them from Fortnum and Mason’s,” the Colonel said slowly.

“Ah, do you say so,” said Holmes suavely.

The door to the room opened. Engrossed in the Colonel’s story, none of us had heard the door or footsteps. The Colonel’s wife Bernadette entered, splendidly tall and flashing eyed, in a red velvet dress that set off her skin magnificently.

“Don’t try to protect me, Theodore,” she said. “It was I who sent those sweets to Lord Percy. I could stand no more. If Theodore could turn the other cheek for himself, so could I, but not when our children were being slighted. Mr. Holmes, do you know of *Claviceps Purpurea*?”

To my own surprise, I answered: “I do. The cause of St Anthony’s fire, or ergotism, usually due to infestation of rye by a fungus. People eating the resultant flour or bread can get raging thirst, abdominal cramps, delirium, coma and death. It also causes a dry gangrene of the limbs...” I faltered as I recalled Mr. Darrow’s blackened arms and legs.

“Upon my word, Watson,” cried Holmes “You excel yourself.”

Bernadette bowed slightly to us both. “The witch doctors at home have supplied me with the poison. It failed when Percy sent back my offering. I had to confess to Theodore when it came back and he had sent nothing. He has shielded me since. But madam,” turning to Mrs. Darrow, “I regret your husband’s death. He obviously stole and ate some of the discarded sweets when he came to the house. We could not report the theft of these murderous objects, as well as our jewels, without incriminating ourselves”.

Holmes stood and looked at me, then the Merridews and Mrs. Darrow quizzically. “Who stole the sweets did himself a serious disservice. But Mrs. Darrow has a son to raise, just as you two have Ben and Lucy, and now has no husband. What can we do? Watson: affairs of the heart are your department.”

I gazed at the tragic people in our humble lodgings. “If Ben has been barred from Eton, you have some means,” I said to the Colonel.

“Yes, of course,” he said.

“Little enough would be needed to keep Mrs. Darrow and her son Bob until he is grown enough to keep them both in an honest way. Reparation not retribution.”

“Bravo, Watson; I keep finding unexpected depths in you,” said Sherlock Holmes. “Would you find that satisfactory and refrain from further attempts on your odious brother and brother-in-law, Colonel and Mrs. Merridew? I think all have reason enough to stay silent on this matter.”

Mrs. Darrow, the Colonel and his wife came to an arrangement there and then.

The threesome left our quarters and Holmes and I regarded each other. “The pigeons?” I asked eventually.

“Elementary, Watson. The maid had thrown out the crumbs of the shattered sweets for the birds, and the poor starvelings had eaten the poison. When I dissected them, I found they had not frozen to death but had died beforehand. I suppose we shall have to eat humble pie and tell Lestrade he was right in the first place. No crime has been committed by any other party except the late Mr. Darrow. Enough blood has been shed in these families. Can you not pity Merridew and his abominable memories of the Zulu War? And if you are writing this case up, I would make the pigeons the centre piece. They did focus attention, did they not?” And he reached for his violin.

Ironically, Lord Percy died some three months later, entirely naturally. We read today that the new Lord Chevron’s son, Ben Merridew, has made the first eleven at Eton.



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A Toast to Sherlock Holmes: A man of refined tastes

By Richard Brown

This toast was initially given to The Spence Munros in Halifax on January 15, 2017

“There is a cold partridge on the sideboard, Watson, and a bottle of Montrachet” – The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger



It must have been frustrating for the young Sherlock Holmes to have his birthday so close to Christmas. What did he get for presents? Did he have a party and invite other children? Or was he reclusive, staying in his room and playing with his chemistry set or reading books on the famous cases of the Bow Street Runners?

Today it is still difficult to buy the adult Sherlock Holmes a birthday gift. He is a man of refined tastes: a fan of the Royal Opera and concerts at the Albert Hall; a man who attends the theatre and knows many of the actors and their peccadilloes. A glance at the depictions of Holmes shows his fine taste in clothes, and the descriptions of Dr. Watson illustrate his enjoyment of fine food, drink and tobacco. So where do we start with the search for the perfect birthday present?

