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One-hundred sixty fourth issue

Contents
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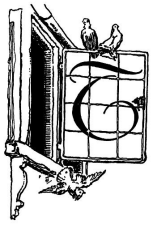


Traces of Bootprints

The creeping man makes his appearance

In the more than 40 issues under our editorship we have never focused our gaze on only one of the 60 Holmes stories. This issue puts that streak to an end with three feature-length articles and a song about "The Adventure of the Creeping Man." First published in 1923, it certainly is not one of the most discussed stories. However, as you will see, it has given these four writers – Richard Brown, Jim Ballinger, Douglas Kerr and Barbara Rusch – plenty of grist for their respective mills.

To kick off this Creeping Man issue, we republish, and update, a 1985 *Canadian Holmes* article by Richard Brown giving an historical and medical background to the story. This is followed by a clever song from Jim Ballinger that some with razor sharp memories may remember from a Bootmakers meeting in 1993. Sherlockian and academic Douglas Kerr then wades through the many and sordid alleyways linking *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to our Professor Presbury. Barbara Rusch rounds out the quartet looking at some of the story's sinister elements. This issue wraps up with a few book reviews, a Strictly Personal and the return of our Diary Notes, which not even COVID-19 could keep away.

Always ahead of the curve, topical and up-to-date, *Canadian Holmes* recently featured a 2-part article on Professor Challenger by Charles Prepolec. On July 30, 2020 the manuscript to *The Land of Mist* (1926) went under the hammer at Christie's in London. The manuscript sold for £38,000. Charles was not the winning bidder. For more on the auction see: http://www.bestofsherlock.com/mss/land-mist-2020.htm

Here at the *Canadian Holmes* editorial desk we strive to give you our best issue each time. In our last outing, Summer 2020, we let a mistake slip through the net, a mistake eagle-eyed Harley Nathan picked up. Kelvin Jones's article about Dr. Thorndyke stated "In 1901, 20 years after the appearance…of Sherlock Holmes." The article should have stated 14 years. Thankfully, expert math skills are not a pre-requisite for this editorial position. Thanks, Hartley for keeping us humble.

Rejuvenation Therapy: Historical background to The Creeping Man

By Richard Brown

Richard Brown is a Sherlockian living in Halifax. A long-time member of the Spence Munros, he is also a professor in psychology at Dalhousie University and guest lecturer at many universities around the world.

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in Canadian Holmes *Volume 9, Number 2, Christmas 1985.*

he Adventure of the Creeping Man, published in 1923, has received some attention by Sherlockians for the clues it offers to Holmes's university. These clues, however, are not conclusive, for based on the same information, the town of "Camford" has been described as Oxford by Nicholas Utechin in *Sherlock Holmes at Oxford* (1) published, in 1977, and as Cambridge by Trevor Hall in *Sherlock Holmes: Ten Literary Studies*, (2) published in 1966.

A second feature of the story, which has received less attention, is the basis of the story in the search for "the secret of rejuvenescence." There is no murder, robbery or blackmail in "The Creeping Man;" indeed there is no crime at all, and little mystery. The entire tale revolves around the monkey serum treatment and seems to have been written as a vehicle to condemn this practice.

The story, in brief, is that Presbury, the 61-year-old Professor of Physiology at "Camford" University, had fallen in love with Alice Morphy. She is the young daughter of Professor Morphy, the Chair of Comparative Anatomy, and a perfect girl in both mind and body. In his passionate frenzy, Presbury desired to have his youthful vigour returned to him, so he turned to H. Lowenstein of Prague for "the secret of rejuvenescence and the elixir of life," a wondrous strength-giving serum, tabooed by the medical profession because Lowenstein refused to reveal its source. This "serum" was taken from the black-faced Langur, the most human of climbing monkeys, and, when available, from "Anthropoids."

The serum was sent by A. Dorak from London in a vial and was injected by means of a hypodermic syringe every nine days.

This serum had several effects on the behaviour of Professor Presbury, and it was these changes in behaviour that startled his daughter Edith and caused his student and future son-in-law Trevor Bennett (called Jack by Edith) to seek Holmes's help. The injections caused Presbury to become furtive and sly; to become sinister and to display dangerous changes in mood. Although he has never seemed in better health, is stronger than he has been for years and is overflowing with energy and vitality, the Professor is subject to "queer fits" of anger. His knuckles have become thick and horny, and he has been seen walking crouching on his hands and feet, with his face sunk between his hands. He climbed up the ivy vines on the wall and provoked his dog Roy with stones and sticks. Yet, despite this, his intellect did not seem to be affected. His mind was clear, his lectures as brilliant as ever and his memory reliable. Edith, however, noted that, at times, her father had no recollection of what he had done, and lived in a strange dream. From this report Holmes made his miscalculation about Presbury's memory.

Although J.J. Egan (3) suggested that "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" was influenced by Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it is based on the idea of sexual rejuvenation. As pointed out by Charles Higham in *The Adventures of Conan Doyle* (4): "The Creeping Man, alive with an antic humor reminiscent of the Challenger stories, embodies a theme based on the hullabaloo over the recent Voronoff monkey-gland experiments of the 1920's." Van Liere in his 1959 book, *A Doctor Enjoys Sherlock Holmes*, (5) has also examined this story with respect to the study of rejuvenation and mentions the pioneering work of Charles-Édouard Brown-Séquard.In a more fanciful vein, Manly Wade Wellman in a 1953 *Baker Street Journal* poem summarized "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in verse, which reads, in part:

> The old Professor, it appears, worked hard at turning back the years
> (Sweet Alice was the motive), and he'd studied monkey glands.
> With serum shots his veins he'd fill, then, like a Class B double bill,
> he started climbing ivy vines and walking on his hands. The
> wolfhound wasn't mad or drunk; he thought his bossman was a
> monk, and so has many a gaffer seemed when love leads up the lane.
> Said Holmes, with manner stern and sage, 'Professor P. should act
> his age.' And he and Watson had some tea before they caught their
> train. (6)

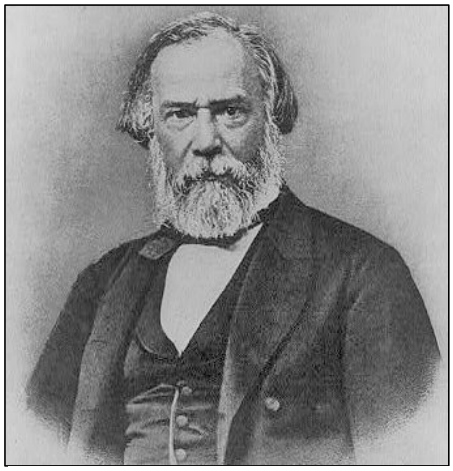
Arthur Levine in his *Baker Street Journal* article (7) suggested that another British user of the monkey gland serum, by some misadventure, had found his way to the Himalayan mountains and been called the Abominable Snowman – a fate which might have befallen Professor Presbury if not for Holmes's intervention.

The dream of rejuvenation, the restoration of youthfulness and the inhibition of aging dates back to antiquity. Rejuvenation therapy has two aspects: delaying death by removing the debilitating effects of old age, and the restoration of sexual prowess. Many plants, such as orchids (the Latin name for testicles), salep (a flour made from the tuber of an orchid), sweet potatoes and fenugreek were considered to have rejuvenative powers by medieval Europeans, and sexual stimulants were made from these. The Romans felt that water baths were rejuvenating, and they developed many spas, such as those at Bath and Tunbridge Wells. The legend of the "fountain of youth" dates from the 12th century, and the Spanish explorer Ponce de León was in search of a miraculous spring that would "rejuvenate and beautify any who drank from it" when he discovered Florida in 1513. In Victorian times, hydrotherapy or "taking the waters" was recommended for the aged. The springs at Tunbridge Wells were recommended for "enlivening the nobler parts of the body and spirits," producing "a sanguinous temperament which naturally incites men and women to amorous emotions." (8)

More esoteric recipes for rejuvenation, as the centuries went on, included Aurum potable, an elixir which included gold in the recipe (at great expense to the customer, no doubt); powdered unicorn's horn (made from rhinoceros horn); and other elixirs with names like phosferine, Sanotogen, Vitae ore, El Zair and orchis extract – none of which contained much that could not be purchased at the local chemist's shop. For sexual rejuvenation, more specific remedies were available, including Damaroids, Gordon's Sexual Restorative, and Elixir simplex, which was simply sugar and alcohol in water, coloured with burnt sugar and flavoured with orange essence. These were available all over England from well-known quacks and even sold on street corners by peddlers.

In the late 1800s, however, the idea developed that male aging was mainly due to the gradual running down of the testicular function, and that all that was needed to restore it was to graft testicular tissue or to inject whole-testicle extracts. (9) As the reproductive capacities of men declined in old age, it was natural that the genital organs became the centre of preoccupation by those who sought the secret of rejuvenation.

Professor Presbury obviously knew that the monkey gland serum was a controversial, scarce and expensive substance. It was used by only two



Charles-Édouard Brown-Séquard (1817-1894)

customers in England. He took the utmost precaution to conceal his treatments, even from his trusted assistant and secretary, Trevor Bennett, himself the possessor of a medical degree and who was taken as much into the Professor's confidence as if he had been a son or a younger brother.

What is the history of this monkey serum therapy for sexual rejuvenation, and what relationship does the history of this subject have to "The Adventure of the Creeping Man?"

