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Canadian Holmes

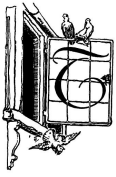
Volume 44 Number 2

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One-hundred sixty sixth issue

***Contents***  
**Canadian Holmes**  
**Spring 2021**  
***Volume 44 Number 2***

Traces of Bootprints <i>By JoAnn and Mark Alberstat</i>	1
The view from the bow window <i>By Barbara Rusch</i>	2
Why did Conan Doyle marry Watson off? <i>By Don Roebuck</i>	4
Two comic strips by Tom Gauld	6
There was certainly an element of comedy <i>By Christopher Redmond</i>	7
The real killer of Charles Augustus Milverton <i>By Richard Krisciunas</i>	12
The Empty House: Grant Allen and a near-death experience <i>By Daniel L. Friedman, and Eugene B. Friedman</i>	19
Canadian Holmes on screen: John Neville - A Study in Terror (1965) <i>By Charles Prepolec</i>	25
Conan Doyle and the anti-vaccination movement <i>By Mark Alberstat</i>	28
A Toast to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle <i>By Dan Andriacco</i>	32
The Adventure of the Crooked Man quiz <i>By Karen Campbell</i>	33
Strictly Personal – Angela Misri	35
Reviews	37
Bootmakers' Diary	39



# Graces of Bootprints

## *Christopher Plummer, gone but not forgotten*

As most readers will know, Toronto-born Christopher Plummer died on February 5 at the age of 91. To the Sherlockian world he will always be remembered for his performance as Holmes in the 1979 Jack the Ripper movie *Murder by Decree*.

Although not universally loved by the critics of the time, the movie is still a favourite among many Sherlockians and well worth re-watching on your own, or when Covid allows, in a group. His portrayal of Holmes highlighted Plummer's acting abilities, star power and ability to overcome a so-so script.

Upon his death, tributes to Plummer flooded social media many of them mentioning his long association with the stage in Canada, especially through Stratford. Playing Holmes in *Murder by Decree* resulted in the only Genie Plummer won despite being nominated six times. Charles Prepolec's look at Canadian actors who have portrayed Holmes has a look at John Neville in this issue but will feature a fuller examination of Plummer's career in the Summer 2021 issue.

Also, in this issue, Barbara Rusch continues her Bow Window column, this time looking at the history of wax figures. This is followed by Don Roebuck's consideration of why Conan Doyle married off Watson. Christopher Redmond looks at two comedic plays with a Sherlockian connection, Richard Krisciunas pulls back the curtain to explain who really killed Charles Augustus Milverton, Daniel and Eugene Friedman delves into the friendship between Grant Allen and Conan Doyle, Dan Andriacco gives us a toast while Karen Campbell quizzes us on "The Adventure of the Crooked Man." The issue is rounded out by Angela Misri being subjected to the Strictly Personal questions and a series of book reviews and, of course, Diary Notes.

As Spring warms up our temperatures, sit in the sun or in a comfy chair and enjoy 40 pages of Sherlockian goodness.

# *The view from the bow window*

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



Wax, whose properties are as old as life itself – and almost as mysterious – is one of the most versatile materials known to mankind. No matter how it is treated, it retains its luminosity, fluidity and texture. Beeswax has long been accorded supernatural attributes. In ancient Egypt, the bee was deified, as it was believed that beeswax and honey emanated from the tears of the god Re, assuming a sublime, mystical quality, which explains why it was used exclusively in votive candles. The custom of fashioning objects of wax was popularized during the Renaissance in religious encaustic paintings, while more sinister applications appeared in the practice of witchcraft and sorcery, in which a tiny replica of a despised enemy would be formed in wax, to be pierced with nails or needles, tortured or burned.

Before photography, the wax likeness served not merely as an accurate representation of notable characters but also as an artistic medium. This unique form of three-dimensional portraiture seems to have originated in 15th-century Italy. Leonardo da Vinci may have been the first to experiment with anatomical models made of wax to illustrate the functions of the human body, its translucence bearing an uncanny resemblance to the colour and texture of human flesh tones. It was the custom in England since medieval times, when a king or queen died, to take a plaster death mask from which was fashioned a life-sized effigy in wax, which was then borne on a black-draped platform called a “hearse,” along with the coffin at the funeral procession. By the 17th century, museums sprang up displaying automata and waxworks of historic personages.

But the arrival of Madame Tussaud on the scene rendered such previously successful exhibitions obsolete. Born Marie Grosholtz in Berne, Switzerland in 1760, she learned her craft from her uncle, surgeon Philippe Curtius, who opened a museum of curiosities and wax effigies. Her connections to the court of Louis XVI led to a spot of trouble during the Reign of Terror, when she was incarcerated for a time in the Bastille. Upon her release, she was assigned the grim task of fashioning death masks of the decapitated victims of the guillotine. In 1802 she took her two sons and left for England, where for the next 30 years she exhibited

her realistic replications of the celebrated and notorious in every city and town. By 1835, at the age of 74, Madame Tussaud had decided to settle the collection permanently in London, in that most auspicious of venues, Baker Street. Her story has changed our perceptions of those whose legacies, for good or evil, she helped preserve, while becoming a legend in her own right.

Sherlock Holmes barely had to crane his neck out the bow window of 221B to catch a glimpse of the crowds lined up at one of England's most popular attractions. Though there is no likeness within its halls of the world's greatest consulting detective, there are no fewer than two in the Canon itself, both used to defeat archvillains armed with air guns. The first, a bust moulded by Meunier of Grenoble, entrapped Colonel Sebastian Moran in "The Empty House," while the second, a life-sized facsimile modelled by Tavernier, succeeds in tricking Count Sylvius into revealing the whereabouts of the precious Mazarin Stone. So effective is the Tavernier that Sam Merton, the Count's accomplice, is led to exclaim, "A fake, is it? Well, strike me! Madame Tussaud ain't in it. It's the living spit of him, gown and all." Though Meunier and Tavernier are not listed in the commercial directories of the day, it is not inconceivable that they were apprenticed at Tussaud's, travelling from France to study with the best there was.

And what became of the stage props they created? The Meunier bust suffered a hole straight through the forehead and was likely discarded. But the Tavernier sculpture was preserved intact and resides on the upper floor of the Northumberland Hotel, now the Sherlock Holmes Restaurant and Pub, where it presides over the entirely reconstructed sitting room at 221B, a fitting tribute to an iconic national hero.

Nor is wax as a tool in crime solving Holmes's only connection to the medium. No doubt aware of its mystical nature and the reverence in which it was held by the ancients, Holmes has devoted his retirement to its study, as evidenced by his magnum opus, *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen*. Thus it is that the subject has become a focus of both his "waxing and waning" years.

*Madame Tussaud's commemorative catalogue for the 1897 Diamond Jubilee of "a certain gracious lady." From the collection of the author.*



# *Why did Conan Doyle marry Watson off?*

By Don Roebuck

Don Roebuck FCNRS teaches English in Toronto

At the end of *The Sign of Four*, with the treasure safely at the bottom of the Thames and Jonathan Small on his way to jail, Watson drops his bombshell: he is going to marry Miss Morstan and, by implication, move out of 221B.

Some scholars have seen this as Conan Doyle's way of writing "finis" to the Sherlock Holmes saga. Christopher Redmond, for example, says that, in Watson's impending marriage, "one recognizes the author's intent to write Watson out of Holmes's life, ending their companionship and ruling out any future adventures."<sup>(1)</sup> Nigel Cawthorne is even more categorical: "without his amanuensis there could be no more Holmes."<sup>(2)</sup>

And yet Conan Doyle somehow managed to write another 58 of these stories. So let us consider an alternative hypothesis: that Conan Doyle did want to get Watson out of 221B but his purpose was to allow for more variety in any future Holmes stories.

We know variety was something Conan Doyle was concerned about. Writing to Herbert Greenhough Smith, the editor of *The Strand Magazine*, in May 1903, Conan Doyle lamented the impossibility of preventing "a certain sameness & want of freshness"<sup>(3)</sup> in the Holmes stories, and in another letter he suggested that, for the sake of variety, a story with a crime be inserted between two stories without one.<sup>(4)</sup>

Now, one striking "sameness" in *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four* is that, in both stories, the actual case begins with Holmes and Watson chatting in the sitting room at 221B. But with Holmes and Watson living separately, Conan Doyle would have to tell the reader, at the beginning of each story, how the two men happened to link up before setting off together on their adventure, and this linking up could occur in a variety of ways. And additional variety could be obtained by alternating pre-marriage and post-marriage stories (although this appears not to have occurred to Conan Doyle until "The Speckled Band," the eighth story in *The Strand Magazine*).

Now, let us see how this worked in practice. I shall take as my sample the first 24 Holmes stories in *The Strand Magazine* (that is, up to the hiatus). Of these 24 stories, 12 were pre-marriage and 12 were post-

marriage. And in the 12 post-marriage stories, the two men link up in six different ways:

1. In one story (“Five Orange Pips”) Watson is staying at 221B for a few days while his wife visits a relative.

2. In four stories (“Scandal in Bohemia,” “Red-Headed League,” “Case of Identity” and “Blue Carbuncle”) Watson drops in on Holmes – just to see him, or to wish him the compliments of the season, or, in two of these stories, for no specified reason.

3. In two stories (“Engineer’s Thumb” and “Naval Treaty”) Watson goes to see Holmes about a specific case: in one, a patient comes to see Watson and, after taking care of him, Watson takes him to see Holmes, and in the other, Watson receives a letter from an old schoolmate who needs Holmes’s help.

4. In three stories (“Stock-Broker’s Clerk,” “Crooked Man” and “Final Problem”) Holmes drops in on Watson and asks him to accompany him.

5. In one story (“Boscombe Valley Mystery”) Holmes summons Watson by telegram.

6. And in one story (“Twisted Lip”) Watson runs into Holmes by chance (in this story, in an opium den).

So Watson’s marriage enabled Conan Doyle to work a bit more variety into the Holmes stories. But is that why he married Watson off? Or did he just think that *The Sign of Four* needed a romantic subplot?