Where did Sherlock Holmes shop? He had no wife to tell him what to wear, nor did he have a “Gentleman’s gentleman” as Bertie Wooster had in Jeeves, and it is unlikely that Mrs. Hudson bought his clothes or other personal items, so he must have shopped for himself. Thus, the obvious plan of action is to look into the London shops where Holmes was most likely to make his purchases and see what he might like for his birthday. [And I have been to almost all of these shops.]

Maybe an umbrella, a cane or a walking stick from James Smith & Sons of New Oxford Street (founded in 1830), located conveniently close to the British Museum. Or what about a new hat, a deerstalker or a trilby, from Lock & Co. Hatters of St. James’s Street (founded 1676; the oldest hat shop in the world); or a wallet, a belt or a pair of new boots or shoes from Foster and Son of Jermyn Street (founded in 1840), or leather gloves



from Dents (founded 1777); or a suitcase or Gladstone bag from Swaine Adeney Brigg in the Piccadilly Arcade (founded 1750).

Maybe a shirt or a cravat from Ede & Ravenscroft, London's oldest tailor (founded in 1689) or a dinner jacket from Henry Poole & Co. of Savile Row (founded 1806). What about socks or underwear? Where would Holmes purchase his underwear and what type would he buy? Did he shop at Harrods of Brompton Road, Knightsbridge (founded 1834); Liberty of Great Marlborough Street (founded 1875); the brand new Selfridges of Oxford Street (founded 1909); or did he prefer to frequent the shops of the Burlington Arcade in Piccadilly (opened in 1819) "for the sale of jewellery and fancy articles of fashionable demand."

So much for clothing. What about a book from Hatchard's of Piccadilly (founded 1797); or some shaving products, aftershaves, colognes, and skincare items from D. R. Harris & Co. of St. James's Street (founded 1790). Or possibly a new pipe or some tobacco from JJ Fox of St James's Street (founded in 1797), which he must have frequented in his studies of the ashes of various tobaccos. What about some tea or coffee from Thomas Twining on the Strand (founded 1706), which is very close to the offices of *The Strand* magazine.

Or what about some foodstuffs? Every day foods would no doubt be purchased by Mrs. Hudson from the markets. Possibly the "new" Covent Garden market (since 1830) for fruits and vegetables, sold by the *sieve*, which equalled one *bushel* or the *half-sieve*, which was one *peck*. The largest *punnet* was equivalent to 5½ pints, and the smallest *punnet* was 1½ pints. A *pottle*, on the other hand, changed meanings often enough that nobody could be quite sure what it measured. Only Mrs. Hudson could navigate such a system. She might also have shopped at the Leadenhall market (rebuilt in 1881) for cheeses, poultry, meat and flowers. She would also shop at the Billingsgate fish market and the Smithfield meat market, but surely Holmes would not frequent these markets unless he was on a case or in disguise.

What about some gourmet biscuits, jams or other foods from Fortnum & Mason in Piccadilly (founded 1707) or fine cheeses from Paxton & Whitfield of Jermyn Street (founded 1797). Maybe some handmade luxury chocolates from Charbonnel et Walker in The Royal Arcade, the oldest chocolate shop in London, opened on Bond Street in 1875. Holmes may have frequented such shops for gifts to be taken on a visit to Irene Adler.

But at last we come to Berry Brothers & Rudd on St. James's Street, since 1698, London's oldest wine shop, which has supplied wines to the

British Royal Family since 1830, and may have indeed supplied the wine for our toast: To Sherlock Holmes, a man of refined tastes.