The person who initiated sex gland rejuvenation therapy was Charles-Édouard Brown-Séquard, Physician and Professor of Experimental Medicine at the College of France from 1878 to 1894. It was in 1889 that Brown-Séquard reported his first experiments on rejuvenation at the Society of Biology in Paris. He was 72 years old when he stood in front of his scientific peers and, holding a small phial of fluid in his hand for all to see, disclosed that he had made an extract of animal sexual glands and that although he had had only eight injections so far, he was "tremendously rejuvenated." (10)

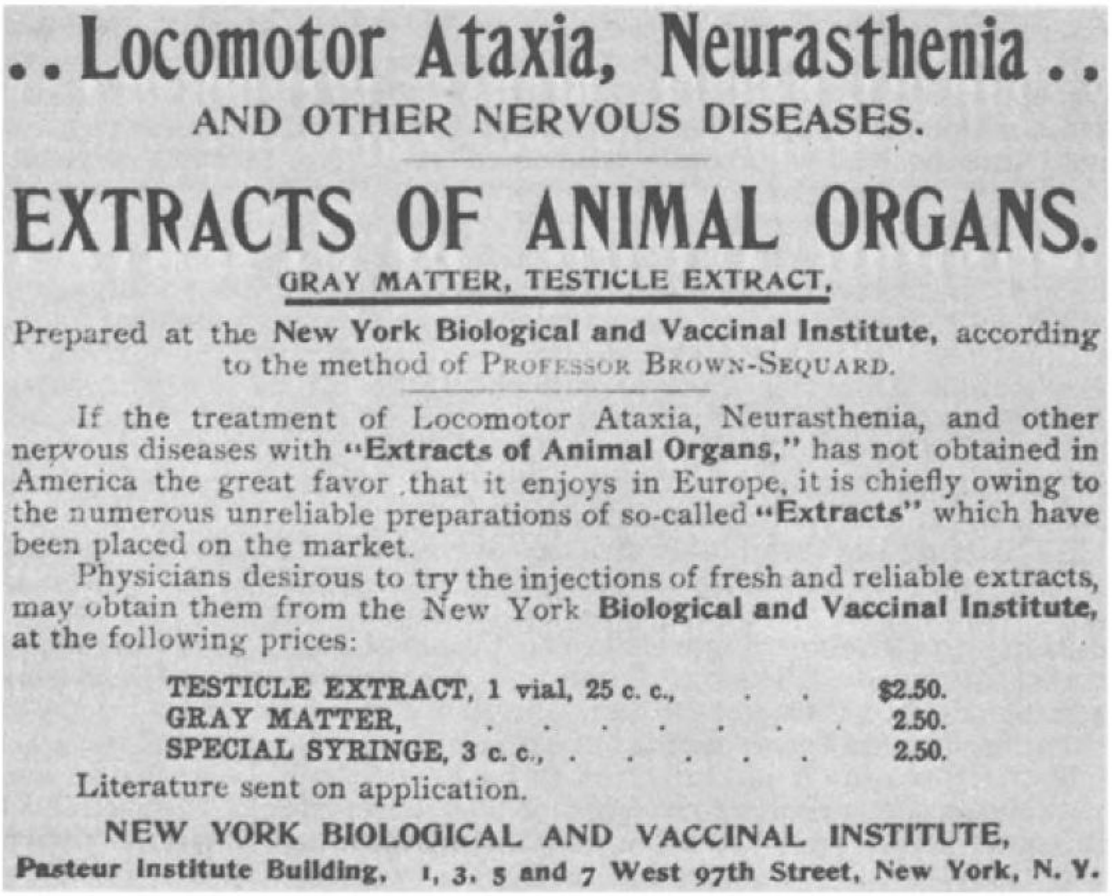
How had this extract rejuvenated Professor Brown-Séquard, the French physiologist and neurologist? First, he regained his strength and he no longer felt fatigue; he was no longer tired and could "remain standing whole hours without feeling the need to sit down;" he could "even without thinking about it, ascend and descend the stairs almost on a run;" he had increased strength in his forearms; he could urinate more forcefully and defecate without laxatives. His intellectual work became much easier: "with regard to the facility of intellectual labour, which had diminished within the last few years, a return to my previous ordinary condition became quite manifest during and after the first two or three days of my experiments." (11)

The English summaries of Brown-Séquard's methods, which appeared in the *Lancet* (12) and the *British Medical Journal* (13), were quite sensational but omitted some important details. Brown-Séquard reported in his lecture that he had just been married, for the third time, to a much younger woman, and after taking his injections he had been able to re-engage in sexual activity, which had also waned along with the rest of his vigour. This made quite a sensation in the Paris papers of early June 1889.

What then was this magical serum which Brown-Séquard injected into himself almost every day for a fortnight? In his address to the French Society for Biology, Brown-Séquard stated: "I have always believed that

the weakness of old men is partly due to decreasing function of the testicles." (14) His procedure consisted of subcutaneous injections of a liquid obtained by crushing dog or guinea pig testes with the addition of a little water and filtering this preparation.

This method of rejuvenation, the injection of testicular extracts, became known as "organotherapy" or "the method of Brown-Séquard." In America in late 1889, testicular extract was hailed as an "Elixir of Life" and was recommended (by some) as a treatment for cases of debility, epilepsy, locomotor ataxia, chorea, cancer, cholera, tuberculosis and leprosy. (15) As well as testicular extract, Brown-Séquard experimented with extracts of other endocrine glands, including the thyroid and adrenal; thus his research laid the foundation for the science of endocrinology. (16) In New York, testicular extract was available in the 1890s at a price of $2.50 for 25 cc (25 injections). A special syringe was also available for an extra $2.50. These were sent by mail to any distance in the U.S.A., complete with directions. Whether or not they were sent in wooden boxes is not stated, but they would need some form of protection to send glass vials and syringes by mail in the 1890s, and wood seems most likely. Similar procedures were no doubt in practice in Europe, as Dr. Variot of



..Locomotor Ataxia, Neurasthenia..

AND OTHER NERVOUS DISEASES.

EXTRACTS OF ANIMAL ORGANS.

GRAY MATTER, TESTICLE EXTRACT,

Prepared at the **New York Biological and Vaccinal Institute,** according to the method of PROFESSOR BROWN-SEQUARD.

If the treatment of Locomotor Ataxia, Neurasthenia, and other nervous diseases with **"Extracts of Animal Organs,"** has not obtained in America the great favor that it enjoys in Europe, it is chiefly owing to the numerous unreliable preparations of so-called **"Extracts"** which have been placed on the market.

Physicians desirous to try the injections of fresh and reliable extracts, may obtain them from the New York **Biological and Vaccinal Institute,** at the following prices:

TESTICLE EXTRACT, 1 vial, 25 c. c.,	**$2.50.**
GRAY MATTER,	**2.50.**
SPECIAL SYRINGE, 3 c. c.,	**2.50.**

Literature sent on application.

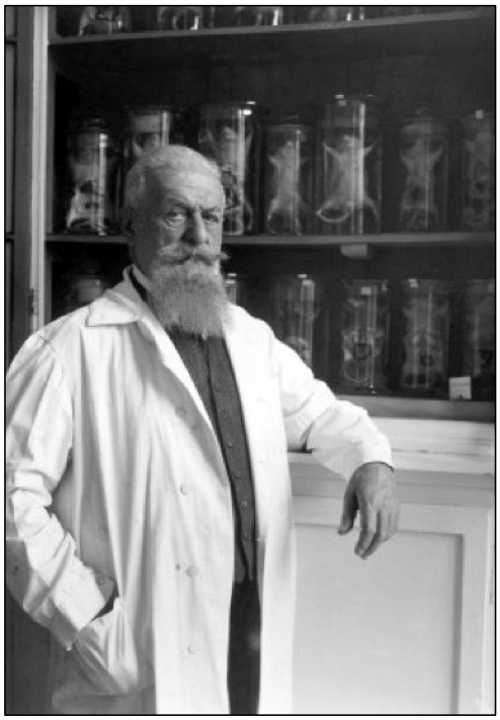
NEW YORK BIOLOGICAL AND VACCINAL INSTITUTE,

Pasteur Institute Building, 1, 3, 5 and 7 West 97th Street, New York, N. Y.

Advert for organ extracts from Bulletin of the Pasteur Institute*, New York, 1897.*

Paris, Dr. Villeneuve of Marseilles and Dr. Grigorescu of Bucharest were particularly noted as proponents of the therapeutic effects of testicular extracts in the 1890s. (17)

In his original presentation in 1889, Brown-Séquard (18) reported using testicular extracts from young guinea pigs and "extremely vigorous" young dogs. Later, in 1893, Brown-Séquard published a lengthy two-part paper in the *British Medical Journal* (June 3 and 10) in which he gave a procedure for preparing testicular extracts from bulls. (19) As far as I know, Brown-Séquard never used serum from monkeys. But many changes occurred in rejuvenation therapy between 1894 and 1923. (20)



Eugen Steinach (1861-1944).

Another physiologist, Eugen Steinach of Vienna, studied the role of the testes in producing sexual arousal. From 1900 to 1910 Steinach experimented on the effects of testicular extracts on rat sexual behaviour, and by 1914 Steinach was the world's foremost authority on the physiology of sex. (21) Later, in the early 1920s, Steinach became the leading researcher in the science of rejuvenation. Steinach was a veterinarian and worked primarily on dogs and rats but in 1918 he hired for his Vienna clinic a young surgeon, Dr. Robert Lichtenstern, who began to apply the Steinach operation for rejuvenation to aging human males. During the early 1920s, hundreds of such men were operated upon by Dr. Lichtenstern in Vienna, by Dr. Peter Schmidt in Germany and Dr. Norman Haire in London. (22) Here we may link the name Robert Lichtenstern of Vienna to that of H. Lowenstein of Prague, and we know that both had connections with London practitioners.