#### Notes

1. Redmond, Christopher, *Sherlock Holmes Handbook*, 2nd ed., Toronto, Dundurn Press, 2009, p.15.

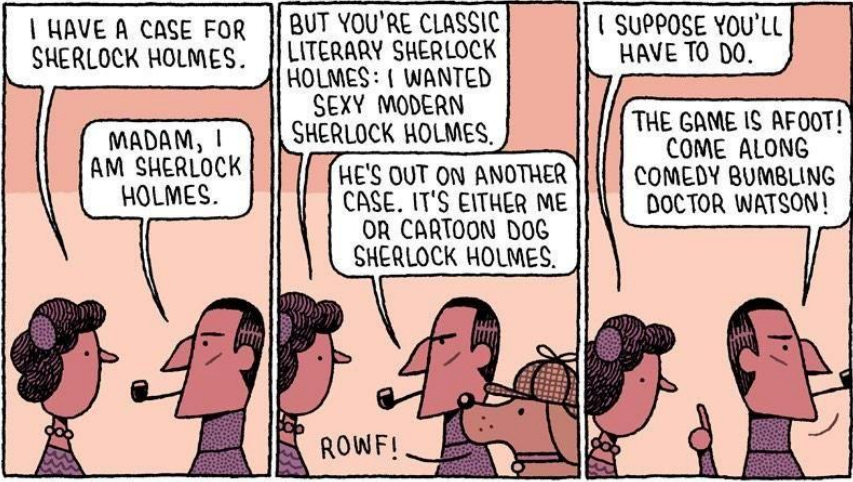
2. Cawthorne, Nigel, *A Brief History of Sherlock Holmes*, London, Robinson, 2011, p.17.

3. Lellenberg J., Stashower D., and Foley C., *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, New York, Penguin Press, 2007, p.514.

4. *Ibid.*, p.515.

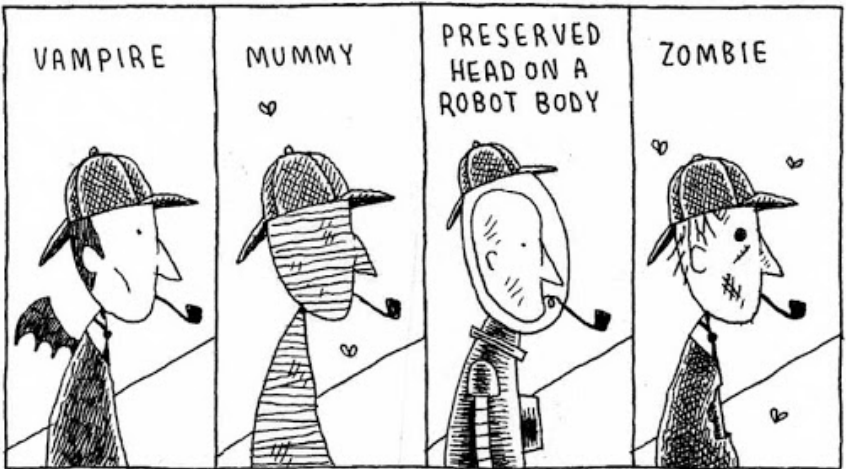


221B BAKER STREET...



TOM GAULD

FOUR MORE REINCARNATIONS FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES.



TOM GAULD

Tom Gauld is a Scottish cartoonist and illustrator living in London. His work can be found regularly in *The New Yorker* (including cover art), *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *New Scientist*.

Tom Gauld's website is: <http://www.tomgauld.com>

# *There was certainly an element of comedy*

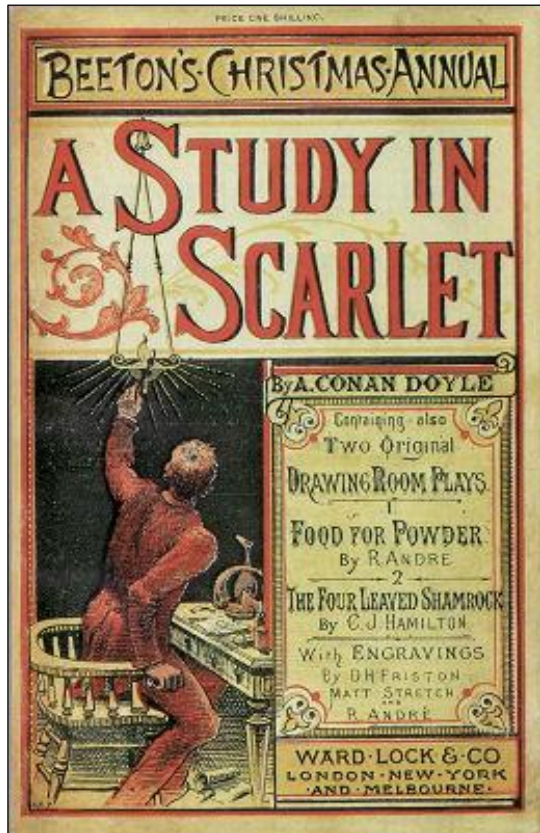
By Christopher Redmond

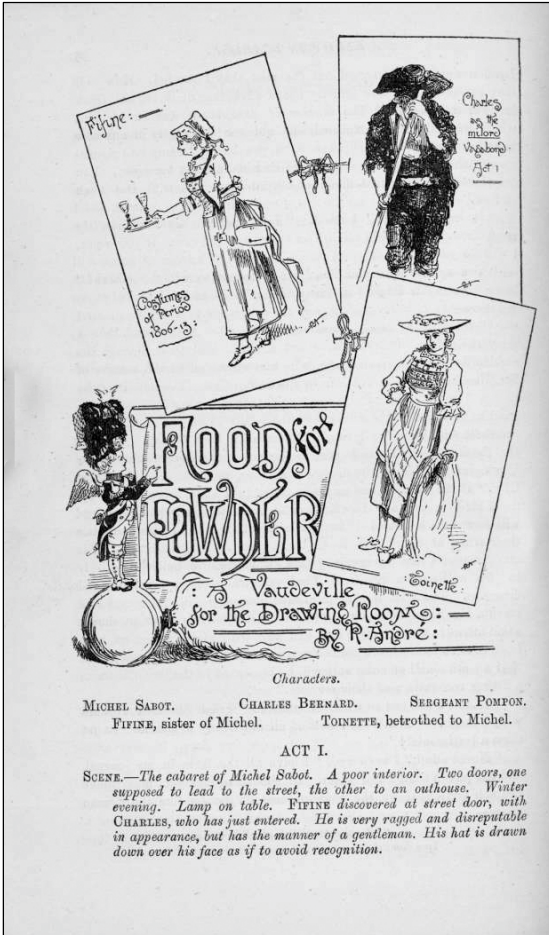
Christopher Redmond is a former editor of Canadian Holmes. Chris has held many positions with *The Bootmakers*, won more awards than can be listed and written, edited and compiled a shelf full of Sherlockian books.

Can you name two literary works that never mention Sherlock Holmes but are coveted by Sherlockian collectors everywhere? The answer: *Food for Powder* and *The Four Leaved Shamrock*, two “drawing room plays” that appeared along with *A Study in Scarlet* in the 1887 *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* that first drew Holmes to the world’s attention.

Although few collectors have an original *Beeton’s*, there are several facsimile editions including one published in 2018 by Life Is Amazing, so the texts of the plays are not hard to come by. (One of them, *Food for Powder*, is available for Kindle.) But I wonder how many Sherlockians, among those who have the two play texts within arm’s reach, have ever read them. And I would wager that nobody has ever seen one of them produced, or even read aloud in any drawing room.

Would these plays be of any interest whatever to a Sherlockian aud-





ience? *Food for Powder* is a light comedy operetta set in France in the Napoleonic era and centres on a young man whose sister and fiancée don't want him to go off and fight in the Emperor's wars. (Spoiler: he goes anyway and comes home safely.) Comedy with a Napoleonic background was a familiar genre to Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of the Brigadier Gerard stories.

ACD was the author also of the one-act play *Waterloo*, which draws on the Napoleonic wars not for humour but for tear-jerking melodrama. To readers today it seems hard to over-estimate how fascinated a late Victorian audience was with the wars that

had taken place more than 70 years earlier — how possible it was that “a dangerous homicidal lunatic, with Napoleonic delusions,” as Holmes puts it in “The Six Napoleons,” could exist in London.

According to *Beeton's*, *Food for Powder* is the work of “R. André.” Apparently, the only researcher who has been able to identify André is Michael Sims, who gives him a paragraph in his 2017 book *Arthur and Sherlock: Conan Doyle and the Creation of Holmes*. Sims reports that André was actually William Roger Snow (1834-1907), who was both a respected artist and a prolific writer. As Sims tells it, “His indiscretions with an Irish actress had wrecked both his military career and his marriage, resulting in the need to write for money under pen names unknown to both the military and his wife.” He was “Clifford Merton” until his wife briefly caught up with him; thereafter he was Richard André.

As an artist, André (or Snow) was distinguished enough to be named to the Royal Academy. A web search today will turn up some references to auction sales of his works, and reproductions of many of his illustrations, mostly for children's books. Some of the drawings he did for volumes of fairy tales are reminiscent of the fairy paintings done by Arthur Conan Doyle's father, Charles Doyle. Both artists were represented in the 2016 exhibition "Once Upon a Time: Fairy Tales from the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books" presented by the Toronto Public Library.

As for André's written works, the one most accessible today, apart from *Food for Powder*, is *The King's Bell Tower: A Romance of the Olden Time*, first published in 1888 and recently republished by Amazon with the assurance that it is "culturally important... part of the knowledge base of civilization as we know it." Comic operettas like "Food for Powder" make up a significant part of his *oeuvre*, along with children's books, as well as tracts for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Online research about long-ago authors has its limitations, but I am fairly sure our André is not the same person whose manual about waste management technology was recently published by the state of Minnesota. I am on the fence about a volume of history titled *Bullets and Steel: The Fight for the Great Kanawha Valley 1861-1865* and credited to Richard Andre, Stan Cohen and William D. Wintz.

There could have been some Bootmakers in attendance on November 2, 1989, when Thomas E. Blom gave a lecture for the Toronto Public Library's Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books. Under the title *The Secret Lives of Richard André*, the lecture text was published by TPL the following year.

The second "drawing room play" in the *Beeton's* volume, *The Four Leaved Shamrock*, is credited to C. J. Hamilton. The initials stand for Catherine Jane, again according to Michael Sims in *Arthur and Sherlock*, who says Hamilton (1841-1935) had published several novels and was later to be the author of a series, *Women Writers: Their Works and Ways*.