“I have oysters and a brace of grouse, with something a little choice in white wine. – Watson, you have never yet recognized my merits as a housekeeper.” - *The Sign of Four*

“I think that I shall have a whisky and soda and a cigar after all this cross-questioning” – *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*

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Bootmakers’ Diary continued from page 40

Friday, May 4, 2018: Annual Meeting of The Speckled Band of Boston

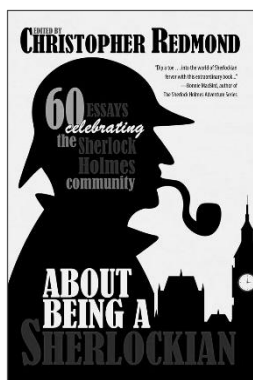


Over 90 members and guests of the 78-year old Band, which meets but once a year, gather for the society’s (invitation only) 2018 Annual Dinner Meeting, at the Tavern Club, Boston. Led by Dan Posnansky (Keeper), George Schwartz (Poker), Glen Miranker (Herpetron) and Tom Francis, (Cheetah), the Band unanimously celebrates the inaugural occasion

of inviting a dozen women into their prandial midst – including Bootmakers Barbara Rusch, Peggy Perdue and Fran Martin. The theme of the event is reflected in the quiz, titled “Now, Watson, the fair sex is your department,” with the winner being awarded The Watson Cup and the winner of the year’s best new paper The Sherlock Holmes Bowl. The evening concludes with the recital of the “Musgrave Ritual” and the singing of *We Never Mention Aunt Clara*.

– Donny Zaldin

“Holmes gave me a brief review”



About Being A Sherlockian – 60 Essays Celebrating the Sherlock Holmes Community
Edited by Christopher Redmond (Wildside Press, \$14.99 CAD)

How often have we been asked “What led you to the world of Sherlock Holmes” and “Why?” “How did you become involved?”

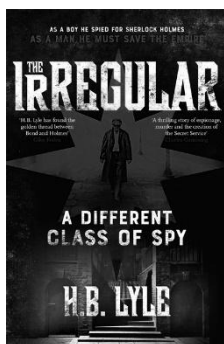
Everyone has their own reason and now we get to hear other Sherlockians open up and share their personal stories. No two experiences are alike. Each is as varied as the contributors themselves, from a variety of backgrounds and ages.

The 60 essays contained within the pages of this book can evoke a range of emotions. The authors are applauded for sharing these memories with us. We feel joy at knowing that we can find like-minded people with whom we can share our thoughts and ideas. We feel hope in knowing that there is always someone out there in the Sherlockian world who we can count on for conversation. We feel inspired when we hear about other people’s experiences and chance meetings with Sherlockians who have paved the way but now have left us.

Each contributor had begun a journey along Baker Street with one destination in mind. Some may have experienced difficulties getting started, or hit a few bumps along the way. The best part of each of these journeys is the like-minded people encountered.

This book is a treasure trove of memories. It is cleverly separated into chapters that are reminiscent of the Canon itself.

Christopher Redmond has done it once again, in bringing the Sherlockian community closer together.
– Fran Martin



The Irregular by H. B. Lyle (2017 Hodder & Stoughton, £17.99)

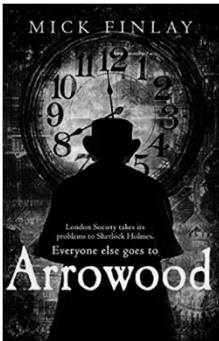
1909: Captain Vernon Kell is trying to uncover German spies and is largely scoffed at by his political superiors. The only one who pays him any mind is that windbag at the Board of Trade, Winston Churchill. After his last agent is killed and none of his higher ups believe his talk of a German threat, Sherlock Holmes recommends Wiggins, formerly of the Baker Street Irregulars, to be his new agent. Young Wiggins, now

ex-Army, working as a bailiff, takes on the job assuming it'll give him the chance to track down the culprits who were responsible for the death of his policeman friend, Bill Tyler, during the 'Tottenham Outrage.' Plot threads overlap and Wiggins finds himself deeply embroiled with a Russian anarchist cell, in a budding romance with a mysterious Latvian émigré, finding a leak/spy at Woolwich Arsenal, protecting Kell's wife, Constance, from the lecherous attentions of a French spy named LeQuinn, to say nothing of his monstrous Dutch henchman, and a state visit from the Tsar.