Finally, we turn to the work of Dr. Serge Voronoff, a Russian who became a French citizen in 1897. (23 & 24) Voronoff, like Brown-Séquard and Steinach, felt that the testes were central to the process of aging in men, and on 8 October 1919, at the Congress of Surgery in Paris, Voronoff (almost exactly 30 years after Brown-Séquard) presented a paper on "Testicular Grafts." Voronoff had implanted the testes of young rams and goats into aged animals and noted a remarkable degree of rejuvenation. These elderly rams and goats (120 had been operated on) were completely rejuvenated. Ram number 12, for example, was 12-14 years old (80 to 90

human years), tottered on his legs, could not retain his urine, and appeared exhausted. Two months after a testicular implant from a young ram, his urinal incontinence disappeared, he stood tall on his legs without tottering, he was aggressive; and, when penned with a young ewe-lamb, he showed "the awakening of his sexual instinct, which he had lost years ago," with the result that he fathered a young lamb, born in February 1919. The accounts of Voronoff's research on animals are reported in his book *Life; A Study of the means of Restoring Vital Energy and Prolonging Life*, published in 1920. (25 & 26)

Dr. Serge Voronoff (1866 – 1951)

In 1919 Voronoff planned to use testicular implants for rejuvenation of humans but French law forbade the use of tissue from cadavers and he was not able to arrange to use "tissues" from criminals condemned to death. Finally, he decided to use anthropoid apes as donors of testicular tissue, and on 13 June 1920 Voronoff conducted his first ape-to-man testicular transplant. In the next two years (1920-1922), 162 similar operations were conducted in Paris, and the newspapers reported enthusiastically about his successes. This produced a sensation, with thousands of articles published about Voronoff. Many religious and anti-vivisectionist groups attacked him and "cartoons depicted grandfathers swinging from chandeliers". (27) Monkey gland hysteria reached its peak in the early 1920s in both Europe and America. It is interesting that Voronoff, like Brown-Séquard and Presbury, married a young woman in his old age. At 68, Voronoff married the 21-year-old Fräulein Gertrude Schwartz of Vienna. (28)

Here, then, we have the probable stimulus for Conan Doyle's story "The Creeping Man." The monkey gland hysteria of the 1920s was at a peak in 1923 when "The Creeping Man" was published. Yet how could a story be written about testicle transplants? Obviously, Conan Doyle needed to be somewhat more delicate; thus he combined the method of Brown-Séquard with that of Vornoff. Instead of receiving a testicle transplant, Professor

From the October 14, 1921 Chicago Tribune*, accompanying an article about an American man receiving the glands of a Brazilian ringtail monkey.*

Presbury received a series of injections of testicular "serum" which was taken not from dogs, guinea pigs or bulls, but from anthropoid apes.

Of course, the recipients of these extracts did not act like apes, dogs or guinea pigs but the cartoons of the day may have suggested this. Holmes appears to have sympathized with the anti-monkey-gland crusade, for he states that "when one tries to rise above Nature one is liable to fall below it. The highest type of man may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny." One reason for the outcry against monkey gland therapy, which emphasized the "unnaturalness" of the treatment, was that the primary motivation for treatment seems to have been the restoration of sexual vitality. (29 & 30) Holmes echoes this motivation: "The real source

lies, of course, in the untimely love affair which gave our impetuous Professor the idea that he could only gain his wish by turning himself into a younger man." One might speculate that "his wish" was for a re-awakening of sexual vigour. Holmes is deeply critical of this motivation and states that such a treatment is "a very real danger to humanity." He tells Watson to consider the consequences: "the material, the sensual, the worldly would prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be survival of the least fit."

While the rejuvenation therapies of Brown-Séquard, Steinach and Voronoff were responsible for many early developments in endocrinology, they were all criticized by scientists of their day, and are unlikely to have been successful. There is no evidence that the sex glands regulate the process of aging and, with the chemical identification of the androgens from the testes in the 1930s, it was soon shown that they do not affect aging. Rejuvenation therapies are still popular today and you can find advertisements for them in many papers and books but none seem to have caused such a sensation as the "monkey glands" of Dr. Voronoff.

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Author's note on "Rejuvenation Therapy: Historical background to The Creeping Man"

It has been 35 years since I wrote this article and since then much has been published on rejuvenation therapy and on "The Creeping Man," all of which can be found on the internet, which did not exist in 1985. This note simply lists some more recent publications which expand on my article.

Books

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- Richard Brown

The Creeping Man

By Jim Ballinger (May 1993)

This song was first performed at a Bootmaker meeting on 15 May, 1993 and later that year during a Bootmaker Players production at the Four Corners Library in Brampton. To make the metre work, one has to read an entire verse in one breath; there are no breaks or pauses.

It started with a dog
That was endeavouring to bite
Its master, newly home from Prague
Where he had been for a fortnight
It was respectable old Presbury
At Camford U a prof
But what had caused the dog's extreme fury?
What set the wolfhound off?

Though sixty-one years old
The good professor was so bold
(And daft) as to become engaged
To a girl less than half his age
She was a colleague's daughter Alice
Who at this was somewhat callous
And would much prefer flirtation
Within her own generation

Upon the prof's homecoming
From his continental travel
His behaviour had become
A tangled skein to be unravelled
He began receiving letters
With a cross beneath the stamp
Told his assistant that he'd better
Pass them on to him untampered

There was a quaint carved wooden box
He kept behind a cupboard's locks
The dog he sent into a craze
At intervals of each nine days
One night he was seen in the hall

On hands and feet as in a crawl
When his assistant offered aid
He straightened up and rushed away

Next night his daughter got a scare
The dog was barking on its chain
And clearly in the moonlight there
Was Father at her window-pane
Her room was on the second level
And to reach it he had climbed
The ivy vine, but why the devil?
See in nine days' time!

Past midnight, Holmes and Watson find
Professor swinging from the vine
When tired of this, he'd taunt the hound
Which soon escaped and brought him down
It turns out that he'd got his hands
Upon a source of monkey glands
Which he injected each nine days
To keep up with his fiancée

Elixir of eternal youth
Presents a danger, said the sleuth
Consumed at night while all were sleeping
The professor turned into the creeping man
The creeping man, the creeping man

Illustration by Ralph C. Criswell from The Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1925 printing of* "The Creeping Man."

The Strange Case of The Creeping Man

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Arthur Conan Doyle's tale "The Adventure of The Creeping Man" first appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in March 1923 and was collected with 11 other stories in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, published by John Murray in 1927. Though it is a post-war composition, the action of the story takes place in September 1903, and Watson, in narrating it, describes it as one of the very last cases handled by Holmes before his retirement from practice.(1) In several interviews given on his tour of America, which started the month after this

Illustration by Frederic Dorr Steele in Hearst's International, *March 1923.*

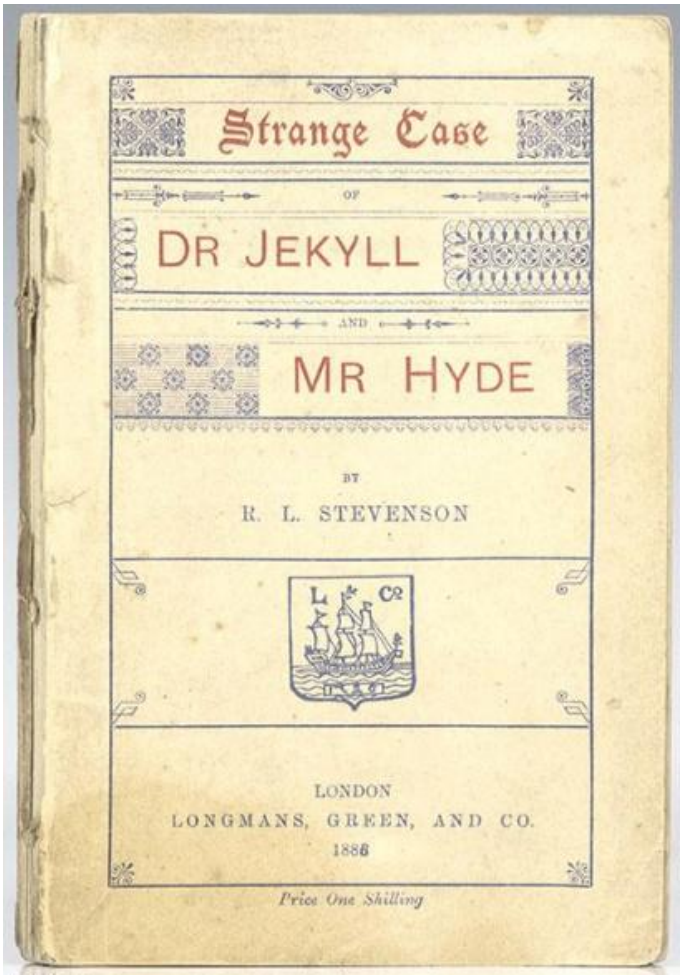
tale was published, Conan Doyle declared that he had decided to write no more Holmes stories, feeling that he should devote his energies to his commitments to Spiritualism.(2) For a whole year he abstained from Holmes.(3) Not for the first time, Holmes proved difficult to lay to rest, and more of his cases were to follow. But there are indications that, at least for a while, Conan Doyle thought of "The Creeping Man" as a last word from, and about, Holmes.

"The Creeping Man," a story about a scientist whose bizarre and violent behaviour is discovered to be the consequence of a self-administered drug, has been dismissed as "a weak reworking of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*."(4) Indeed, Stevenson was something of a model or strong precursor for his fellow Scot, Edinburgh University alumnus, and lapsed professional. "I never met Robert Louis Stevenson in the flesh," Conan Doyle was to recall, "though I owe so much to him in the literary spirit."(5)

As suggested by the title in the "strange case" of Dr Jekyll, and the "case-book" of Sherlock Holmes, the emergence of the professional protocols of law, medicine, experimental science, and police work were all producing "the case" as the form in which events or situations could be systematically described and understood. To quote Holmes in "The Creeping Man:" "[t]he various incidents will now fit themselves easily into the general scheme."(6)

As Bennett, Professor Presbury's secretary, tells Holmes at the conclusion of "The Creeping Man:" "Well, thanks to you, Mr Holmes, it is very clear that we have traced the evil to its source."(7) In comparison, the origins of Dr Jekyll's case are more complex and a great deal darker, necessitating a more laboured, difficult, indeed modernist narrative structure.

