Canadian Holmes

The Journal of the Bootmakers of Toronto
Volume 46 Number 1 – Winter 2022/2023

Canadian Holmes is published by The Bootmakers of Toronto, the Sherlock Holmes Society of Canada.
Bootprints *(editors) are Mark and JoAnn Alberstat, 46 Kingston Crescent, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 2M2, Canada, to whom letters and editorial submissions should be addressed. E-mail: markalberstat@gmail.com and on Twitter at @CanadianHolmes*
Membership and subscription rates
(Full details online at www.torontobootmakers.com)
Canadian Premier - $40.00 CAD; US or International Premier – $40.00 USD
Canadian Regular - $30.00 CAD; US or International Regular - $30.00 USD
Full-time Student - $25.00 CAD or $25.00 USD
Past Issues of *Canadian Holmes*, including postage - $12.00 CAD per copy
Further Subscription information and details are available on the society's website, www.torontobootmakers.com.
Business correspondence should be addressed to The Bootmakers of Toronto, 2045 Lake Shore Blvd. West, Suite 3303, Etobicoke, ON, M8V 2Z6, Canada.

Canadian Publications Mail Sales Product Agreement Number 40038614, The Bootmakers of Toronto, 2045 Lake Shore Blvd. West, Suite 3303, Etobicoke, ON, M8V 2Z6, Canada. Return postage guaranteed.
ISSN 0319-4493.
Printed in Canada.

Cover and portrait description by Peggy MacFarlane: This portrait of Peter Calamai starts with a photo taken in 2009, when he and I were part of a contingent of Bookmakers attending a Sherlock Holmes Society of London meeting in Portsmouth. I was going around snapping photos during the weekend's banquet, and when I got to Peter he flashed me a whimsical, slightly sardonic smile. If you were fortunate enough to know this Master Bootmaker, you probably knew that look.

Another reference photo allowed me to portray him wearing a Victorian outfit made by his beloved wife Mary and occasionally worn at Blue Carbuncle dinners. A portrait of Peter without a reference to Mary would be no likeness.

Peter's heritage was Italian, and his surname, which translates as "inkwells," was a wonderfully appropriate name for a writer. Hence the inkwell, the quill and the stack of books. Many thanks to JoAnn and Mark Alberstat for allowing me to pay tribute to our dear mutual friend in this way.

Canadian Holmes
Volume 46 Number 1
Winter 2022/2023
One-hundred seventy third issue

Contents
Canadian Holmes
Winter 2022/2023
Volume 46 Number 1

Traces of Bootprints

A special issue for a special Sherlockian

Through his writing, Peter Calamai BSI MBt (1943-2019) made many lasting contributions to Sherlockian and Doylean scholarship. He created a body of written work that is both vast and significant, and deciding what to include in this special issue was no easy task.

The eight articles that were selected span a period of almost two decades, from 2000 to 2018. These works previously appeared in this publication, *The Baker Street Journal* or the anthology *The Hounds Collection, Volume 5*. Thank you to the editors of other publications for agreeing that Peter's work be reprinted.

Peter's love of journalism and his four-decade newspaper career is evident in articles about Conan Doyle's use of slang, his stint as a war correspondent in Sudan, and newspapers mentioned in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Peter's scientific studies, and his experience as a science writer, clearly shaped his works on Sherlock Holmes as an environmentalist and sanitation (or lack thereof) in Victorian London.

Peter's curiosity about, and passion for, the Canon can also be seen in his examination of cab fares racked up by Holmes and Dr. Watson, and the relationship between the detective and fellow sleuth Lord Peter Wimsey.

Rounding out the issue is one of Peter's Christmas letters, always a witty look at the past year in the Calamai household. This particular dispatch, like the others issued annually, shows how much Peter and his wife Mary (1944-2021) enjoyed travel, theatre and spending time with family and friends.

In these pages, some readers will discover Peter's work for the first time and gain an appreciation of his legacy. For others, this volume will be a reminder of Peter's talent and bring back fond memories of many years of friendship.

ACD as a master of slang

This article first appeared in the Spring 2010 edition of Canadian Holmes.

Arthur Conan Doyle's use of slang, argot and dialect in the Canon is often poor. Consider the forced nature of much of Altamont's vocabulary in "His Last Bow" and the Americanisms put in the mouth of Sir Henry Baskerville in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* – which he would not have picked up in Canada. By contrast, the range of slang, argot and cant used by Abe Slaney in "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" is impressive and even lexicographically pioneering. So just like finding a trout in the milk jug, it is worthwhile to look more closely at the vocabulary in that story. First, however, it would be best to distinguish between these three language categories:

Cant — Special vocabulary used by any set of persons of low or disreputable character.