Along the way, in addition to Churchill, we get a cameo from Raffles and Bunny, a walk-on bit for Watson, and the last-minute appearance of real-life figure Mansfield Smith-Cumming. Holmes, while there in brief flashback scenes involving Wiggins's memory, is only represented via messages in the active storyline. I suspect Holmes will have an active role in a later book. For anyone familiar with the real history of Vernon Kell and Smith-Cumming, or an interest in the formation of MI5 & MI6, you'll have a good idea of where this is all heading.

It's a lively read, although a tad choppy due to flashbacks, but once you catch the rhythm of the language and narrative, it moves along at a good pace. If you enjoyed Mick Finlay's *Arrowood*, you'll love *The Irregular*. It's a strong first book in a proto-spy thriller series with the second volume, *The Red Ribbon*, released August 2018.

– Charles Prepolec



Arrowood by Mick Finlay (2018 HQ, paperback, \$19.99 CAD)

A Victorian detective who dislikes Sherlock Holmes? What more could I ask for to pull me into this 400-page mystery which takes you around London like a drunken tour guide?

William Arrowood is the title character and a former journalist who is far from the pleasantries and shine of Baker Street in his rented South London flat. His Watson is Norman Barnett, a man who keeps his heartbreak and secrets to himself, and the readers.

This story revolves around a missing person, the brother of a French woman who comes to Arrowood as she cannot afford Holmes. The case quickly leads to murder, beatings, blackmail and, of course, Fenians. Finlay's characters are all flawed in their own ways, and yet wonderfully portrayed and rounded out. The locations are closer to The Bar of Gold than Whitehall, but the grittiness of the characters and setting is part of the charm. Holmes is mentioned as is his case at the time, "The Cardboard Box," but doesn't intrude on the enjoyment of this non-Sherlockian Holmes tale.

– Mark Alberstat

B OOTMAKERS' DIARY

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

— *The Five Orange Pips*

Saturday, April 7, 2018 – *The Gloria Scott*

The Bootmakers of Toronto met for the second story meeting of the year in the Elizabeth Beeton Auditorium of the Toronto Reference Library.

Edith Reese, our Mrs. Hudson for the meeting, announced that since we are having ice cream and she has no way to keep it cold we will have our refreshments at the beginning of the meeting. She also noted that *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, “The Dancing Men” and “The Gloria Scott” were all set in Norfolk. The items served at the Cromer Inn included crab sandwiches, turkey sandwiches – black turkeys were bred in Norfolk – “sea” asparagus, a variety of cheeses and kettle chips.

While we were on break we were invited to browse through the many books that Wilfrid de Freitas has brought from Montreal from the estate of the late Patrick Campbell.

The first speaker was Ian Hamilton. He has written 11 books about a forensic accountant named Ava Lee, who recovers stolen money. The main character is Chinese-Canadian and a lesbian. The books are being adapted into a CBC-TV mystery series.

Karen Campbell then handed out the quiz.

The next speaker was Doug Wrigglesworth, who spoke on “Dr. John H. Watson: A Retrospective.” The full version of this paper begins on page 3 of this journal.

Next up was mystery writer Tracy L. Ward. She has written a series about Dr. Peter Ainsley, a Victorian morgue surgeon, called the Marshall House Mysteries. She described them as CSI meets Sherlock Holmes with a little bit of Jack the Ripper thrown in.

Karen Campbell takes up the quiz. The winners were Celio Barreta, Frank Quinlan and Steve Wintle.

Karen Gold distributed the lyrics sheets for *Young Victor Trevor*, sung to the tune of Carole King’s *You’ve Got a Friend*.

The door prize was won by John Gehan.

– Bruce D. Aikin, MBt., Sh.D.



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