*The Four Leaved Shamrock* is a three-act work of broad comedy (one might even say slapstick) where the chief joke is the thick accent and exaggerated gestures of stereotyped Irishmen and women, and the plot is full of melodramatic cliché, with the rapacious landlord, the disguised suitor and the domestic servant who is shrewder than she looks, Molly McDonnell.

"The Theological Survey was here once," says Molly. "They came to look after the milliners. I seen them myself, and they with little hammers in their hands, chipping off bits of stone." Miss Tetbury Tettleton, who has already observed of Molly that "this old person is really charming; she



"THERE'S A FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK IN THAT RING."

## THE FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK.

A Drawing-room Comedietta in Three Acts.

May also be acted as a Charade to the word "STOPPAGE."

By C. J. HAMILTON, Author of "Marriage Bonds," "True to the Core,"  
"Mr. Bartram's Daughter," etc.

### *Dramatis Personae.*

MR. O'GORMAN, of Gormansboro', an Irish Landlord in very reduced circumstances.

LORD KILGAVAN, *alias* JOSEPH HOPKINS.

MRS. O'GORMAN.

ROSE O'GORMAN.

MISS TETBURY TATTLETON, a Literary Lady on a tricycle tour.

MOLLY McDONNELL, an Old Servant.

*Costumes.*—Mr. O'Gorman should have, if possible, an old faded hunting coat. Molly McDonnell, a frilled white cap tied under her chin, a woollen cross-over, a stuff gown, and a large apron. Miss Tetbury Tattleton, a deer-stalker cap and a thick serge tricycle costume with red handkerchief tucked into the front.

would make a capital genre study," is ready to interpret: "Geological Survey, you mean, come to look after the minerals."

Miss Tetbury Tattleton, Honorary Member of the Antiquarian Society, arrives on a bicycle, toting her notebook and pencil — women on bicycles, free from ordinary social convention, were clearly comic figures in 1887, not taken for granted as they would be in 1903 when Conan Doyle wrote "The Solitary Cyclist." She is more reminiscent of Mrs. Westmacott in Conan Doyle's *Beyond the City*, published in 1892.

There is nothing much that's Sherlockian in *The Four Leaved Shamrock*, although a key point in the

plot is the discovery of "a dirty, dusty, rusty old tin box" containing the lost title-deeds. Surely Dr. Watson's tin box, tucked into the vaults of Cox and Co. at Charing Cross, was never in such condition? Nor did it have to be found through an energetic project of pulling up floorboards, reminiscent of Joseph Harrison in "The Naval Treaty."

But there's one thing more. At the beginning of the play, where its author lists the *Dramatis Personae*, there are a few notes about costuming. Miss Tetbury Tattleton, who wears "a thick serge tricycle costume with red handkerchief tucked in the front," is also intended to appear wearing, of all things, "a deerstalker cap." One can only imagine that the headgear was meant to have comic effect, and one can only marvel at the realization that here Sherlock Holmes comes within 20 pages of the hat that would come to define him, years before the efforts of any illustrator or actor to make the deerstalker recognizable.

Performing one of these drawing-room plays might be an amusing activity for a Sherlockian society, possibly with the cast affecting



Victorian clothes and manners. Either would be a fairly ambitious production, though. *Food for Powder* has a cast of only five but it runs to two acts and includes a dozen songs to melodies from Gilbert and Sullivan, *Coming Through the Rye*, *Come Landlord Fill the Flowing Bowl*, and others less well known in the present century. *The Four Leaved Shamrock* requires six actors and a fair amount of disguising and unveiling, not to mention the Irish accents.

There are quite a number of drawing-rooms in the Sherlockian tales, including the one where Watson woos Mary Morstan, and the one where Isadora Klein receives Holmes and Watson in “The Three Gables”: “an Arabian Nights drawing-room, vast and wonderful, in a half gloom, picked out with an occasional pink electric light.” It would take a stage as dramatic as that, at the very least, to present either of the drawing-room plays from *Beeton*’s. Yet I heartily wish that some society would try it someday.



## *Write for Canadian Holmes*

Whether you write with an old-fashioned pen like this fellow or the latest laptop, we are looking for you. All types of articles, toasts, thoughts, or reviews are welcome. It is up to you to make *Canadian Holmes* the stand-out journal it can be. Contact the Bootprint, Mark Alberstat, today with your thoughts.

[markalberstat@gmail.com](mailto:markalberstat@gmail.com)

# *The real killer of Charles Augustus Milverton*

*By Richard Krisciunas*

*Richard Krisciunas practiced criminal law for 45 years. He retired as Chief of the Trial Division with the Prosecutor's Office in Detroit, Michigan and was an adjunct Trial Practice professor at Detroit Mercy School of Law for 37 years.*

**S**herlock Holmes killed Charles Augustus Milverton. Dr. John Watson was his accomplice and he wrote the story to cover up Milverton's murder. Watson's version of the events at Appledore Towers is improbable, implausible and impossible. As Holmes stated on many occasions, "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." (1) "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" is a cover-up perpetrated by Watson to deflect attention from Holmes and himself but the truth can be deduced through reason, logic and common sense. Let's examine the evidence.

Watson wrote that he and Holmes broke into Milverton's house and were hiding behind a curtain in his study when a lady entered the room shortly after midnight and fired six shots into the blackmailer's body before disappearing into the night. Watson's version makes absolutely no sense for several reasons. How did the killer get there? Why wasn't a servant around to greet and escort her to the study? Why would Milverton leave the entry doors unlocked to a stranger at midnight? How would the maid, whom Milverton was waiting for, know how to manoeuvre her way through the house, in the dark, to the study where Milverton waited? How did the lady elude the servants who responded to gunshots in the study? Why did Watson neglect to mention that he and Holmes were armed when they broke into Milverton's safe? Why wouldn't Holmes help Scotland Yard solve the murder case when he had helped solve 50 other murder cases? There are too many holes in Watson's story for it to be true.

Holmes, clearly, disliked Milverton. Holmes said, "I've had to do with fifty murderers in my career, but the worst of them never gave me the repulsion which I have for this fellow." Holmes foreshadowed Milverton's killing before leaving for Appledore Towers: "Between ourselves, Watson, it's a sporting duel between this fellow Milverton and me. He had, as you saw, the best of the first exchanges, but my self-respect and my reputation are concerned to fight it to a finish."

Watson's story leaves too many questions unanswered. Milverton's alleged killer was the former wife of "a great nobleman and statesman." How did she travel to Appledore Towers after midnight? Did she walk miles from her stately home? Did she arrive by carriage? Did she take a hansom or ride a horse? How did she arrive after midnight without being detected by Milverton's staff? Appledore Towers was located out in the country in Hampstead, more than three kilometres from 221B. (2) The estate was large, with an entry gate.

It is reasonable to conclude that the alleged meeting between Milverton and the maid to Countess d'Albert was scheduled for midnight. Holmes and Watson planned to ride a hansom to Church Row after 11 p.m. and to be "at work before midnight." (3) After breaking into Milverton's house, Holmes worked on the safe for 30 minutes before opening it. (4) When the woman arrived, Milverton allegedly said, curtly, "you are nearly half an hour late." This puts the time at 12:20 a.m. or later.

According to Watson, the house was dark when they approached and Milverton was supposed to be asleep. Agatha told Holmes that Milverton "retires punctually at ten-thirty." As he approached the house, Holmes said, "You see, there is not a glimmer of light in any of the windows, and everything is working splendidly." It appears that Milverton was meeting the maid for the first time.

Watson wants us to believe that Milverton had no one to greet and escort the maid to his study. Milverton was rich and had several servants. The staff included Agatha, the housemaid; an undergardener, who grabbed Watson's ankle as he jumped over the garden wall; a gardener; a secretary and, presumably, a cook and other servants. Watson wrote, "Meanwhile it had struck me that it would be wise to secure our retreat through the outer



*Two artists impression of the same scene. The left is from Collier's and is by Frederick Dorr Steele while the other one from The Strand is by Sidney Paget*



door, so I examined it. To my amazement, it was neither locked nor bolted.” Why would Milverton, a man who had reason to be concerned for his safety, leave his house unlocked to a stranger at midnight?

Furthermore, how did the regal lady who killed Milverton convince him to meet at midnight? Milverton would have recognized her if *she* had tried to schedule the appointment. The killer had to convince someone else to contact Milverton and pretend to be either Countess d’Albert’s maid or a valet who told Milverton that the countess’s maid had damaging letters for sale. This person would have had to ask Milverton to set up a midnight meeting. If such a go-between existed and the regal lady planned to kill Milverton, what would prevent that person from, subsequently, blackmailing the regal lady? Again, Watson’s story doesn’t make sense.

The shooting woke up the servants, who responded promptly. Watson wrote, “At the same instant we heard voices in the house and the sound of hurrying feet. The revolver shots had roused the household ... The front door was open, and figures were rushing down the drive.” How did the mysterious lady escape undetected by Milverton’s many servants, who were running in the direction of the gunshots in the study?

After the woman ground her heel into Milverton’s face, Watson wrote: “I heard a sharp rustle, the night air blew into the heated room, and the avenger was gone.” Did she escape through the door leading to the veranda and garden? Holmes and Watson later fled through the same door. But where would she have had to go? For a clue, let’s look at the route Holmes and Watson took.

“This way, Watson,” said he, “we can scale the garden wall in this direction.” ...he threaded his way swiftly among a plantation of small trees...it was a six-foot wall which barred our path, but he sprang to the top and over. As I did the same ... and scrambled over a grass-strewn coping. I fell upon my face among some bushes.”

So do you really think the regal lady, wearing a dress, ran into an enclosed garden and was then able to hop a six-foot fence? No one heard or saw a hansom, a carriage or a horse making a getaway *because there was no woman*. When Lestrade interviewed the servant staff, no one mentioned a midnight appointment and *no one had seen a woman*.