Argot — Vocabulary special to any group, trade or profession. Today the word "jargon" is largely a synonym for argot, which has shed any criminal connotation it once had.

Slang — Vocabulary of general dispersion but still below the level of standard educated speech. Consisting of new words (often drawn from argot or cant) or current words employed in some special sense. Slightly more formal than slang would be colloquialisms, those words and phrases regularly employed in informal speech and writing but not on the BBC or in business correspondence. Many words have successfully ascended this lexicographical ladder; others hover between the rungs and a multitude drop off every year, unnoticed and unmourned.

This crude taxonomy leaves unresolved the categorization of Americanisms, especially prominent in "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" and elsewhere in the Canon. One difficulty is that yesterday's Americanism often became today's slang in England, at least from the mid-19th century onwards; so the year in which Conan Doyle penned an expression largely determines whether it can still be classed as an American interloper or whether it had been absorbed by the English into their own web of words.

The year of composition of stories in the Canon is relevant to another aspect of this discussion — whether the slang, argot or cant was current vocabulary, already passé or not yet in common usage. Again, this is hardly a precise determination, since slang can often be in use for many months before it is first recorded in print (usually by journalists) and for years before lexicographers impale a specimen. To complicate matters, the

bulk of the Canon was composed in a period when English slang was unusually stable. As Eric Partridge noted in *Slang Today and Yesterday*, published in 1933:

> It is certain that slang has, since 1859, changed less rapidly than it did before that date: perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the slang of 1859-1874 survived almost intact until the Great War, that a surprising amount of that old slang still survives, and that much of the slang current in the 1860s has actually become incorporated in English colloquial and familiar speech by being promoted from the stage of slang.

Partridge attributed this "fixing and dignifying" of so much of that mid-Victorian slang to two seminal publications — *The Slang Dictionary* by John Camden Hotten (especially its extensive glossary, which remained continuously popular for decades) and *Slang and Its Analogues Past and Present* by John S. Farmer and W.E. Henley. Although Hotten's volume was initially published anonymously in 1859, the third edition of 1874, containing all the addenda and corrigenda, remained in print into the 1930s. Farmer and Henley appeared in seven volumes between 1890 and 1904; since a mere 750 sets were sold to subscribers, the work's influence was greatly extended by a one-volume abridgment issued in 1912.

One more lexicographical dictionary is needed to fill that gap on the second shelf. In 1909, J. Redding Ware brought out his *Passing English of the Victorian Era: A Dictionary of Heterodox English, Slang and Phrase*. Although advertised as a supplement to the forthcoming Farmer and Henley abridgment, Ware's volume stands on its own as an exceptionally valuable guide to the spoken English of 1860-1910, covering all classes from society to costers.

There were, of course, earlier dictionaries of English slang and cant (Grose dates from 1785) but it seems arguable that if a slang word from "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" cannot be found in more than one of these three sentinels of Victorian English, then that word was not in common usage at the time. For greater certainty, we can also consult the *Oxford English Dictionary*, remembering that only the portions as far as the letter K (and perhaps also the Q section) had been published by the summer of 1903 when Doyle finished this adventure.

It turns out that most of Slaney's expressions were decidedly uncommon usage at that time, being recorded in only one of those leading English slang dictionaries. Three of Slaney's choicest expressions appear nowhere else in the Canon — "on the cross," "jay" and "joint." Two others — "get (have) the drop" and "heeled" — also show up in the mouths of Americans in *The Valley of Fear*. "Boss" is used repeatedly in *The Valley of Fear* to

refer to McGinty and once in "The Three Gables", when Steve talks about "my boss Barney." The expression "give someone the slip" turns out to be almost as much of a Sherlockianism as "elementary," with Holmes uttering some variation of it in four stories ("The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk," "The Adventure of the Final Problem," "The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter," "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans"). As well, Henry Peters uses the expression in "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax."

The key questions for this lexicographic investigation are:

1. If we rely on contemporary slang dictionaries, can it be demonstrated that many of the slang expressions in "The Dancing Men" were well-known in England at the time the case was recorded?

2. Does the appearance in "The Dancing Men" mark the first recorded usage in England for any of these expressions? More particularly, did Conan Doyle anachronistically use any expressions that came into general use later than mid-1898, the generally accepted chronology for the action in "The Dancing Men"?

3. If some or most of the slang expressions in "The Dancing Men" do not appear to have been well-known at the time of this story's publication, then where did Conan Doyle pick up this pioneering slang?