These two stories rest on a similar narrative premise: there is no doubt that one provided inspiration for the other, and these two stories are a part of each other's history. Certainly, Conan Doyle felt respect for and kinship with Stevenson, which makes the differences between the tales all the more telling. What "The Creeping Man" does to Dr Jekyll turns out to be a strange case of its own. Both these stories centre on a mystery that is investigated and solved. All the Holmes stories do this, to be sure, but in "The Creeping Man" Conan Doyle seems to be following the matter of the Stevenson tale quite closely. An eminent man of science, with a reputation for being progressive, materialistic, and rational, is observed behaving oddly, and there are episodes of rage and violence. Somehow, he is not himself. His household become alarmed, professional friends or



First edition, first issue of The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde *by Longman, Green, and Co, London, 1886*

colleagues are mobilized to investigate, the scientist tries to guard his secret but in the end is revealed to have used his professional expertise to acquire a transgressive knowledge or powers. For the public, the scientist may have been the avatar of modernity, but in both these stories, his quest puts this man of high intellect on a path to regression or degeneration, apparently reversing the Darwinian narrative of the descent of man from the apes. Mr Hyde looks troglodytic(8), and is characterized by "raging energies" and bursts of "ape-like fury."(9) In the Conan Doyle story, Professor Presbury's knuckles are thick and horny.(10) He is "overflowing with energy and vitality,"(11) and has been seen to go on all fours.

Both these tales about the dangers of research are in the species of cautionary science fiction whose heyday coincided with the knowledge revolution of the late 19th century, and was roughly bracketed by these two publications, between the 1880s and the 1920s. Their literary antecedents go back to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and further to various instantiations of the Faustus story. Dr Jekyll's hubristic investigations conjure up a diabolical force that he is then unable to shake off. But here there is an important distinction to be made. Conan Doyle's scientist is no tragic Faust or doomed Victor Frankenstein. If anything, Professor Presbury's motives belong in traditional comedy, and he is a version of the drooling old man aspiring to a sexy young girl. This too may be some sort of echo of the Stevenson tale, where the sedentary middle-aged Jekyll transforms himself into the vigorous and satyr-like young

Hyde. A widower of 61, Conan Doyle's professor has become engaged to a much younger woman. "It was not the reasoned courting of an elderly man but rather the passionate frenzy of youth," Holmes is told.(12) But the old professor, as ever, is an anxious lover. Alice Morphy is described as "a very perfect girl both in mind and body."(13) Her father approves of the match, for Presbury is distinguished and wealthy, but the girl with the perfect body "had other views."(14) Though she likes the Professor despite his eccentricities, and though it is "only age which stood between them," she does seem hesitant, and there are several younger candidates for her hand.

About this time, Presbury makes a mysterious journey to Prague, and returns, furtive, and "under some shadow which had darkened his higher qualities."(15) As Holmes later discovers, the professor has acquired, from the disreputable Dr. Lowenstein of Prague, a rejuvenative serum derived from a monkey, the black-faced langur, described as the "biggest and most human of climbing monkeys,"(16) to juice up his sexual powers. Back in England, he is kept supplied with the drug by a shady dealer in the East End, a Bohemian called Dorak.

It seems certain this part of the tale has in mind the treatment to restore sexual potency developed in 1918 by the physiologist Eugen Steinach, which became very popular in the early 1920s, and was rumoured, falsely, to involve a serum derived from monkey glands. In Vienna, according to Richard Ellman, a hundred teachers and university professors submitted to the operation, one of them being Sigmund Freud in 1923. This is the same operation performed on W. B. Yeats by the surgeon Norman Haire in April 1934.(17) Conan Doyle was a well-informed man and, of course, a physician, and it is a good bet that in 1923 news of Steinach's treatment for flagging potency, and the monkey gland rumour that came with it, became ingredients for the monkey business plot of the tale. As Conan Doyle broke down and transformed the material inherited from Stevenson, the monkey gland story, with its disturbing and prurient overtones, was one of the new elements he introduced to the mix, where it grafted easily onto the simian appearance of Dr Jekyll's alter ego. Meanwhile, in making a desire to recover youth the main motive of his story, Conan Doyle was picking up a definite, if neglected, strand in Dr Jekyll, where all the men are ponderous and middle aged but Hyde, "that young man"(18) in whose shape and senses Jekyll "felt younger, lighter, happier in body."(19)

Though it is developed in the laboratory, Stevenson gives no information about the "salt" that brings out Mr Hyde from within Dr Jekyll. For the purpose of the story it might as well be a magic potion. Its results, however, are no laughing matter. Our first glimpse of Hyde sees him trample a child in the street, an astonishingly disturbing moment. "The

trampling scene is perhaps a convention," as Gerard Manley Hopkins, one of the greatest poets of the Victorian era guessed: "he was thinking of something unsuitable for fiction."(20) Hyde is a sadist and worse. Later he commits an unmotivated and brutal murder. Criminal, savage, animal and wicked, "a soul boiling with causeless hatreds,"(21) he is associated with a Gothic vocabulary of extremism, darkness and atavism, and his uncontrollable energy can only be mastered by the suicide of his host.

In Conan Doyle's strange case, however, the transformations of the scientist are remarkably trivial by contrast. In fact, "The Creeping Man" tends to set its face against the inherent horror of its story of a man motivated by sexual desire and transformed into a beast. To put this another way, "The Creeping Man" seems concerned to draw the teeth of its Stevensonian precursor, to degothicise it, and offer a new version of the story in which, though a grotesque and mysterious transformation does take place, no crime follows and no real harm is done.

Late one night, Presbury's secretary is alarmed to see the Professor scuttle along the corridor on hands and feet. His other actions, when under the influence of the drug, are unsettling but relatively harmless. One moonlit night, he uses a creeper to climb from the garden to his daughter's bedroom window and peers inside for some 20 seconds, one hand raised as if to push up the window, while she lies in her bed paralyzed with fright. The creeping man creepily climbs up a creeper, to watch his daughter in bed – a strange case indeed – but the girl, though scared, is not hurt.

The professor's antics might be construed in various ways, as the actions of a voyeur, a lover in a bedroom farce, a harbourer of incestuous desires, a predatory vampire like the wall-creeping Dracula, or simply a lunatic.(22) None of these alarming explanations is entertained by either Holmes or Watson, and neither seems inclined to see the Professor's behaviour as truly dangerous.(23) They regard it, prosaically, as little more than a prank. Watson later sees Presbury in the garden, under the influence of the monkey serum, "climbing apparently in mere joy at his own powers, with no definite object in view,"(24) like a boy at play, and Holmes too says he believes "it was a mere chance […] that the pastime brought him to the young lady's window."(25) The innocent analogue to Hyde's unmotivated acts of violence, Professor Presbury's monkey business is indulged for its own sake, as Holmes explains it. He regards the Professor's appearance at his daughter's bedroom window as no more than an accidental consequence of his pursuit of the quintessentially, and innocently, boyish pastime of climbing things. Also boyish, no doubt, is Presbury's enjoyment of another nighttime escapade, taunting his own dog, a wolfhound named Roy that is chained up in the garden. He teases the animal, trying to provoke it in every possible way, throwing pebbles

in the dog's face, prodding it with a stick, and flicking his hands about in front of its mouth. To Watson's observation he is an "impassive and still dignified figure crouching frog-like upon the ground," goading the dog "by all manner of ingenious and calculated cruelty."(26) This is unpleasant but hardly satanic.

The triviality of these misdemeanors, compared with the brutal crimes of Hyde, seems to be in line with Presbury's manifestly selfish and foolish motives for taking the drug, when compared to the altruistic and humanitarian – and Frankensteinian – motivation of Henry Jekyll. Professor Presbury's comeuppance, too, is less radical than Dr Jekyll's. The wolfhound slips its collar and attacks him, causing serious injury but not death. Holmes will write to Prague to put a stop to this mail-order drug trade, and Presbury's foolishness will be hushed up to avoid scandal; he must learn to be his age. It is as if the Conan Doyle story is intent on denying and closing down the disturbing implications of the situation it inherited from Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. A predictable, orderly existence is firmly restored in Holmes's last words. "There is an early train to town, Watson, but I think we shall just have time for a cup of tea at the Chequers before we catch it."(27) This triumphant bourgeois equilibrium closes the story and with it, as Conan Doyle seems to have intended it at the time, the career of Holmes.

The textual relation between "The Creeping Man" and Dr Jekyll might be characterized, then, as one of what Genette called "thematic transformation," in this case in the form of containment. (28) The tragedy of Dr Jekyll is repeated, not exactly as farce, but as a grotesque curiosity, with elements of comedy. The story of the raging of the beast within a man is processed to be read as a tale about a man who makes a fool of himself by capering about like a monkey. There is containment in a location sense too: the terrifying Edward Hyde freely prowls the

1997 U.K. postage stamp commemorating Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. *This stamp was part of the Tales and Legends series which also featured a* Hound of the Baskervilles *stamp.*

dark streets of London, where his worst crimes are committed, while the activities of Professor Presbury are confined to his own house and garden in a quiet university town.

Before turning to consider the motivation for this metamorphosis, it should be noted that, as we are used to finding in cases of repression, there are places where the buried resonance of the disturbing material sticks up awkwardly through the blander surface of the treatment. One such instance is found in the opening paragraph of Watson's narrative. There he says that, certain unspecified obstacles having now been removed, he has at last obtained permission to publish the singular facts connected with Professor Presbury, "if only to dispel once for all the ugly rumours which some twenty years ago agitated the University and were echoed in the learned societies of London."(29) While this may recall the important role of rumour and professional reputation in *Dr Jekyll*, it also raises the question of what these rumours about Presbury may have been. If suspicions about what he did are to be dispelled by the news that he took a love potion and started behaving like a monkey, the rumours must have been of something more damaging and uglier. Watson as chronicler opens this possibility but gives no more information about it. He does, however, go on to hint that even now full disclosure is not possible, and "a certain reticence and discretion have to be observed in laying the matter before the public."(30) Whatever more unpleasant or discreditable elements Presbury's actions may have contained, Watson announces from the outset that he is going to erase them from his account.