The biggest flaw in Watson’s story can be found in their preparation for the burglary that night. Remember how Holmes tried to recover the papers when Milverton came to 221B? To protect himself, Milverton revealed that he had a pistol. “I assure you that *I am armed to the teeth*, and *I am perfectly prepared to use my weapons*.” (5) This is critical because the items Holmes and Watson took to Appledore Towers don’t make any sense. Like “the curious incident of the dog in the night-time,” where “the

dog did nothing in the night-time,” and Holmes said, “That was the curious incident.” (6)

Isn't it curious that Watson makes no mention that either he or Holmes armed themselves before going to Appledore Towers? Carefully examine how Watson described their preparation before going to commit a nighttime burglary. Watson wrote, Holmes:

“...took a neat little leather case out of a drawer, and opening it he exhibited a number of shining instruments.” “This is a first-class, up-to-date burgling kit, with nickel-plated jemmy, diamond-tipped glass-cutter, adaptable keys, and every modern improvement which the march of civilization demands. Here, too, is my dark lantern. Everything is in order. Have you a pair of silent shoes?”

“I have rubber-soled tennis shoes.”

“Excellent! And a mask?”

“I can make a couple out of black silk.”

Isn't it curious that they took no weapons? Watson wants you to believe that he and Holmes went unarmed to the home of a man “armed to the teeth,” who is “one of the most dangerous men in London.” Why would Holmes and Watson place themselves in deadly danger and risk being caught unarmed, especially since both owned pistols and their *modus operandi*, when going into dangerous situations, was always to bring their pistols? Let's look at the cases.

In “The Greek Interpreter,” Holmes “slipped his revolver into his pocket.” “Yes,” said he in answer to my glance, “I should say, from what we have heard, that we are dealing with a particularly dangerous gang.” In *The Sign of Four*, when Holmes and Watson went after Jonathan Small, Holmes said, “Have you a pistol Watson?” “I have my old service-revolver in my desk.” “You had best take it, then. It is well to be prepared.” In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, when Holmes, Watson and Lestrade went to look for the escaped murderer Selden, “a danger to the community, an unmitigated scoundrel,” Holmes said to Watson, “Then get your revolver and put on your boots.” “Are you armed, Lestrade?” When the detective said he was, Holmes replied, “Good! My friend and I are also ready for emergencies.”

In “The Red Headed League,” when Holmes and Watson went to prevent a bank robbery, Holmes said, “A considerable crime is in contemplation. And, I say, Doctor, there may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket.” In “The Three Garridebs,” Watson and Holmes armed themselves before searching for “Killer” Evans. “Very dangerous man, usually carries arms and is prepared to use them.” Holmes “took a revolver from the drawer and handed it to me,” and

said, “I have my old favourite with me. If our Wild West friend tries to live up to his nickname, we must be ready for him.”

Yet, when Holmes and Watson planned to commit a midnight burglary at the house of “one of the most dangerous men in London,” they went unarmed? Watson the soldier and Holmes, who routinely took target practice in Mrs. Hudson’s house, didn’t take a weapon this time? No way. What makes more sense is that Holmes and Watson were “prepared,” “ready for emergencies” and, as to Milverton, they were “ready for him.” Watson couldn’t admit that they took pistols to Appledore Towers because he didn’t want to reveal that when Milverton caught them in the act, Holmes shot Milverton.



*Illustration of Holmes and Watson behind a curtain looking upon Milverton. Image is by Stanley E. Armstrong in the April 16, 1905 San Francisco Call.*

What else doesn’t make sense? Was there really a maid named Agatha? Inspector Lestrade never mentioned interviewing her. Watson claimed, after Milverton left 221B, that Holmes, in half an hour, came up with a plan to befriend and court Milverton’s housemaid so he could learn where Milverton kept the incriminating letters. (7) This is ridiculous and implausible. Holmes had never been to Appledore Towers. If he had, he would have known the layout. Therefore, Holmes had no prior information about Milverton’s estate or his staff, yet, he decided to disguise himself as a plumber prior to leaving for Hampstead with hopes of befriendng a housemaid. Seriously?

What makes more sense?

Holmes's plan to convince Milverton to return Lady Blackwell's letters didn't work so plan B to recover the letters had to be a late-night break in. Holmes, probably, went to Hampstead and sat outside the house at night for a week and saw a pattern of when the house lights went off and the house went dark. (8) That's why he returned with Watson to break-in around midnight.

Why did Milverton have to be killed? The answer is simple. Holmes and Watson were committing a burglary. Burglary, a breaking and entering in the nighttime, was punishable by life in prison. Milverton caught Holmes and Watson in the act after they broke in and opened his safe. He caught them in the commission of a felony that would send both to prison. If Milverton reported the burglary to Scotland Yard, Holmes and Watson would have no defence at trial. Holmes shot Milverton to avoid being convicted of burglary. Holmes and Watson had to kill Milverton to keep their freedom. Both are guilty of murder no matter who pulled the trigger.

Curiously, Holmes had always helped Scotland Yard solve homicide cases. Yet, when Inspector Lestrade appeared at 221B and asked Holmes to help solve the Milverton murder, Holmes refused, responding, "My sympathies are with the criminals rather than with the victim, and I will not handle this case." Holmes lied to Lestrade to protect himself and Watson.

Holmes and Watson couldn't return to Appledore Towers for fear of being recognized by Milverton's servants and Agatha (if she really existed). If any of the servants saw Holmes and Watson and identified them, their goose would be cooked and they would both be off to prison for life. Holmes had a premonition that getting caught would send them both to prison when he told Watson, "We have shared this same room for some years, and it would be amusing if we ended by sharing the same cell."

Years passed but Scotland Yard's investigation into Milverton's death was never closed. Perhaps Holmes heard from his Irregulars that the police were getting closer to solving the crime. That's when Watson decided to write his story and came up with an alternative version of how Milverton was killed to plant a seed in the minds of future jurors. If the police investigation placed Holmes and Watson at the scene of the murder, they could both claim that it was a nobleman's wife who actually did the deed.

Another reason to doubt the credibility of the story is the way Holmes treated "Agatha." He wooed her, proposed to her and then, acting totally out of character, dumped her with total disregard for her feelings. In "The Adventure of the Dying Detective," Watson said Holmes "had a remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women. He

disliked and distrusted the sex, but he was always a chivalrous opponent.” Nicholas Utechin criticized Holmes’s conduct in the Milverton story: “Sherlock Holmes was certainly no gentleman on this occasion.” “With brutal disregard for the girl’s feelings, ...Holmes exploited her disgracefully.” (9) There is no way that Holmes could ever have treated a woman this callously. Sherlock Holmes may have been a murderer but there is no way he would have been a cad.

## Notes

(1) Sherlock Holmes in “The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans,” “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier”

(2) After Holmes and Watson escaped from Appledore Towers, Watson claimed “together we dashed away across the huge expanse of Hampstead Heath. We had run two miles, I suppose, before Holmes at last halted and listened intently.”

(3) “At eleven we shall drive as far as Church Row. It is a quarter of an hour’s walk from there to Appledore Towers. We shall be at work before midnight.”

(4) “For half an hour, Holmes worked with concentrated energy, laying down one tool, picking up another, handling each with the strength and delicacy of the trained mechanic.”

(5) “Mr. Holmes, Mr. Holmes,” he said, turning the front of his coat and exhibiting the butt of a large revolver, which projected from the inside pocket. “I have been expecting you to do something original. This has been done so often, and what good has ever come from it? I assure you that I am armed to the teeth, and I am perfectly prepared to use my weapons, knowing that the law will support me.”

(6) “The Adventure of Silver Blaze”

(7) “For half an hour he was silent and still. Then, with the gesture of a man who has taken his decision, he sprang to his feet and passed into his bedroom. A little later a rakish young workman, with a goatee beard and a swagger, lit his clay pipe at the lamp before descending into the street. “I’ll be back some time, Watson,” said he, and vanished into the night.”

(8) “For some days Holmes came and went at all hours in this attire, but beyond a remark that his time was spent at Hampstead, and that it was not wasted, I knew nothing of what he was doing.” Holmes met Milverton on the 4th. The wedding was on the 18th, a fortnight away (two weeks). Milverton said there would be no wedding and he would send the letters to the earl if he wasn’t paid by the 14th. He had 10 days to determine Milverton’s nightly habits.

(9) Utechin, Nicholas, “Great Heavens, Is It You?”: Women in “Charles Augustus Milverton,” *BSJ* Vol. 61-4 (2011), pp.25-28.

# *The Empty House: Grant Allen and a near-death experience*

“Well, sir, if it isn’t too great a liberty, I am a neighbour of yours.”  
“The Adventure of the Empty House” (1)

*By Daniel L. Friedman, M.D. and Eugene B. Friedman M.D.*

*Dan and Gene Friedman are practising pediatricians and the authors of The Strange Case of Dr. Doyle: A Journey into Madness and Mayhem.*

Arthur Conan Doyle’s Holmes stories turned him into an international sensation, but by 1893, Conan Doyle began to resent the character who had brought him such acclaim. He much preferred his adoring public look on him as a scholarly writer of great significance. And so, Conan Doyle figured out how to rectify the situation to his liking. He “killed Holmes.” (2) Now he was free to go on the lecture circuit and write plays, semi-autobiographies, historical novels, short stories and editorials. Even so, he managed to remain in the limelight, because his fanbase held him in such high esteem. But his superstar status didn’t prevent him from helping out a friend in need. That friend was his neighbour and fellow novelist Grant Allen.

Charles Grant Blairfindie Allen, born near Kingston, Ontario, emigrated to England in his early teens, completing his formal education at Oxford’s Merton College. After graduating in 1870, he was appointed professor at Brighton College, and three years later was sent to Queen’s College in Jamaica. (3) In 1876, he abandoned teaching for writing, and soon became the Isaac



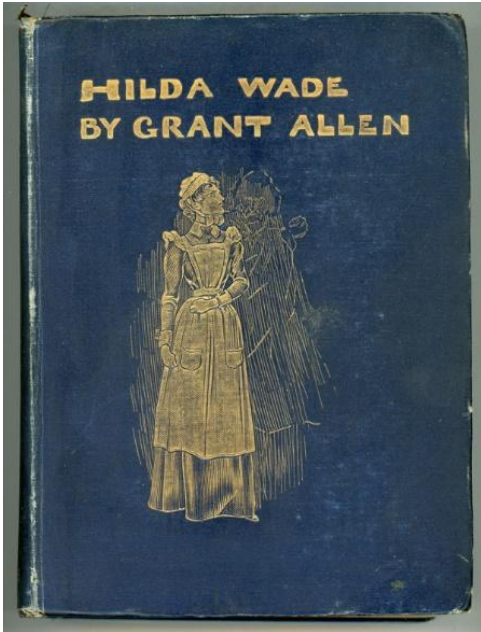
Asimov of his generation. He wrote in almost every literary genre, including natural history, evolution, science fiction, sociology, psychiatry, religion, travel, theology, mystery, fiction, science, botany and biographies.