Cross-checking with the three lexicographic sentinels reveals the following:

• *Boss* — Slang. Not in Hotten or Ware. Farmer cites Dutch baas, a master, but makes no mention of any humorous connotation. The OED does, saying boss is workmen's slang or used humorously for "swell."

• *On the cross* — Cant. Not in Ware. Hotten and Farmer agree on a meaning of "obtaining dishonestly," as does the OED.

• *Get (have) the drop* — Argot. Not in Hotten. Farmer comments simply "to hold at a disadvantage." Ware, defining the expression as American and English, writes: "Outcome of the use of the revolver in the U.S.A.

Sidney Paget's illustration in The Strand Magazine*, December 1903 showing Holmes getting the drop on Abe Slaney.*

The muzzle of the revolver is dropped down to the aim from a higher level — hence the term, which means to obtain victory." OED is clearer, noting original meaning as "to have the chance to shoot before the antagonist can use his weapon;" Volume 1 of the Supplement to the OED cites *The Valley of Fear* as first English usage, overlooking the earlier appearance in "The Dancing Men".

• *Heeled* — Argot. Not in Hotten or Ware. Farmer lists "Armed: from the steel spur used in cock-fighting." In 1755, Samuel Johnson defined a heeler as a cock that strikes well with its heels; the OED cites Johnson and notes that arming a person with a weapon is the U.S. meaning. Volume II of the Supplement cites *The Valley of Fear* as first English usage in the weapons sense, again overlooking "The Dancing Men."

• *Jay* — Slang. Not in Hotten. Farmer says "a simpleton" and equates the term with "buffle," an English term for a fool that dates back to 1580. "To flap a jay" is "to dupe or swindle." Ware cites a Nov. 25, 1894, reference to a jay being the American equivalent of an English yokel or country bumpkin. OED cites uses by Shakespeare and others.

• *Joint* — Cant. Not in Hotten or Ware. Farmer defines as either a low-class establishment or a partnership of thieves. Volume II of the OED Supplement lists an English citation from the Oct. 25, 1877, sessions papers of the Central Criminal Court: "The joints — that means the offices where the swindle was carried on — that is a cant word."

• *Give someone the slip* — Slang. Not in Ware. Hotten defines as "to run away" or "elude pursuit" and cites Shakespeare's "You gave me the counterfeit" in *Romeo and Juliet*. Farmer says to escape unobserved. The OED (this "S" section not published until 1915) lists English citations meaning evasion and escape, dating from 1567.

Conclusion:

Many of these expressions, in the particular sense in which they were used, were well known in England at the time that the case was recorded. The tally from our investigation is three definitely Yes ("on the cross," "jay" and "give someone the slip"), two clearly No ("get the drop" and "heeled") and two Doubtful ("boss" and "joint").

No obvious linguistic anachronisms are perpetrated in the use of slang, argot and cant. Two of these usages in "The Dancing Men" seem to be the first publication in England. Judging from the Supplements to the OED, a case could be made for both "get the drop" and "heeled," since the later *The Valley of Fear* is cited for both.

Most importantly, where did Conan Doyle pick up his slang? First, it is important to establish that Abe Slaney's slang vocabulary is not, despite the comment by the editors of the *Oxford Sherlock Holmes*, exclusively

"American gangster slang." The use of "on the cross" for dishonest, "jay" for simpleton and "give the slip" for evasion were well established in England long before "The Dancing Men" was published. Interestingly, Canonical appearances of the first two of these well-known English slang expressions are limited to "The Dancing Men;" perhaps an indication that Conan Doyle thought of them primarily as Americanisms. Equally of interest, only "jay" appears in that definitive guide to Americanisms, Mencken's *The American Language*. As for the remaining four slang expressions, as someone whose business was words, Conan Doyle could have known both our doubtful words, "boss" and "joint," either from Farmer and Henley or from the early installments of the OED. None of these volumes, however, are listed as being in Doyle's library in the online catalogue recently complied by Benjamin L. Clark (http://www.librarything.com/catalog/ACDoyleLibrary). The completeness of this list can be questioned since NO dictionaries are listed at all. And, of course, we must not rule out the possibility that Conan Doyle knew the words from hearing them used in speech in England; although not commonplace, they were being employed in a limited fashion. This leaves only the two-gun references, "heeled" and "get (have) the drop", as exclusively American at the time "The Dancing Men" was published. As argued above, the first appearance of these expressions in an English publication may well have been in "The Dancing Men." (It certainly wasn't in *The Valley of Fear*, the citation in the OED Supplements). The most straightforward explanation is that Conan Doyle picked up these expressions during his two-month lecture tour in the United States in 1894. Yet Christopher Redmond has noted that the literary and luxury nature of Conan Doyle's tour did not afford much opportunity to observe the daily life of ordinary Americans, much less that of gangsters or cowboys. Far more probable is that Conan Doyle came across the expressions in some American newspaper or periodical, either during his 1894 tour or afterward as he kept up a regular transatlantic correspondence. Above all, we should never lose sight of the fact that Conan Doyle was a writer whose craft was words. Three manuscript notebooks in the Conan Doyle collection at the Toronto Reference Library show that he kept his ear carefully cocked for colloquialisms during visits to America in 1914 and 1923 (1). In his writing, Conan Doyle coined several new words and regularly put existing words to new uses. That he also broke new lexicographic ground in the field of slang, argot and cant should come as little surprise.