Why does Conan Doyle engage with the Stevenson story in an almost provocative way, yet seem intent on dulling its dark resonance and disarming its central theme? Dr Jekyll is a hard act to follow and Conan Doyle's is not the only homage that seems pale beside its full-blooded original. To be sure, there are 60 Holmes narratives and their author must be allowed a few less successful ones. His admiration for Stevenson was unquestionable and this tale is no doubt a sincere form of flattery. But it may also be at some level a repudiation of the dark intent of the story of Dr Jekyll, a reparation of the theme so as to render it less nightmarish, suffusing it with the reassuring light of day that usually (not always) shines in the world of Holmes and Watson. There is selfishness and cruelty in that world but these things can always be challenged and defeated.

Holmes does not encounter, and probably could not deal with, the kind of metaphysical evil that Stevenson could imagine. Jekyll comes to think of Hyde, "for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic."(31) Such an entity is not recognized in Baker Street. "This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground," Holmes reminds Watson in "The Sussex Vampire," "and there it must remain."(32) This is an

important reassurance, given in 1924, that Conan Doyle intended to keep his Spiritualist interests and beliefs out of the Holmes stories. But as a matter of fact, if the evil embodied in Hyde could have no place in the world of Holmes, it was just as incompatible with the Spiritualist worldview to which Conan Doyle had been committed for years. His quarrel with the churches had begun at school at Stonyhurst, where he rebelled against the strict regime of the Jesuits who had "no trust in human nature."(33)

There is no doubt that he was drawn to Spiritualism partly because he found congenial its benign view of the nature of God and man. The doctrine of original sin was mistaken. "Man is not naturally bad; the average human being is good."(34) Conan Doyle's spirit advisors had assured him that "the average human being goes to heaven."(35) In Stevenson's story, Hyde, once released, can never be escaped from. But Conan Doyle's faith told him that no mistake was irrecoverable. In Spiritualist belief, the soul is not punished, though it may have to be re-educated. There are many afterworlds but there is no hell.

The transgression and tragedy of Henry Jekyll inspired in Conan Doyle a story about the misdemeanours and pranks of Professor Presbury. While "The Creeping Man" doesn't rank up to *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, it also does not rank very highly either among the Holmes stories. It appears to have been written at a low creative ebb. One curious proof of this is the story's susceptibility to infiltration from the Stevenson tale and other stories, as if it were an infirm patient with a heightened liability to infection.

Apart from the major presence of Dr Jekyll, and the rest of the Holmes Canon, a cluster of other tales crowd into "The Creeping Man." Presbury at his daughter's bedroom window under moonlight recalls Bram Stoker's Dracula stalking Lucy Westenra, or crawling down his castle wall on a hunting expedition. "With his dressing-gown flapping on each side of him," thinks Watson, Presbury "looked like some huge bat glued against the side of his own house."(36) But his boyish curiosity also owes something to Conan Doyle's sometime collaborator J. M. Barrie, whose Peter Pan hovered at Wendy Darling's window – the boy who wouldn't grow up. As well as sharing an enjoyment of gazing into other people's bedrooms, Presbury is linked to Pan in his unwillingness to accept the natural consequences of ageing and (when under the influence of the drug) his anarchic mischief-making. Another narcissist who refuses to age is Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray, and like Presbury he leads a double life and appears to get his drugs from the East End.(37) The irascible scientist ejecting the investigating Holmes from his house replays the ejection of the investigative journalist Edward Malone from Professor Challenger's

home early in *The Lost World* (1912), and the great hound that tries to tear out the throat of Presbury has its own giant precedent in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902).(38) No doubt other interloping stories have their way with this tale, making an opportunistic appearance but little consequential impact.

A more important part of the picture helps to account for the odd lack of mindfulness of "The Creeping Man," as well as the way it drains its Stevensonian model of problem and tragedy, of what Auerbach called "background."(39) As has been noted, the reason Conan Doyle thought this might well be his last Holmes story was his belief that his work for the Spiritualist movement and revelation must take priority over fiction. This tale has a belated feeling. But it also has a rather unexpected conclusion. Holmes sums up, as he often does, saying the case arose from the Professor's idea that he could only gain his wish by turning himself into a younger man. "When one tries to rise above nature one is liable to fall below it. The highest type of man may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny."(40) This is a moral that could conceivably be drawn from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But what Holmes says next is pure Conan Doyle. With Lowenstein stopped, "we will have no more trouble. But it may recur. Others may find a better way. There is a danger there – a very real danger to humanity. Consider, Watson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become?" (41) These are surprising, and surprisingly strong, words. Science, Holmes is saying, might interfere with human progress, the straight road of destiny which ought to be tending upwards from the anthropoid to the angels, and contribute instead to a triumph of materialism. If science finds a way to prolong human life, the most worldly and egotistical will avail themselves of it, while the more spiritual, having less of a stake in the material world, will not be tempted to linger in this life. The implication is that the spiritual are the most fit for survival, and the material, the sensual and the worldly the least fit. (This was the conclusion of Conan Doyle's reconciliation between science and Spiritualism.) But science may find ways of reversing this bias of nature, serving and prolonging the life of the body at the expense of the life of the spirit, increasing the stock of worldliness and materialism in the world and endangering mankind's spiritual destiny. So, the tale is both another triumph for material methods – Holmes's detective protocols and his "science of deduction" – and a dire warning against the prospect of an irresponsible materialist science upsetting the Spiritual theology. Professor Presbury's quest is seen as entirely ignoble, symptomatic of a low selfishness. The drug – which Holmes is now speaking of

as an elixir of life rather than a simple aphrodisiac – promises him a self-indulgent juvescence, but represents a threat to the order of both nature and providence, the progress of history and the progress of the spirit.

With these words of Holmes, then, the case is radically altered. After assiduously lowering the stakes of its Dr Jekyll predecessor, here "The Creeping Man" abruptly raises them again, and an unexpected but actually world-historical theme is revealed. Suddenly, this tale about science going wrong is after all at least as portentous as *Dr Jekyll*, *Frankenstein* and *Doctor Faustus*.

Holmes's explanatory musings, so oddly inconsistent with the rest of the tale, can be understood in the context of Conan Doyle's thinking and writing at this time, increasingly dominated by what he saw as his Spiritualist mission.(42) He was increasingly impatient with a modernity given over to materialism that had not heeded the new revelation of Spiritualism.

The "real danger to humanity" posed by unbridled materialism was to be found in the Kaiser's Germany, prophesied here in 1903 by Holmes, but already in the past for Conan Doyle and his readers in 1923. He had recently given his opinion that the single cause of the cataclysmic Great War was "the organised materialism of Germany."(43) The Kaiser's greed for power and wealth, and Professor Presbury's greed for youth, were symptoms of the same thing, and the consequence of both threatened to lead the world towards what Herbert Spencer had called re-barbarization.(44) Such concerns are entirely absent from, and foreign to, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Further, in the Stevenson tale there is no character who speaks with anything like the authority bestowed on Holmes in "The Creeping Man" and built up over the whole Canon of the Holmes stories. In the hierarchy of discourses comprising a Holmes story, the detective's own judgements are specially privileged. But the form of *Dr Jekyll*, with its doublings-back, its blind spots, and its multiple and partial witnesses, seems designed to make such a conclusive pronouncement inconceivable: after Jekyll lays down his pen, the tale, you might say, remains strange to itself. In Conan Doyle's hands the story's offspring, conceived as the last case of Sherlock Holmes, is first domesticated and stripped of its Gothic affiliations, and then at the last minute recruited as a cautionary story in its author's campaign for the spiritualization of modernity. It was a strange transformation of Stevenson's fine bogey tale.

Conan Doyle had been careful to keep his Spiritualist ideas out of the Holmes stories. The end of "The Creeping Man" is the point where they come nearest to convergence. It is probably also the point where the case of Professor Presbury is most estranged from its Stevensonian parent.

References

(1) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.50.
(2) Ibid. Editor's note p.70.
(3) Lycett, Andrew, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2007, p.406.
(4) Kerr, Douglas, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession, and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p.87.
(5) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *Memories and Adventures*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924, p.260.
(6) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.71.
(7) Ibid., p.70.
(8) Stevenson, Robert Louis, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.16.
(9) Ibid., p.20.
(10) Ibid., p.67. In this resembling the hands of Edward Hyde, "lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair." p.58. "Always look at the hands first, Watson" says Holmes.
(11) Ibid.
(12) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.53.
(13) "Alice" suggests youth and purity. Conan Doyle gave the pseudonym Alice to one of the young girls who photographed the Cottingley fairies; his *The Cottingley Fairies: An Epilogue* appeared in *The Strand* in February 1923, the month before "The Creeping Man." "Morphy" is Irish, suggesting the wild and passionate nature Conan Doyle ascribed to a Celtic ethnicity. In his story "A Physiologist's Wife" of 1890, the passionate widow, married to a staid scientist who is unable to control her, is called Mrs. O'James. See Arthur Conan Doyle, *Round the Red Lamp*, London: Methuen, 1894, pp.108-38.
(14) Ibid.
(15) Ibid., p.54.
(16) Ibid., p.70.
(17) Ellman, Richard, "Yeats's Second Puberty," *New York Review of Books*, 9 May 1985, p.10-17.
(18) Stevenson, Op. cit., p.16.
(19) Stevenson, Op. cit., p.54.