Conan Doyle first met Allen in 1883 at publisher Smith, Elder & Co's full-dress dinner party, held at Greenwich's Ship Tavern. Their introduction to each other must have been brief, for in a letter to his mother, Conan Doyle stated that he had met "Allen Grant the botanist."<sup>(2)</sup> A dozen years later, Allen, who knew that Conan Doyle's wife Touie had tuberculosis, strongly suggested that he relocate to Hindhead, boasting that the district's soil and air quality had 'cured' him of his consumption. <sup>(4)</sup> Conan Doyle, who was always searching for the ideal climate for his wife, immediately purchased a plot of land just down the hill from Allen's home. This made the two great authors neighbours. They cemented their friendship by going on weekly bicycle excursions through the Surrey countryside, spending the time in long conversations on a wide variety of topics. At the same time, each of them was busy submitting new works to their shared publisher, George Newnes's *The Strand Magazine*.

But in 1899, just two chapters shy of completing his detective story *Hilda Wade*, Allen became deathly ill. He asked Conan Doyle, as a favour, to complete this groundbreaking work for him. Perhaps feeling that he owed Allen a debt of gratitude. <sup>(5)</sup> Conan Doyle got right to it. He worked alongside Allen, and sometimes independently, on *The Episode of the*

*Officer who Spoke Perfectly* and *The Episode of the Dead Man who Spoke*. <sup>(6)</sup> On October 25, 1899, Allen succumbed to liver cancer.

It turns out *Hilda Wade* was not Conan Doyle's final gesture of respect to one of his generation's most prolific and beloved writers. Four years later, Conan Doyle decided to resurrect Holmes in "The Empty House," a 'cliffhanger' which revealed how Holmes survived his supposed end at the Reichenbach Falls. The tale describes Holmes's narrow escape of ambush by Professor Moriarty and his minions. But



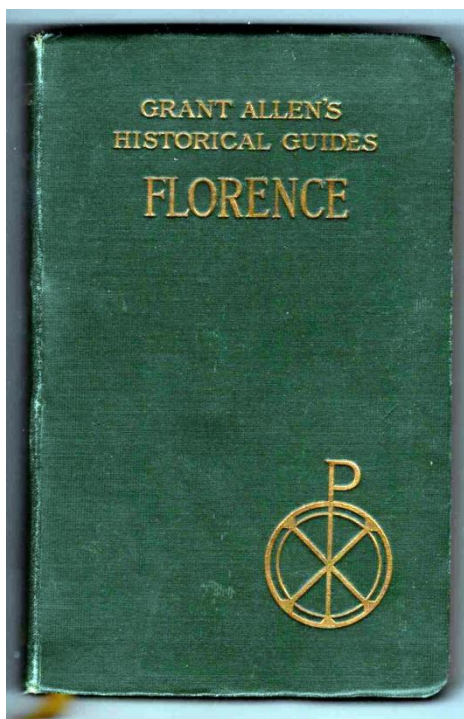
what Conan Doyle failed to disclose to his readers is that he also scattered hidden gems throughout the tale, each related in some fashion to Allen.

*The Empty House* opens with Watson briefing us about a decade-old case involving “the murder of the Honourable Ronald Adair under the most unusual and inexplicable circumstances.” At the time of his death, Ronald Adair was sharing a home with his mother and his sister Hilda. The use of the name Hilda would have immediately struck a chord with any Allen fan who had read the novel Conan Doyle had helped Allen to complete – the aforementioned *Hilda Wade*. It has to be noted that Conan Doyle did use the name Hilda at least twice in fiction before Allen’s death, once in 1891 in “The Colonel’s Choice” and again in 1892 in “A Question of Diplomacy.” The Adairs were residing at 427 Park Lane in the posh London district of Kensington. In Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventure* (which also opens in Kensington), we learn about the *Park Lane Murders*, and the number 427 manages to pop up as the address of Mr. Nettlecraft’s Staples Inn. (7) The choice of the name Ronald is also significant, as it is the first name of a principal character in *Philistia*, Grant Allen’s first novel. (8) Ronald le Breton’s older brother Ernest was *engaged* to “Miss Edith” Oswald. In “The Empty House,” Ronald Adair is *engaged* to “Miss Edith” Woodley. And Ronald Adair is the son of the Earl of Maynooth. Interestingly, Maynooth is an area in Ontario, the province of Grant Allen’s birth. And like Allen, Ronald Adair was a second-born child.

In “The Empty House,” Watson walks along the streets of Kensington and “accidentally” collides with a book-carrying “elderly deformed man.” This “bibliophile” becomes irate when his precious books are knocked from his hands and onto the ground. Among the fallen books are *The Origin of Tree Worship* (9) and *Catullus* (10). Allen wrote an essay in 1892 titled “The Attis of Catullus, translated into English Verse with Dissertations on the Myth of Attis, on the Origin of Tree-worship, and on the Galliambic Metre.” Another of the ‘old man’s’ fallen books was *British Birds*, a possible subtle tribute to Allen’s close friends Alice and George Bird. (11) And the fourth, the *Holy Wars*, is another possible unstated allusion to Allen’s first novel, *Philistia*. (12) *Philistia* (today a region in modern-day Israel and Egypt) was hotly contested during the medieval crusades, or, as most historians also call them, the Holy Wars.

It is then revealed that the elderly gentleman is Holmes in disguise. Once Watson recovers from his initial shock at this discovery, Holmes explains how he managed to escape death. This scenario fits perfectly into the title of one of the *Hilda Wade* chapters Conan Doyle composed for Allen – “The Episode of the Dead Man Who Spoke.” Holmes first reveals to Watson that a week after his escape from Moriarty’s henchmen at the Reichenbach Falls, he was able to make his way to Florence. This choice





of Florence as a starting point city is not accidental. It was Grant Allen who put together *A Historical Guide to Florence* for American tourists. (13) Holmes then tells Watson about his strange journey to distant Tibet, where he spent “some days with the head Llama.” Again, this is a perfect tie-in to Conan Doyle’s contributions to Grant Allen’s *Hilda Wade*. Chapter 11 (Conan Doyle’s first at the helm) begins where Allen’s Chapter 10 left off – Hilda Wade and Professor Sebastian being granted an audience with the “head of all Lamas” in exotic Tibet. Perhaps Holmes, Wade and Sebastian gathered round the Dalai Lama at the very same moment.

Holmes’s tours of Europe and Asia are a secret tip of the hat to Grant Allen, who was declared “an inquisitive explorer of continental cities” by *Review of Reviews* – Volume 16 (14). Holmes’s odyssey ends in southern France’s Montpellier, the city where Grant Allen spent his winters when his writings furnished him with sufficient funds to do so. Allen highlights Montpellier’s “beautiful weather” in his travel guide to *The Mediterranean* (15) while in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, he speaks of the holy man of St. Roch of Montpellier, who issued a firm warning to his countrymen that poor sanitary conditions promote the spread of the plague. (16)

We are also told in “The Empty House” that Holmes travelled to Norway, where he transformed himself into an explorer named Sigerson. An actual Dr. Sigerson had written favourably about Grant Allen’s *The British Barbarians: A Hill-top Novel*, Hilltop being the name of Allen’s home. (17) In his *Contemporary Portraits* (1923), author Frank Harris describes Allen as a “pacifist” and “chemist,” both terms alluded to during Holmes’s sojourn to the pacifistic monasteries of Tibet and the chemical laboratories of France. (18)

Particularly of interest is the appellation Conan Doyle gave to the villain in “The Empty House” – Colonel Sebastian Moran. The Christian name Sebastian matches the surname of Grant Allen’s fictional Professor Arthur

Sebastian. The Colonel and the Professor, both of them Oxonians, share remarkably similar physical and intellectual characteristics. Each is elderly, brilliant and sports a “grizzled” mustache.

In Allen’s *Miss Cayley’s Adventures*, the title character is declared a shikari (a word used in India to describe hunters or trackers), after her rifle accidentally blasts a tiger right between the eyes. Colonel Moran is likewise described by Holmes as being a shikari – a direct reference to the tiger-hunting skills the Colonel displayed during his time in India. In *Hilda Wade*, we learn that Professor Sebastian spent “three years in Africa” and in “The Empty House,” Holmes tells us that Colonel Sebastian authored *Three Months in the Jungle*.

Holmes then berates Watson, telling him how ineffective his search efforts for him had been after his dealings with Professor Moriarty. He derides Watson with these cutting words: “There I was stretched when you, my dear Watson, and all your following were investigating in the most sympathetic and inefficient manner the circumstances of my death” and concludes his diatribe with, “At last, when you had all formed your inevitable and totally erroneous conclusions, you departed for the hotel and I was left alone.” This statement makes it quite clear that Holmes perceives Watson as a rank amateur – or an “unprofessional detective,” which matches up with Grant Allen’s title *The Unprofessional Detective*. (19)

On the final pages of “The Empty House,” Holmes waxes poetic about evolution and natural selection. He rambles, “There are some trees, Watson, which grow to a certain height and then suddenly develop some unsightly eccentricity. You will see it often in humans. I have a theory that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his pedigree. The person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family.” This statement, which students of biology learn as “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny,” might well have been uttered by Grant Allen, a noted naturalist and evolutionist in his own right, as well as the biographer of Charles Darwin and the close friend of Herbert Spencer (the coiner of the phrase “Survival of the Fittest”) (20).

### ***Leaving Behind a Legacy***

Conan Doyle’s skills at hiding clues within the fabric of his works are most evident within “The Empty House.” Obviously, Grant Allen was much more to Conan Doyle than just a neighbour. He was a novelist that Conan Doyle held in the greatest admiration. While Conan Doyle’s Holmes would go on to become a symbol of the detective novel, so, too,

did Grant Allen's *Hilda Wade* help pave the way for generations of female detectives – among them, Agatha Christie's sophisticated Miss Marple, Edward Stratemeyer's juvenile whiz-kid Nancy Drew, Sue Grafton's alphabet-solving Kinsey Millhone, and Jeffery Deaver's street-smart police officer Amelia Sachs.