Selected Bibliography:

Birchfield, R.W, (Ed). *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I (A-G), Clarendon Press, 1972; Vol. II (H-N), 1976.

Collison, W.E., *Contemporary English; A Personal Speech Record*, 1928.

Farmer, J.S. and Henley, W.E., *Dictionary of Slang*, George Routledge & Sons, 1912.

Fowler, H.W. and F.G., *The King's English*, Oxford UP, 1906.

Fowler, H.W., *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, Oxford UP, 1930.

Grose, F. Captain, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (ed: E. Partridge), Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

Hotten, J.C., *The Slang Dictionary*, Chatto & Windus, 1913.

Mencken, H.L., *The American Language*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1963.

Oxford University Press, *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, 1971.

Partridge, E., *Slang Yesterday and Today*, George Routledge & Sons, 1933.

Redmond, C., *Welcome to America, Mr. Sherlock Holmes*, Simon & Pierre, 1987.

Ware, J. R., *Passing English of the Victorian Era*, George Routledge & Sons, n.d. 1909.

Notes

(1) Calamai, Peter, "American slang is very expressive sometimes." *The Magic Door*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, Spring 2005.

Dispatches from the Moor: Newspapers and The Hound of the Baskervilles

This article first appeared in the Winter 2001 edition of The Baker Street Journal, Vol. 51, No.4.

Some formidable difficulties exist in connection with the three contemporary newspaper accounts that appear in Dr. Watson's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The first problem is the lack of any other record of the existence of a newspaper called the *Devon County Chronicle*. This is the supposed newspaper from which an account of the inquest into the death of Sir Charles Baskerville is read aloud by Dr. James Mortimer in his first meeting with Sherlock Holmes at 221B Baker Street.

Next there is the absence of any editorial about free trade in *The Times* of 30 September 1889. Holmes is quoted as reading a section of such an editorial (referred to in Britain as a leading article, or leader) to demonstrate how the threatening note to Sir Henry Baskerville had been assembled by cutting out words from the article. Nor is there a *Times* leader dealing with free trade on the publication day before or after the date indicated in *The Hound*. Third, we are faced with the impossibility of Laura Lyons reading "in the paper next morning" about the death of Sir Charles late on the night of 4 June.

Devon County Chronicle

According to the records at the Colindale branch of the British Library, which specializes in newspapers, the only newspaper ever bearing these exact words in its nameplate was *Besley's Exeter News and Devon County Chronicle*, which existed under this title for the first four months of 1827. The paper then continued publication as the *Devonshire Chronicle and Evening News* until it expired in March 1853, more than 35 years before the events in *The Hound*. Other publications bearing at least two of these words in their titles came and went during the hothouse period of newspaper growth in the mid- to late-Victorian era. Most published once a week, although a few managed twice. These included:

1. the *South Molton Gazette, Devon and Somerset Chronicle and West of England Advertiser*, published from July 1872 to November 1944 when it was incorporated in *The Tiverton Gazette*;

2. the *Devon County Standard*, published from 1877 to April 1898 and continued until 1911 as the *Torquay Observer and District News*;

3. the *Barnstaple Times and Bideford and North Devon Chronicle*, published from July 1869 to December 1908; and

4. the *Crediton Chronicle and North Devon Gazette*, published from July 1881 to October 1891 and through various name changes to *The Mid-Devon Gazette*, which was still being produced in Crediton as recently as 2000.