(20) Hopkins, Gerard Manley, letter to Robert Bridges, 28 October 1886, *Selected Letters*, ed. by Catherine Phillips, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 243. The obliquity of Hopkins's comment is discussed by Roger Luckhurst in his Introduction to *Strange Case*, pp.xxiv-xxvi.
(21) Stevenson, Op. cit., p.65.
(22) Holmes dismisses Bennett's suggestion that the connection between insanity and the phases of the moon might be relevant to the case, p.59.
(23) Asked for his explanation of Presbury's quadripedalism, Watson suggests lumbago, p.56.
(24) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.67.
(25) Ibid. p.71.
(26) Ibid. p.68.
(27) Ibid. p.70.
(28) Genette, Gerard, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997, p.213. In this essay I use the words transtextuality, intertextuality, hypertext and hypotext with the meanings assigned them by Genette in *Palimpsests*, p.3-7.
(29) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.50.
(30) Ibid.
(31) Stevenson, Op. cit., p.65.
(32) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.73.
(33) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *Memories and Adventures*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924, p.15.
(34) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *The History of Spiritualism*, 2 vols., London: Cassell, 1926, vol.1, p.14.
(35) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *Lecture on Spiritualism*, Worthing, *The Worthing Gazette*, 1919, 10. These matters are discussed at greater length in Douglas Kerr, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession, and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp.201-33.
(36) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.67.
(37) Stoker and Barrie were friends of Conan Doyle, and he also knew and admired Oscar Wilde, having met him at the famous dinner where *Dorian*

Gray and *The Sign of Four* were commissioned by J. M. Stoddart for *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*.
(38) Holmes tells Watson he was first attracted to the case because of the unexpected behaviour of the dog. "Why does Professor Presbury's faithful wolfhound, Roy, endeavour to attack him?" Holmes says he is contemplating a small monograph upon the use of dogs in the work of the detective. Presumably it would include a chapter on the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime, from the story "Silver Blaze" (1892).
(39) Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, pp.3-23.
(40) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Adventure of the Creeping Man" in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, 50-71, p.70.
(41) Ibid.
(42) His activities in the months surrounding the publication of "The Creeping Man" (March 1923) include the first communications from his spirit guide Pheneas (December 1922), the publication of *The Case for Spirit Photography* (London: Hutchinson, December 1922), an address on "Psychic Photography" before the London Spiritualist Alliance (January1923), the publication of *The Cottingley Fairies: An Epilogue* (February 1923), two public lectures on "The New Revelation" (February 1923), and the start of an exhausting tour (March to August 1923) in which he lectured on Spiritualism in some 20 cities in the United States and Canada.
(43) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *The Vital Message*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919, p.19. Nor did he believe the Allies who opposed Germany in the war were innocent of a similar materialism: "The system which left seven million dead upon the fields of Europe must be rotten to the core." Arthur Conan Doyle, *The British Campaign in France and Flanders*, vi: July-November 1918, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009, p.169.
(44) Spencer, Herbert, "Re-barbarization," *Facts and Comments*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1902, pp.122-33. A tendency of apparently advanced nations to revert to incivility, robbery and violence, which Spencer called re-barbarization, was a theme not unknown to Stevenson, especially in his South Seas work.

Sinister Elements in "The Adventure of the Creeping Man"

By Barbara Rusch

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At first blush, this story appears at worst rather silly, at best quite conventional, revolving around an elderly professor betrothed to a much younger woman and insecure in his sexual prowess, who suddenly assumes the attributes of a monkey. Is Arthur Conan Doyle putting us on? Is this some form of pastiche, or a satire, which might well have been titled "The Creepy Man"? To some extent it follows a prescriptive and familiar formula: our hero and his trusted companion are comfortably ensconced at 221B discussing matters of mutual interest, a client relates a preternatural plot which Holmes finds intriguing, they travel to the scene to investigate, a theory is formulated, the finer points of which only he perceives, all is made clear through deductive reasoning, and the narrative ends as a cautionary tale. Just another foray into the grotesque and lurid *Case-Book* — not much else to this kooky chronicle, right?

Oh, so wrong. For if we excavate a little deeper, we come to realize that this is the most thematically significant tale of the Canon — in fact, a morality play and philosophical treatise which grapples with the most controversial scientific, theological and ethical questions of its time. A closer examination of these themes would be most instructive.

Pantheism "When one tries to rise above Nature," Holmes observes, "one is liable to fall below it," one of his most memorable aphorisms and not the first time he evokes nature as proof of a higher power. In "The Naval Treaty," he expounds upon the beauty of the moss-rose: "What a lovely thing a rose is … There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers." Here he goes even further, invoking nature not merely as evidence of a higher order, but as its standard-bearer and benchmark of

morality. “When one tries to rise above Nature, one is liable to fall below it.” What is this but an endorsement of scientific pantheism, the belief which equates God with the laws of the universe and the forces of nature, indivisible and sacred, essentially proclaiming that God *is* nature, not merely a manifestation of it? According to these philosophical precepts, it is man’s responsibility to conform to its laws, not set himself above them.

Darwinism It is no accident that the serum Professor Presbury injects into his veins derives from the glands of the langur monkey. The tenets of Darwinian theory, which posits that man evolved from a simian-type creature, were still being fiercely debated 64 years after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859, the year Conan Doyle was born. This story is one of several in the Canon which pits science against superstition. As Holmes so tellingly observes in “The Sussex Vampire,” “This agency stands flatfooted upon the ground … No ghosts need apply.” For religious fundamentalists who believed strongly in man’s exceptionalism, these hypotheses posed a huge threat, and in some circles still do. If man is nothing more than a product of evolution, what does that imply about our relationships to the lower primates, to each other and to God?

Holmes’s rant ends with a dire warning: “There is real danger there — a very real danger to humanity. Consider, Watson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become?” Holmes’s argument suggests a kind of social Darwinism, a dichotomous social construct in which all human beings are either spiritual or material, the

Illustration of Professor Presbury by Ralph C. Criswell for *The Los Angeles Times*, March 22, 1925.

former representing the more admirable quality. And yet, while some may choose to live a more corporeal existence, does this make them any less deserving of life? And what of those, like the majority of us, whose lives are a complex, Janus-like, Cartesian duality, a compendium of mind and body? Are they only fractionally entitled to life? Indeed, Presbury does undergo a horrible transformation, a transmogrification really, crouching in the attitude of a frog, conjuring up the image of a creature emerging from the primordial ooze, then morphing into a monkey state with a crawling, swinging gait, his thick, horny knuckles dragging on the ground, and an inexplicable urge to climb trees, following the Darwinian evolutionary trajectory in a kind of devolutionary path, just as Holmes predicts.

Thus, we can clearly see that, far from this being a subject of farce, "The Creeping Man" becomes, much like Presbury himself, a metaphor for the sexual, psychological and moral angst of its age. Moreover, the story seems to anticipate the famous Scopes Monkey Trial, which took place two years after its publication in 1923, placing Darwin's evolutionary theory at the core of a disputatious dialogue.

Eugenics, the Science of Hate And yet, taken to its extreme, Holmes's assessment contains frightening overtones of the dubious science of eugenics, which advocates selective breeding for the purposes of purifying the racial and genetic superiority of an ethnicity or a nation, based on the belief that certain traits such as intelligence and criminal inclinations are necessarily passed from one generation to the next in a kind of genetic determinism.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Darwin's evolutionary theories were formulated hand in hand with this notion of eugenics, developed by his cousin, Francis Galton. Indeed, perhaps there was some kind of congenital imperative at work here. A movement which began, optimistically enough, in the United States, gaining popularity in the 1920s, it originated as a doctrine designed in theory for the creation of a utopia devoid of disease and social ills. In practice, eugenics ended in the demonization of those designated morally degenerate and mentally impaired, ultimately resulting in the arbitrary mass sterilization of hundreds of thousands.

Now, I am not for a single moment suggesting that Holmes would have in any way condoned the depravity, horror and brutality consequent to the principles of eugenics. I am simply pointing out that it is from such seemingly innocuous remarks, most especially when expressed by persons in authority or held in high esteem, that tiny seeds take root, and unimaginable atrocities, including genocide, have evolved. It is not for

Sherlock Holmes to determine what constitutes "worthless lives." Nor is any one race or ethnicity inherently superior – or inferior – to any other.

And to whom may we attribute these theories of genetically, racially and culturally imposed determinism? To Holmes, to Watson or to Conan Doyle? Did the author subscribe to eugenic principles? Hard to say, though it would be difficult to imagine that he was not exposed to them. The notion that vice may be embedded in a contaminated genetic code is one which Holmes apparently endorses. Himself something of an anthropologist of crime, he affirms in *A Study in Scarlet* that "there is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds." And if we can judge by Watson's graphic and unflattering descriptions of Blacks, Jews and Latinas, he has few qualms in perpetuating the concept of congenitally acquired proclivities either. Though it would be unfair to judge any of them entirely by 21st-century standards, one might have hoped that two intellectual giants of their day, Holmes and Conan Doyle, both fierce advocates of the principles of justice, could have risen above the common prejudices and racial biases.

It's also worth noting that though Holmes's skills at observation and deduction were undoubtedly modelled after Dr. Joseph Bell, Conan Doyle's instructor at Edinburgh University Medical School, his name is likely a tip of the deerstalker to acclaimed American physician, novelist, poet, educator and reformer Oliver Wendell Holmes. But it was his son, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., an enthusiastic proponent of eugenic theory, who, in a controversial decision in 1927, ruled in favour of the almost completely arbitrary sterilization of an innocent young woman, Carrie Buck, deemed "mentally defective." In his ruling he stated that "three generations of imbecility are enough." These are deep waters indeed, which at the very least merit further consideration.

Deviant Sexuality Perhaps Holmes's admonition against the dangers of rising "above Nature" is more indicative of his own state of mind, his own priorities, or lack of them, than a true moral indictment. Is man to be regarded as depraved for attempting to prolong healthy sexual activity into old age? Had Presbury been searching for a cure for heart disease, say, or arthritis, two conditions also associated with the aging process, would Holmes have been equally unsympathetic? Surely justice must be tempered with compassion, though his casual dismissal of the exigencies of others speaks more loudly to a man devoid of sexual identity than to any moral imperative. After all, calculating machines and automatons are by definition asexual. He appears to be implying that predetermined parameters to scientific inquiry ought to be imposed, sexual deficiencies not falling within them. One wonders what Holmes made of Freudian

theory, which was exploding at the time, or is it just sexuality in the aging male that he finds so repugnant? In this case, Holmes seems to be a bit of a creeping man himself – creeping back to the dark ages – in which his evaluation of a male wishing to maintain his testosterone levels equates to degeneracy. Were it within Holmes's purview, Viagra might never have been discovered. In this salacious saga, Holmes does not exactly come off smelling like a moss-rose himself.