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# *Canadian Holmes On Screen:* *John Neville -* **A Study in Terror (1965)**

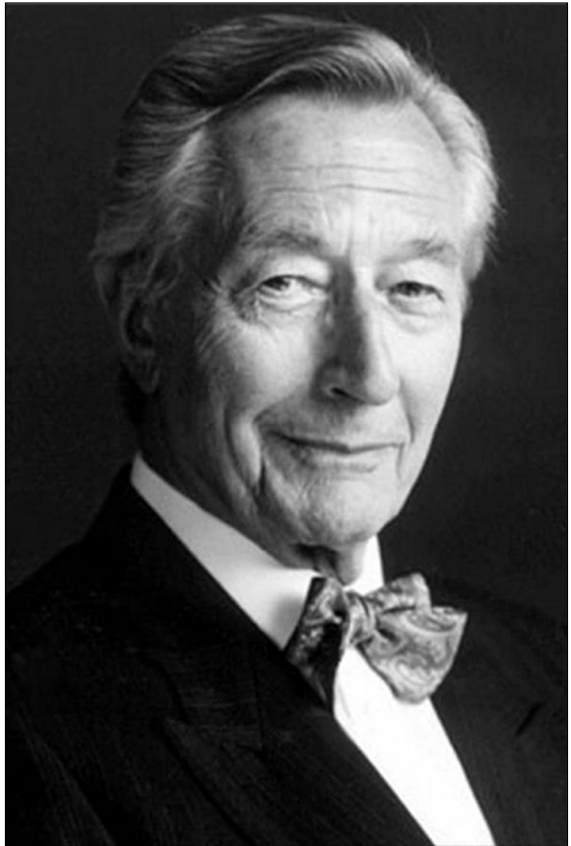
*By Charles Prepolec MBt, BSI*

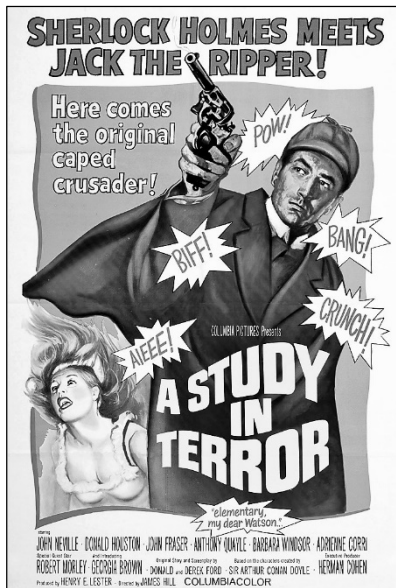
*Charles Prepolec, M.Bt., BSI (“The Man with the Twisted Lip”) is a Calgary AB Sherlockian, former mystery specialty bookshop owner, collector and freelance editor. His most recent fiction anthology is Gaslight Gothic: Strange Tales of Sherlock Holmes (2018 EDGE)*

**J**ohn Neville: British-born Canadian film and stage actor, as well as theatrical artistic director, who is best known for playing Lord Alfred Douglas to Robert Morley’s Oscar Wilde in *Oscar Wilde* (1960), Baron von Munchausen in Terry Gilliam’s *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) and a recurring role as the mysterious ‘Well-Man-icured Man’ on television’s *The X-Files* (1993-2018).

*The Canadian Connection:*

Born John Reginald Neville (May 2, 1925 – November 19, 2011) to working-class parents in London, he served in the Royal Navy in the Second World War, then trained as an actor at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, before





becoming a star of the stage, with classical roles at the Old Vic, and a stint as artistic director of the Nottingham Playhouse. In 1972, with his wife Caroline Hopper, and their six children, he moved to Canada, serving as Artistic Director of the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, AB from 1973-78, and becoming a Canadian citizen in that time. He next moved to Halifax, serving there as Artistic Director of the Neptune Theatre from 1978-83. In 1985 he took over as Artistic Director of the Stratford Festival and was so successful at eliminating the company's debt that his contract was extended to 1989. Theatrical acting or directing gigs continued with performances at

Ryerson University Theatre School, Toronto's Actors Repertory Company, duMaurier World Stage Festival, and Souleppper Theatre Company. He was appointed an OBE in 1965 and made a member of the Order of Canada in 2006. He died of Alzheimer's complications in Toronto in 2011.

*The Sherlock Holmes Connection:*

John Neville's brush with Sherlock Holmes goes deeper than most. In 1965 he was cast by director James Hill (*Born Free*) to star as Holmes in the Compton-Tekli/Sir Nigel Films (the latter being headed by Adrian Conan Doyle) production *A Study in Terror*, which sets



Holmes on the trail of Jack the Ripper. Clearly influenced by the Hammer Films sex and blood formula, it's a completely original, vaguely garish, Technicolor approach to the Ripper killings, notable for a cast that includes Robert Morley as a perfect Mycroft (the character's first big screen appearance), Frank Finlay as Lestrade (a role he repeats in *Murder*

by *Decree*), Anthony Quayle as Dr. Murray (also returns in *Murder by Decree* but as Sir Charles Warren), Barbara Windsor of *Carry On* fame as Annie Chapman, a young Judi Dench (Neville recommended her from his Old Vic days) and Donald Houston as a competent



Watson. It's a fine, underrated Sherlock Holmes film, with Neville a solid lead, so don't be thrown by the American marketing that riffed on the mid-sixties Batman craze with 'biff', 'pow', 'bang' and 'Here comes the original caped crusader' emblazoned on the poster. A tie-in novelization, by Ellery Queen, no less, was also issued by Lancer Books.

In 1975 Neville returned to the role of Sherlock Holmes but on stage, in the Royal Shakespeare Company revival of the Gillette play *Sherlock Holmes* at the Broadhurst Theater in New York. The play ran for 471 performances and opened November 6, 1974 with John Wood as Holmes. Neville took over the role of Holmes for a run from May 13 to August 18, 1975.



#### *The Curious Connections:*

Neville was originally up for the role of Holmes as a replacement for Douglas Wilmer in the 1960s BBC television series but turned it down, resulting in Peter Cushing taking it on in 1968. In 1970 Neville appeared as the

Duke of Wellington in the dreadful Sir Nigel Films production *The Adventures of Gerard*, alongside Peter McEnery as the titular Etienne Gerard and Eli Wallach as Napoleon. In 1971 Neville took on the role of R. Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke in *A Message from the Deep Sea*, the opening episode in the Thames Television series *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* (1971-73). Neville's final Sherlockian (and Canadian) connection was an appearance, as a Dr. O. Henry, in *The Case of the Celestial Signal*, a 1998 episode of the Canadian television series *The Adventures of Shirley Holmes*, the grand niece of Sherlock Holmes.

Next: Christopher Plummer – *Murder by Decree* (1979)

# *Conan Doyle and the anti-vaccination movement*

By Mark Alberstat

Mark Alberstat is co-editor of *Canadian Holmes* and has written extensively on Conan Doyle and sports. He is also co-editor of *Canada and Sherlock Holmes* from the BSI Press.

As Canadians across the country and others around the world line up for their COVID-19 shots, a small – but often vocal – group is decrying the imaginary evils of vaccination. Anti-vaxxers have been with us since the 19th century and in the late 1880s Conan Doyle weighed in.

In mid-July 1887, five months before *Beeton's Christmas Annual* would appear on newsstands unleashing Sherlock Holmes on the world, a young Dr. Conan Doyle wrote two letters to the editor. The first of his two letters appeared in *The Evening Mail* (Portsmouth) on July 15, 1887 and the second 12 days later in *The Hampshire County Times*. Both were in reply to an earlier anti-vaccination letter.



*Conan Doyle in 1887*

Unfortunately, neither of these newspapers are found in any online database so the exact text of the original letter is lost to history. Both of Conan Doyle's letters are responding to a Colonel Wintle. This was probably Lieutenant Colonel A. T. Wintle, R.A. who served with the Bhootan Expedition in 1865 (1) and was published in a journal titled *Vaccination Inquirer*.

Anti-vaxxers appeared shortly after the first vaccine appeared in 1796, when Edward Jenner showed that a vaccine derived from cowpox would prevent the inoculant from developing smallpox. Jenner used an eight-year-old boy, James Phipps, as

his first human vaccine recipient in an experiment that wouldn't pass an ethics board today. However, the vaccine worked saving millions of lives. Great Britain introduced compulsory vaccination against smallpox in 1853 for infants under three months and 14 years later to all children under 14.

Wintle's first letter, that we are aware of, objects to vaccines upon two points, writes Conan Doyle: "its immorality and its inefficiency or positive harmfulness." Conan Doyle counters that anyone with these thoughts wants to "revert to the condition of things which existed in the dark ages before the dawn of medical science." (2)

The morality argument is a religious one. People who object to vaccinations on this ground believe diseases, like smallpox, have been sent by God and it is immoral for us to step in and prevent providence from working its ways through the population.

In response, Conan Doyle wrote:

Is it immoral for a Government to adopt a method or procedure which experience has proved and science has testified to conduce to the health and increased longevity of the population? Is it immoral to inflict a passing inconvenience upon a child in order to preserve it from a deadly disease? Does the end never justify the means? Would it be immoral to give Colonel Wintle a push in order to save him from being run over by a locomotive? If all these are really immoral, I trust and pray that we may never attain morality. (3)

In addition to the morality question, Wintle's other objection was on the effectiveness of the smallpox vaccine. Conan Doyle's counter is that the vaccine has been around, by then, for almost a century and "has been thrashed out ... argued over in medical journals, examined by statisticians, sifted and tested in every conceivable method, and the result ... is a unanimity upon the point which is more complete than upon any other medical subject." (4)

Conan Doyle argued that the ravages of smallpox are often forgotten by later generations, reminding the reader that in the early Georgian era advertisements for missing relatives almost always described them as "having pock marks upon" their face. Mary, the wife of William III, died of smallpox and entire areas of the country were devastated by the disease.

Like the anti-mask protests of today, Conan Doyle asks how long "I wonder, would the committee of the Anti-Vaccination Society remain in the [smallpox] wards before a case broke out among them?"

The second of Wintle's letters that Conan Doyle rebuts is in a different newspaper and one wonders if Wintle was looking for a different audience



or hoping that the young doctor who so strongly replied to the first letter didn't read both journals.