Victorian Gothic literature often contains an overt sexual component: a cunning and cruel villain in a position of power who seeks to assert dominance over a vulnerable female whom he exploits and abuses, holding her captive in a castle keep. A number of Holmes narratives incorporate this literary trope, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, "The Copper Beeches" and "The Solitary Cyclist," to enumerate but a few. In today's world, Presbury's behaviour would be construed as stalking or harassment, and one shudders to imagine what the consequences might have been had he managed to scale the side of his house and enter the room in which his fiancée lay sleeping. It seems likely that a sexual assault would have taken place. Surely there is a not-so-fine line between sexual desire and sexual misconduct. In light of the recent #MeToo movement, what begins as no more than a sordid affair assumes far greater significance, and it would seem that Conan Doyle is no less than visionary in the themes he chooses to explore. Many of the Holmes tales revolve around the consequences of inappropriate or illicit relationships, though I would argue that none deal with the subject of toxic masculinity in as honest and forthright a manner as this weird and slightly unpalatable plot.

It would not be unreasonable to enquire what might have motivated Arthur Conan Doyle to tackle the subject of the loss of male libido as appropriate subject matter for a detective mystery. At the time he was turning his attention to Professor Presbury and his sexual angst, he was approaching his mid-sixties, and perhaps had some personal concerns with regard to his own virility.

Drugs and Dogs The dangers of drug use is a persistent theme in the Canon. From the opium dens of Upper Swandam Lane in "The Man with the Twisted Lip" to the Devil's Foot Root that destroys an entire family, Conan Doyle was ahead of his time in alerting the world to its perils. In Holmes's mind, Lowenstein's serum is no more than dangerous pseudo-science. Of course, when it comes to accepting or rejecting scientific theories, Holmes has his own peculiar methods. Strange that he cannot see the folly of his own weakness for harmful injections, particularly his predilection for cocaine, but he is, despite our adulation, just a man, after all.

And here we have another curious incident of a dog in the nighttime, though unlike the canine in "Silver Blaze," Roy actually does something – alerting the household that something is amiss with his master, thus providing an important clue in solving the mystery. Some years ago, the late Rabbi Steven Saltzman, who at one time was a member of the Bootmakers of Toronto, posed the question as to whether Professor Presbury, when in his monkey state, is a human being at all, which the Rabbi defined as "possessing an inner life." But by that definition, those suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's might not qualify as human either. Nor is it just his physical bearing that's changed so dramatically. As his daughter Edith expresses it, "It was not my father with whom I lived. His outward shell was there, but it was not really he." It is precisely this absence of an inner life which Roy seems to sense as well. Whether Presbury retains some vestige of humanity is a matter for debate. But equally important, what other tale could provide a platform for a finely tuned philosophical discourse on what constitutes human identity?

Literary Genres and Allusions Where most of the Holmes narratives follow the established conventions of the detective mystery, "The Creeping Man" is a mingling of genres. Certainly it contains elements of Gothic: hints of the supernatural, unexplained horrors in the dead of night, an atmosphere of madness, perceived danger to a vulnerable young woman, secrets harboured within a spooky old pile, the depredation of a distinguished scholar devolving into animal form, pseudo-science and dangerous experimentation with deadly potions in underground chemical laboratories – this quirky yarn has it all. Nor is Holmes himself innocent of these dubious scientific inquiries, which include beating bloated carcasses, and one which in "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" nearly costs Watson his life, which Holmes himself confesses was "an unjustifiable experiment."

Presbury is described as "some huge bat glued against the side of his house … his dressing gown flapping on each side of him," eerily reminiscent of no less a Gothic superstar than Bram Stoker's Count Dracula, the darkest manifestation of repressed sexual desire, published in 1897, 26 years before "The Creeping Man," and from which Conan Doyle clearly draws inspiration. Of course, as with all Sherlock Holmes's revelations, the paranormal is explained away with the aid of incisive deductive reasoning.

But this tale also contains important elements of science fiction, which tends to mingle scientific fact and prophetic vision. Edgar Allan Poe, the source for much of Conan Doyle's Gothic as well as his detective fiction, anticipates a trip to the moon. As it happens, around the time Conan Doyle

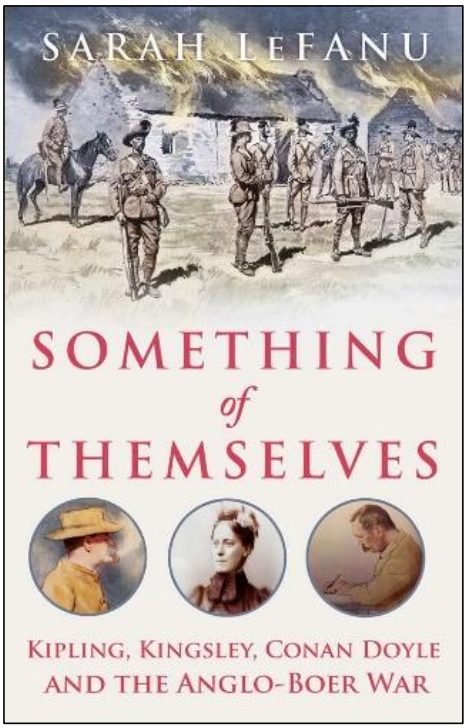
was conceiving the unlikely plot for "The Creeping Man," rejuvenation treatments were being developed by a Russian-born surgeon named Serge Voronoff [Editor's note: see "Rejuvenation Therapy: Historical background to The Creeping Man" on page 2 for more on Voronoff], who was injecting animal glands and tissue from monkey testicles into men suffering from what we would today call erectile dysfunction.

Nor was Conan Doyle the first to probe this highly charged subject. Dorian Gray's lust for eternal youth – and lust in general – imperils his eternal soul. Even more pronounced, Presbury evokes Mr Hyde, the loathsome, Janus-like counterpart to eminent scientist Dr Jekyll, a complex and multi-layered man of science, who injects himself with a powerful concoction of drugs, with the result that his more elevated spiritual and intellectual attributes become subverted to his baser animal instincts. As he gradually succumbs to his inner demons, the monster within emerges, followed by the inevitable devolution into madness and depravity. Both of these tales of horror feature anti-heroes who "try to rise above Nature."

All these anti-heroes who begin with such great promise, in the end turned villains, are metaphors for the duality of human nature. Their moral and spiritual descent is reflected in an appalling physical decline, the inevitable result of the Frankenstein monster concealed just beneath the surface, which cannot be contained by its creator. Such is the tragic inevitability when good men turn to the dark side – literary models for the eternal struggle between good and evil. As Oscar Wilde observes, "It is always with the best of intentions that the worst work is done." Like Holmes, his observations are most incisive.

Taken to its Logical Conclusion So what might first appear as no more than a pernicious plot or promiscuous parody is at the cusp of some of the most burning philosophical, psychological, ethical and scientific issues of the day, an engaging discourse at the core of the human condition and an exploration of man's folly in his attempts to be god-like. Ricocheting between the sublime and the ridiculous, this somewhat nasty narrative anticipates some of the most pivotal social movements of our time and is as far from an "observation of trifles" as may be imagined. Containing multiple layers of camouflage, it is a remarkable example of a masterful theosophical treatise masquerading as a farcical short story. The intriguing themes Conan Doyle chose to explore continue to resonate today, sparking a conversation that shows no signs of abating anytime soon. Thus, "The Creeping Man," while one of the darkest tales of the Canon – and undoubtedly one of its most underrated – is also amongst its most profound.

"Holmes gave me a brief review"



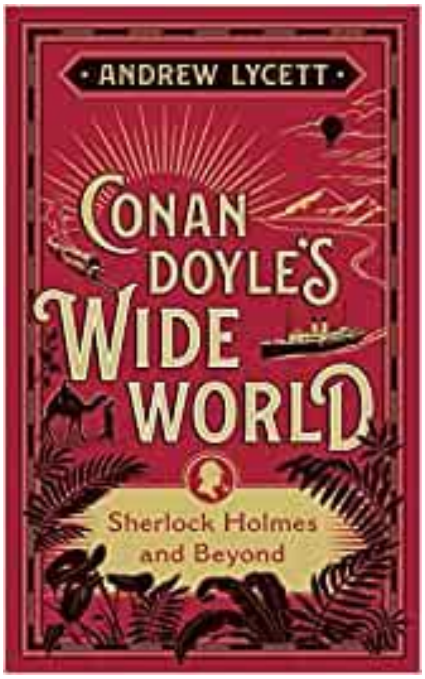
Something of Themselves: Kipling, Kingsley, Conan Doyle and the Boer War by Sarah LeFanu (2020, Hurst Publishing $32.95 CAD).

Three very different, but markedly noteworthy, writers – Rudyard Kipling, Mary H. Kingsley and Arthur Conan Doyle – each travel to South Africa and serve Britain in the war against the Boers. One goes as a journalist, another as nurse and the third as a doctor. Only two return from the endeavor. LeFanu investigates the motivations that drove each of them to play their respective roles in one of Britain's uglier imperial wars, and does so by documenting and exploring their individual lives and attitudes immediately leading up to the war, what they each actually did in South Africa during the war, and then how the war affected their work and lives afterwards, and finally, the lasting legacy of their experiences. Each something of a social outsider, or perhaps simply viewing themselves as such, has their own motivation. Doyle comes off as largely escaping from domestic entanglements for a 'Boys Own' sort of adventure ends up an apologist for the war; Kipling, mourning the death of his daughter, is well on his way to being an angry Imperialist, but Mary H. Kingsley is the most fascinating of the bunch. As an ethnologist and amateur anthropologist, she's the only one there out of genuine interest and concern for the native population. LeFanu writes with an easily accessible charm, and considerable wit, backed up with impeccable research, resulting in an insightful and excellent piece of work. Highly recommended.

- Charles Prepolec

Conan Doyle's Wide World: Sherlock Holmes and Beyond by Andrew Lycett (2020, Tauris Parke $38.00 CAD).

Conan Doyle lived an active life full of adventures and travel. From his time aboard an Arctic whaler as a surgeon, to sailing down the Nile and travelling across Canada in a set of private rail cars at the invitation of the CPR, Conan Doyle dove into travel with both feet. He, like Watson, visited several continents and even lived in both Switzerland and Egypt to help



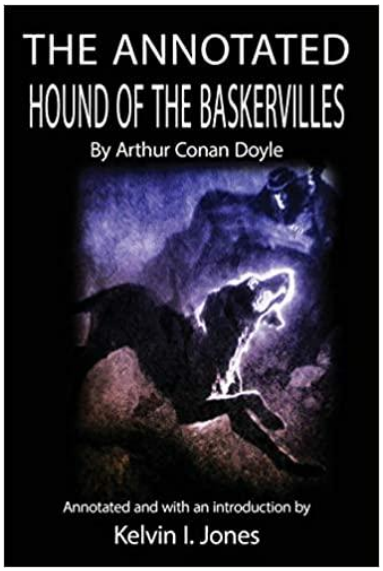
lesson his wife's tuberculosis. Later in life he travelled extensively in support of Spiritualism.

The book consists of a selection from Conan Doyle's diaries, memoirs and other writings in which he describes his travels and adventures. Lycett weaves together various travel writing and place description, reminding us how great a writer Conan Doyle was beyond the Sherlock Holmes canon.

A centre section of glossy photos helps the reader picture the places described. In this section we see Doyle and various family members everywhere from Egypt to Venice and Davos to British Columbia. Interestingly, a couple of the photos are by Doyle himself, an avid travel photographer.

If you enjoy travel and fine travel writing don't pass up this book. It will be equally at home among your travel books as it will be in your Conan Doyle collection.

- Mark Alberstat



The Annotated Hound of the Baskervilles by Conan Doyle. Annotated by Kelvin I Jones (2020, Cunning Crimes, available through Amazon, $17.99 USD. A limited and signed hardback edition is available via Facebook link at Siger Holmes)

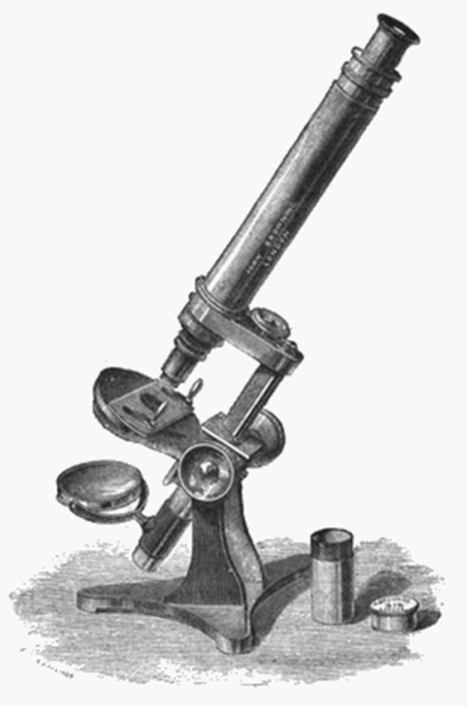
Jones takes one of the most written about stories and breathes new life and new interest into it through this book with its 50-page introduction, copious annotations and almost 20 appendices.

The appendices cover such topics as filmography, a chronology of the writing of the novel, geographical references within the story, the gothic elements, a definition of an ancestral curse, and even a short story about Conan Doyle and Fletcher Robinson.

Jones has taken his decades of writing about Holmes and the Canon and created an impressive book focused on the most famous of Holmes's cases. Although there is no note about Meyers, Toronto, the book should not be overlooked.

- Mark Alberstat

Strictly Personal



Where a Canadian Sherlockian goes under the microscope for all

Name: Karen Campbell

Age: 54

Birthplace: Cambridge, Ontario

Occupation: High School English Teacher

Current city of residence: Toronto

In school I excelled at: writing, public speaking, singing

A great evening for me is: not having any marking to do

Goal in life: see the world

Other hobbies and interests: singing, anything connected with Japan, Victorian and Georgian life, dinosaurs, country music

Favourite dining experience: pub lunch/dinner with Sherlockian friends

First Sherlockian memory: Sherlock Hemlock the Sesame Street Muppet. They eventually gave him a Watson; a dog who was much smarter than he was. (Watch the YouTube videos. They're hysterical.)

Three favourite canonical tales: the gothic ones are my favourites. The Adventure of the Speckled Band, The Adventure of the Devil's Foot and *The Hound of the Baskervilles.*

Favourite non-Sherlockian reading: Lucy Maud Montgomery, P.G. Wodehouse, Stephen Leacock

Favourite Sherlockian movie: The Hammer *Hound* with Peter Cushing. This is the film that first got me hooked on Holmes.

Favourite non-Sherlockian movie: *Jurassic Park*

Most prized possession in my Sherlockian collection: *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* with the Sidney Paget illustrations.

If I could live anywhere in the world it would be: Honolulu

If I could live at any time in history it would be: 1895, of course!

If I could ask Holmes, Watson and Doyle each one question, it would be:

-Holmes: Who is the best and wisest man you have ever known (and don't say it's yourself!)

-Watson: Where is Cox and Co.?

-Doyle: The Hound! Nine years! What took you so long????

First learned of the Bootmakers: TVO fundraiser in 1983 with Donald Redmond at the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection

I would like my epitaph to read: Thank you for believing in me when sometimes I didn't believe in myself.

My last words will be: "Who turned the light off? It's dark in here!"

What questions do I wish I had been asked? Hey! that's just a bit too personal!

OOTMAKERS' DIARY

... it is a page from some private diary.
— The Five Orange Pips

Saturday, June 6, 2020 – The Adventure of the Norwood Builder

At 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 6, the Bootmakers of Toronto started an historic event – their very first meeting on the internet via Zoom. Mike Ranieri began the meeting on time with 54 participants logged in. This quickly grew to 67. Since there are several couples the attendance was about 70 people. This new format showed one advantage in that many people who could not physically attend a meeting are now able to join. There were participants from Halifax, Nova Scotia; Vancouver, British Columbia; Syracuse, New York; and London, England, to name just a few.

Mike began the meeting with the Brent McCollough Music Corona Virus Bee Gees Parody of *Stayin' Alive* called *Stayin' Inside*. A little humor to cope with a serious situation.

Next, we saw the introduction to the Granada Mystery version of "The Norwood Builder," with Vincent Price.

Mark Alberstat talked about *Canadian Holmes*. JoAnn and Mark have now edited more than 40 issues of our journal.

Mike then introduced our guest speaker, Mark Jones, who joined us via the internet from London, England. He is a consultant in higher education, the author of several books on film, television and literature and a member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. The title of his talk was: The Forgotten Victims of Black Peter. He noted that 14 stories begin with the discovery of a body. In eight of these the victim is found to be the villain. One of these stories is Black Peter. Jones discussed a bank failure and linked that to the events in "The Devil's Foot," and remarked that Tregennis was the name of tin mine owners in Cornwall. He then answered questioned about his presentation.

After his talk concluded, Karen Campbell took up the quiz on "The Norwood Builder." The winner was Susan Dahlinger with Mark and JoAnn Alberstat and Bruce Aikin tied for second place.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 P.M.

- Bruce D. Aikin, M. Bt., Sh.D.

Saturday, July 11, 2020 – The Adventure of the Dancing Men

On what was to have been Silver Blaze Day at 7:03 p.m. Meyers, Mike Ranieri, welcomed 57 attending via Zoom or phone to the second virtual Bootmaker meeting. Meetings are usually held in the afternoon but this was rescheduled to accommodate two speakers from Japan. The story under discussion was 'The Dancing Men.'

Meyers showed a short video of what appeared to be Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II extending to Doug Wrigglesworth a pre-birthday greeting on his 80th birthday, falling on August 7.

Mike announced that Barbara Rusch had made a YouTube video on Holmes, for HomeEquity Bank, that explains how Doyle came to create him using some items from her collection to illustrate.

Meyers also let us know that the Special Collections at the Reference Library had created an online escape room game.

This was followed by a video of a young gentleman explaining the method by which Holmes cracked the code of the dancing men.

Mimi Okabe introduced, and then acted as translator for Umiko Shigaki, who proudly showed off a few favourite pieces from her collection of Holmes memorabilia.

Then, again with Mimi's help, though his English was good, Yuichi Hirayama spoke of and exhibited some of his collection of books, including translations of Holmes stories, along with novels and comic books involving Japanese detectives who share Holmes's abilities of observation and deduction.

There was a multiple-choice quiz from quiz mistress Karen Campbell, the winner being Susan Dahlinger from New York. Her prize, several issues of 'The Shoso-in Bulletin,' published from 1991-2004 by The Men with the Twisted Konjo donated by George Vanderburgh.

Our Lassus, Karen Gold, sang 'The Dancing Men,' to the tune of 'Dancing in the Street,' by Martha and the Vandellas.

Thelma Beam then presented the story denouement with a summary of her award-winning 2013 paper, "Arthur Conan Doyle and the Cubitts of Happisburgh." It was long thought that Doyle got the idea about the cipher from a young boy he met at a hotel in Norfolk but until an autograph book was purchased by the Toronto Reference Library. which showed the actual origins of the Dancing Men, it could not be confirmed.

By tracking down and interviewing the descendants of Gilbert John Cubitt, the boy who gave ACD the idea, Thelma was able to give the history of the Dancing Men from the point of view of the family itself.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

- David Sanders M.Bt.

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