Conan Doyle begins this letter by taking a jab at Wintle's argument, saying it "appears to me to contain a jumble of statistics and quotations, some of which do not affect the question at all, while others tell dead against the cause which he is championing." (5)

Wintle's letter apparently claims that vaccination is a failure because occasional outbreaks in smallpox were still happening. Conan Doyle counters by saying those outbreaks strengthen his argument for vaccination by showing there are far fewer deaths among those vaccinated and the disease is much more severe among those unvaccinated.

Conan Doyle then presents a table showing 20 years of data from the Smallpox Hospital:

of those with 4 vaccine marks .....	5 per cent died
of those with 3 vaccine marks .....	1.9
of those with 2 vaccine marks .....	4. 7
of those with 1 vaccine marks .....	7.7
With none, but professing to have been vaccinated .....	23.3
Non-vaccinated patients .....	37 (6)

Wintle reports fatal cases following vaccination. Conan Doyle readily acknowledges these few fringe cases but adds that this underlines the need for the purest of vaccines and insists that the harm done by vaccines is far outweighed by "the total amount of good done. At present if a child dies of any cause within a certain time of its vaccination the anti-vaccinators are ready to put it down as cause and effect. Convulsions, whether arising from worms, or teething, or brain irritation, are all ascribed to the pernicious effect of what the literature of the league terms 'that filthy rite.'" (7)

Conan Doyle closes this letter by saying that Wintle may well have his own views upon vaccination but chastises him for taking those views to the public press, where he may influence others to take the route so obviously counter to "medical men upon a medical point."

In the end, Conan Doyle encourages everyone to read "The Facts about Vaccination," published by the National Health Society.

When Conan Doyle wrote these letters "you could divide Europe into nations that had made vaccination mandatory, such as Britain, which were down to about two deaths per million people from smallpox each year and those that hadn't, such as the Netherlands, which had more than 4,000 deaths per million people each year. But even so, a Royal Commission in 1896 – exactly a century after Jenner injected James Phipps – recommended the government should cease making it compulsory

although it acknowledged the smallpox vaccine was effective and safe. Two years later a “conscientious objector” clause was introduced, allowing parents to opt out of vaccinating their children. Compulsory vaccination itself was finally abolished in 1948.” (8)

Conan Doyle weighed in on vaccinations again about a dozen years later when in 1900 he became involved in the Boer War. This time the disease was enteric fever, or typhoid. Conan Doyle was immunized against the disease before arriving in South Africa to work in Bloemfontein as a doctor. In another letter to the editor, this one to *The British Medical Journal*, Conan Doyle characterized the outbreak of enteric fever as “a calamity.” (9) He wrote that one of the mistakes of the war was that “inoculation for enteric was not made compulsory.” (10) It is believed there were almost 5,000 cases of typhoid with 1,000 deaths in South Africa during the war.

Although the two letters rebuking Wintle are the only known comments Conan Doyle made on small-pox vaccinations, he did continue to write many letters to the editor on a wide variety of subjects and to a wide variety of journals.

#### References

- (1) <https://digital.nls.uk/british-military-lists/archive/100675034>
- (2) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *Letters to the Press*, University of Iowa Press, Iowa City, 1986, p.27.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) Doyle, Op. cit., p.29
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) O’Hare, Mick, “The anti-vaxxers have been around as long as the vaccines,” *The Independent*, London, December 3, 2020.
- (9) Doyle, Arthur Conan, “The War in South Africa,” *The British Medical Journal*, July 7, 1900, p.49.
- (10) Ibid.

# *A Toast to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

*This toast was given by Dan Andriacco at the BSI New York weekend's Gaslight Gala on January 11, 2019*

In a wonderful passage from a story not generally regarded as one of the best, Sherlock Holmes remarks: “This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply.”

How is it possible that the Literary Agent, sometimes known as “the St. Paul of Spiritualism,” allowed these seemingly skeptical words to be recorded? Perhaps the answer lies in a couplet from a verse composed by the Agent himself:

So please grip this fact with your cerebral tentacle:  
The doll and its maker are never identical.

At any rate, the Agent and the Master seemed to be on very different spiritual pages. And for that, devotees of detective stories with earthly solutions should be profoundly grateful.

So, raise a glass – preferably of spirits – in honour of a man

- Who believed in spirits, although he didn't drink them;
- Who believed in fairies, even though he knew it made him look foolish;
- Who believed in mediums and their messages, but was himself an extra-large;
- Who allowed Professor Challenger to be converted to spiritualism but not Sherlock Holmes; and (best of all)
- Who gave us a very material hell-hound of the Baskervilles in a story he accurately called “a real creeper.”

To Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:

Steel True  
Blade Straight  
Knight  
Patriot, Physician & Man of Letters

Cheers!

# *The Adventure of the Crooked Man quiz*

This quiz was created by Karen Campbell and presented to the Bootmakers on December 1, 2018.

Part A: Multiple Choice. Choose one of the four possible answers for each question. Each correct answer is worth one point.

1. What season is it as the story begins? (a) Winter (b) Spring (c) Summer (d) Autumn
2. At what time does Holmes arrive at Watson's house? (a) A quarter to nine (b) A quarter to ten (c) A quarter to eleven (d) A quarter to midnight
3. How did Holmes know Watson had had a workman in? (a) The workman had left his card (b) The workman had left his bootnail prints (c) The workman had left his handkerchief (d) The workman had left his screwdriver
4. From what station had Holmes come? (a) Waterloo (b) Westminster (c) Oxford Street (d) Paddington
5. Who is the accommodating doctor who will look after Watson's patients while he is away? (a) Agar (b) Jackson (c) Armstrong (d) Anstruther
6. Where did the Royal Mallow do wonders? (a) India (b) Africa (c) Australia (d) Afghanistan
7. What was Nancy Barclay's religious persuasion? (a) Presbyterian (b) Methodist (c) Anglican (d) Roman Catholic
8. How many children did the Barclays have? (a) None (b) One (c) Two (d) Three
9. What beverage did Nancy Barclay request when she came back from her charity meeting? (a) Coffee (b) Tea (c) Milk (d) Sherry
10. Holmes says the little animal whose footprints he found is: (a) A dog (b) A cat (c) A monkey (d) None of the above
11. Miss Morrison's build, according to Holmes, is: (a) Ethereal (b) Womanly (c) Queenly (d) Portly
12. Miss Morrison's hair is: (a) Red (b) Blonde (c) Brown (d) Black
13. What did Holmes pretend to be when speaking with Henry Wood's landlady? (a) A real estate agent (b) A travel agent (c) A registration agent (d) A tax agent

14. How does Henry Wood make a living? (a) Selling matches (b) Performing magic tricks (c) Telling fortunes (d) Shining shoes
15. To what animal's back does Henry Wood compare his back? (a) A cow (b) A giraffe (c) A camel (d) A crocodile
16. Why did Nancy love Henry Wood rather than James Barclay? (a) Wood was better looking (b) Wood was more charming (c) Wood was better educated (d) Wood was richer
17. Why did Nancy's father prefer James Barclay as a suitor for her? (a) Barclay was better looking (b) Barclay was more charming (c) Barclay was better educated (d) Barclay was richer
18. To what primate does Henry Wood compare himself? (a) A chimpanzee (b) An orangutan (c) A baboon (d) A gorilla
19. Where did Henry Wood not travel during his wanderings? (a) Nepal (b) Afghanistan (c) Pakistan (d) Punjab
20. To what is James Barclay's death officially attributed? (a) Apoplexy (b) Head injury (c) Heart attack (d) Poison

Part B: Short Answer. For each question, give as many answers as you can. Each correct answer is worth one point.

21. Give the clues Holmes used to deduce that there must have been another person in the room with Nancy and James Barclay when the colonel was killed.
22. Name another story (okay, there is only one correct answer here) where Teddy would have been mighty handy for Holmes and Watson to have around.
23. Name other locked room murder mysteries in the Holmes Canon.
24. Name other stories where Holmes or Watson quote the Bible.
25. Name other stories where the Baker Street Irregulars appear.

## Answers

1C, 2D, 3B, 4A, 5B, 6A, 7D, 8A, 9B, 10D, 11A, 12B, 13C, 14B, 15C, 16A, 17C, 18A, 19C, 20A, 21: • A man's footprints • Teddy's footprints • Not the club (it could have been the colonel's own) • key is missing • Nancy shouts "David" (I'd accept this). 22: • The Adventure of the Speckled Band • The Adventure of the Empty House • The Sign of Four. 23: • The Missing Three Quarter (not dead, only sleeping) • The Adventure of the Speckled Band (violence doth recoil upon the violent) • The Devil's Foot (go and do the other half). 24: • A Study in Scarlet • The Sign of Four. 25. The Adventure of the Speckled Band

# *Strictly Personal*

Where a Canadian  
Sherlockian goes under  
the microscope.

**Name:** Angela Misri

**Age:** 45

**Birthplace:** Croydon, London,  
England

**Occupation:** Journalist/Author

**Current city of residence:**  
Toronto

**In school I excelled at:** Writing

**Major accomplishments in life:** I'd have to say my family is my greatest accomplishment. My daughter is brilliant and artistic, my husband has finally retired from the banks and is focusing on creating his music and my parents are healthy and happy living in Brampton.

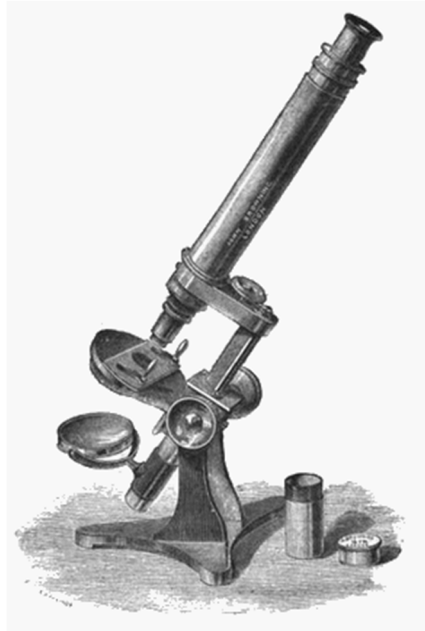
**Goal in life:** It sounds esoteric but leaving the world in a better place than I found it. That means amplifying the unheard voices in every part of my life – work, art, and everyday Canadian culture.

**A great evening for me is:** Dinner with friends and family in our backyard. A lively game of dominoes if we have time!

**Favourite dining experience:** Tough one at a time like this, but I miss sitting on the patio at House on Parliament with friends.

**Other hobbies and interests:** I spend a lot of time reading, and that's been my hobby since I was a small child. I also love playing online games and going to the movies (when we can go to the movies).

**I'm currently working on:** The fifth Portia Adams adventure, *To Kill a King*, and the third kids book about zombies, *Valhamster*. I'm also working on an audio drama about Laura Secord.



**Three favourite Canonical tales:** Scandal in Bohemia, Silver Blaze, Copper Beeches.

**Three least favourite Canonical tales:** The Dying Detective, The Lion's Mane, The Yellow Face.

**Favourite non-Sherlockian reading:** Anything by Stephen King or Rick Riordan.

**Favourite Sherlockian movie:** The Great Mouse Detective

**Favourite non-Sherlockian movie:** BBC's Pride and Prejudice

**Most prized possession in my Sherlockian collection:** My Sherlock charm bracelet.

**If I could live at any time in history, it would be:** The future.

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

**Holmes:** Why bees?

**Watson:** How many Marys did you marry and what happened to them?

**Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:** Did you even imagine that more than 80 years after your death, your ancestors would be fighting with your fans in court over a character you tried to distance yourself from?

**First learned of The Bootmakers:** 2010

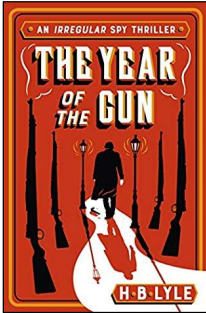
**I would like my epitaph to read:** "The most dangerous woman of all is the one who refuses to rely on your sword to save her because she carries her own." R. H. SIN

**My last words will be:** Thank you.

**What question do I wish I would have been asked:** My one question to Adler (where's the photo now?)



## “Holmes gave me a brief review”

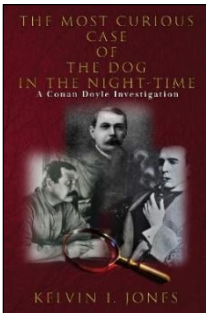


*The Year of the Gun* (The Irregular Book 3) by H.B. Lyle (Hodder & Stoughton, \$23.99 USD)

It is 1912 and we are once again with Wiggins, former leader of Sherlock Holmes’s Baker Street Irregulars. Wiggins has just been released from the Secret Service as he sets out for New York in search of his lost love Bela. After a card game goes wrong, he finds himself on the streets of Dublin working for organized crime boss, Patrick O’Connell.

O’Connell and his girlfriend Molly support the Irish nationalist cause and are intent on purchasing guns to defeat the British. The trio travel to New York to work with a connection who can supply the needed cash. With Holmes’s help, Wiggins discovers what has become of Bela. The novel is fast-paced, enjoyable and has a strong sense of place.

– Mark Alberstat



*The Most Curious Case of the Dog in the Night-time* by Kelvin I. Jones (Independently published, available through Amazon: Kindle Edition \$5.87 CAD, paperback \$15.33 CAD)

Kelvin Jones has been at it again. This time the prolific Sherlockian writer turns his thoughts to Conan Doyle, his dislike of Sherlock Holmes and the scandal of the author’s secret affair with Jean Leckie.

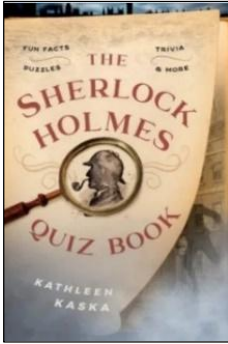
With detective work worthy of Holmes, Jones re-examines what he believes to be the not so platonic relationship between Conan Doyle and Leckie, drawing his own conclusions about their relationship. Jones examines the dual life Conan Doyle led during this period as seen through his writings and lifestyle. The book also looks at the pair’s fervent belief in spiritualism and their attempts to spread the word.

– Mark Alberstat

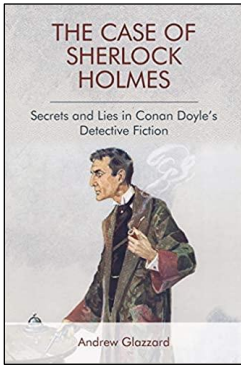
*The Sherlock Holmes Quiz Book* by Kathleen Kaska (Lyons Press, \$21.95 USD pb, \$20.50 USD, epub)

This collection of trivia, puzzles, crosswords and facts can be a fun way to re-ignite your imagination and tease your memory of the Canon. The chapters take the reader from the original stories, through the movies and



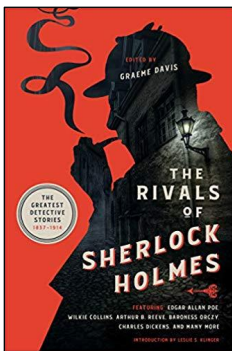


TV shows such as *Sherlock*, *Elementary* and even *Miss Sherlock*. If you are a fan of Sherlockian quizzes and puzzles, here is another book for that shelf. (One complaint would have to be this reviewer's questioning of how accurate all of the puzzles etc. are as in the back of the book, The Bootmakers of Toronto are listed under Switzerland and the only clubs listed under Canada are the Stormy Petrels and the long-defunct Calgary society.)  
– Thomas O'Hare



*The Case of Sherlock Holmes: Secrets and Lies in Conan Doyle's Detective Fiction* by Andrew Glazzard (Edinburgh University Press, 2020, £19.99 pb)

This book has an internal division of seven sections: Finance, Class, Family, Sex, Race, War and Secrecy. Through each of these lenses, Glazzard examines the Victorian and Edwardian world of the Sherlock Holmes Canon. For example, when looked at by this author and laid out in front of the reader, one comes to realize the sad fate of many of the noble families portrayed in the Canon, from the Musgraves on down. This often-academic view of the stories feels like a series of articles or monographs held together by the reader's, and the author's, love of the Holmes stories.  
– Mark Alberstat



*The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Graeme Davis (Pegasus Books, 2019, \$25.95 USD).

Editor Graeme Davis has assembled half a century of detective fiction from 1837 to 1914. Early examples of the genre from writers like Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins and, of course, Edgar Allan Poe kick off this book after an editor's introduction and an essay titled "The Origins of Sherlock Holmes," by Les Klinger. The book features 17 tales of mystery, although five of them are extracts from longer works such as *The Mystery of the Yellow Room* by Gaston Leroux.

Truth be told, none of the characters in any of these stories ever rivals Sherlock Holmes in fame or accomplishment, but reading a book like this does make one appreciate the breadth of the genre.  
– Mark Alberstat

# BOOTMAKERS' DIARY



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

— *The Five Orange Pips*

*Saturday November 29, 2020*

At 1:06 Meyers, Mike Ranieri, welcomed 60 attendees from far and wide to the last virtual meeting of the Bootmakers for 2020 to discuss “The Priory School.”

From his home in Halifax, Jim Ballinger sang a rendition of “Simpsons in the Strand,” which he said was the most requested of all his Sherlockian songs.

Our guest speaker for the afternoon was Vicky Delaney, author of the Sherlock Bookstore series. She told us of the development of Gemma, the owner who keeps getting involved in mysteries through people “believing she is a real detective.” Vicky read an extract from her novel, *A Curious Incident*, along with a short extract from her latest, *A Scandal in Scarlett*.

JoAnn Alberstat then related the history of the ship *Amazon*, built in Nova Scotia and which became the *Mary Celeste* and was found abandoned on December 4, 1872 by the ship *Del Gratia*. JoAnn then informed us that Conan Doyle, calling the ship the *Marie Celeste* in “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement” wrote a fictional account of why and how the ship was abandoned. JoAnn speculated that the name Marie may have been inspired by Poe’s “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” which also inspired Conan Doyle and others to write deathbed stories which cleared up questions surrounding the *Mary Celeste*.

Next came the quiz conducted by Quiz Mistress Karen Campbell. The winners were Bruce Aiken and joint second place Barbara Rusch and Donny Zaldin, with prizes to be awarded courtesy of George Vanderburgh.

Lassus, Karen Gold regaled us with “When We Met the Teacher,” to ABBA’s “When I kissed the Teacher.”

- David Sanders M.Bt.

*Saturday, January 30, 2021*

The meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order by Meyers, Mike Ranieri, at 1:08 PM. There were 93 participants from across Canada, the U.S., the UK and as far away as Germany and India. This is a record number for us.

Some announcements were made:

- Meeting notices may be found on our website at [TorontoBootmakers.com](http://TorontoBootmakers.com), on the calendar page. For those of you who are not yet members, please consider joining.
- There is a special greeting from Buckingham Palace in London, England. Queen Elizabeth II (a fake video, but well done) joins us via video link to announce that Ian Bennett and Mimi Okabe have been elevated to the ranks of Master Bootmakers.

Jim Ballinger, joined us from Halifax and noted that this meeting marked the 40th Anniversary of the first song he wrote and performed for the Bootmakers. His second meeting was about “Black Peter.” Jim performed his song about Inspector Stanley Hopkins, which he wrote in 1981.

Mike Ranieri introduced our guest speaker Steve Mason, from the Crew of the Barque Lone Star, of Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas. The title of his presentation was “The Doctor Is In.” It is his contribution to Chris Redmond’s book *Sherlock Holmes is Like...* Steve explained why Sherlock Holmes is like Lucy van Pelt from Charles Schulz’s *Peanuts* comic strip. His presentation was followed by an interesting question and answer session.

Mike then introduced our next speaker, Donny Zaldin. Donny changed the title of his talk from “Lawyers In the Sherlockian Canon” to “Lawyers In and Out of the Sherlockian Canon.” He noted that in *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson says that Holmes has “a good practical knowledge of British law.” In “The Five Orange Pips,” Watson seems to indicate that Holmes was a lawyer. He told about lawyers mentioned in the stories and some who were influential in Victorian society. The book he co-edited with Will Walsh, *Canon Law*, is still available.

Karen Campbell presented the quiz on “Black Peter.” The winner was Leslie Phillips, who got a perfect score and will receive an electronic version of Jon Lellenberg’s book *Baker Street Irregular*, from Dr. George Vanderburgh.

Karen Gold then presented her Sherlockian song parody “Sea Unicorn,” sung to the tune of The Beatles “Yellow Submarine.”

Hartley Nathan gave a wrap-up of the story.

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



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