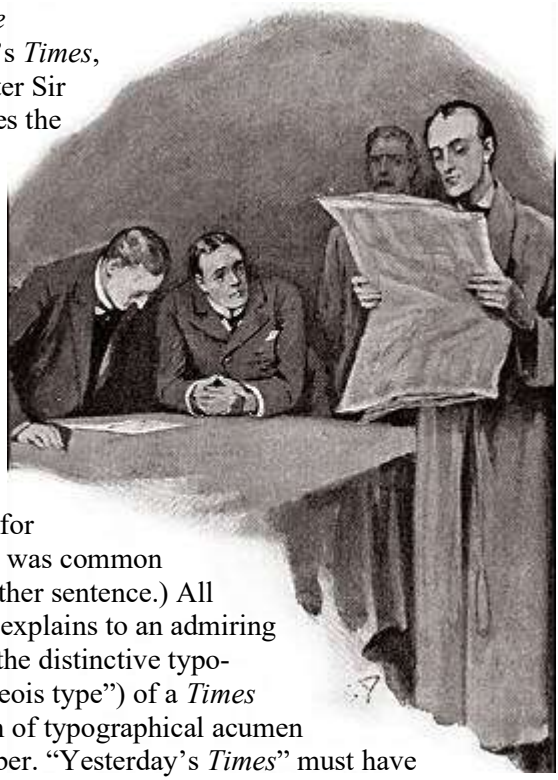
You can see how this name might have been mashed into the *Devon County Chronicle* by Dr. Watson. Unfortunately, the *Chronicle* and *Gazette* published on Saturdays, which fits neither of the two dates given for the putative clipping –14 May was a Tuesday in 1889 and 14 June was a Friday. More follows below about these dual dates. There is also the difficulty that this paper, like the *Barnstable Times*, is a North Devon publication, and our action takes place in South Devon. The first two weeklies are from South Devon, but Dr. Watson would have had to completely mistake the name for the first to work. As for the *Devon County Standard*, it too published on Saturdays.

One solution to this difficulty is to adopt the attitude of Owen Dudley Edwards, general editor of the Oxford edition of the Canon, and argue that all the newspaper accounts reprinted in the stories are pastiche or even parody. Finally, we can consider the possibility that Watson accurately quoted the account from a newspaper clipping but deliberately concealed the paper's name. In the Canon, Dr. Watson is known to have camouflaged the names of communities, buildings, streets, prominent personalities and even entire countries. In these circumstances, then, the best candidate for the camouflaged *Devon County Chronicle* is one of the localized editions of *The Western Guardian*. Further details of this newspaper are provided below.

Even resolving the question of which newspaper leaves open a classic issue of Canonical dates. The original *Hound* in *The Strand Magazine* says Sir Charles died on 4 May and gives the publication date for the inquest article as 14 May. In the book and subsequent republications both dates are transposed to June. It has been suggested that the dates were altered by the literary agent Arthur Conan Doyle acting as editor, when he realized that Watson's May date left too long a gap for Henry Baskerville to be located and travel to London by the end of September. There are other reasons, however, to suggest that the initial month was incorrect, another manifestation of Dr. Watson's all-too-fallible memory and note taking. Sir Charles announces his intention to travel to London the next day, which would have been 5 May, a Sunday, when trains were few and slow. 5 June was a Wednesday, a much more sensible day for a long rail journey. (1)

Also, 14 May is a Tuesday, which would be a most unusual publication day for a weekly newspaper like the *Devon County Chronicle* because advertisers preferred the latter part of the week (which is when *The Western Guardian* and many other weeklies did publish). 14 June is a Friday, a popular publication day for weeklies, including editions of *The Western Guardian.*

Times *leader on free trade*



"Have you yesterday's *Times*, Watson?" asks Holmes after Sir Henry Baskerville produces the note warning him to stay away from the moor. He then reads an extract from a leading article on the subject of free trade, to the bafflement initially of all present. Holmes then demonstrates that the warning note was composed of words clipped from that very *Times* article, except for "moor." (Presumably "as" was common enough to be found in another sentence.) All quite elementary, Holmes explains to an admiring Dr. Mortimer, because of the distinctive typography ("the leaded bourgeois type") of a *Times* leader. This demonstration of typographical acumen occurred Tuesday, 1 October. "Yesterday's *Times*" must have been that of Monday, 30 September. The leading articles (2) that day were:

The Gladstonian Policy—analysis of the results from a by-election at Sleaford in Lincoln

The International Congress at Washington—a precursor to the Pan-American Congress

Strikes and Corners—labor strife

The County Council—local government.

None of these leaders so much as mention free trade, much less contain the extract read by Holmes and reproduced verbatim by Watson. (3) Perhaps Watson was mistaken and Holmes actually asked for Tuesday's *Times*, which would be even fresher in his mind. But no, the editorial

topics on 1 October were British economics, Serbia, the Anglican church, and Ireland. Nor are the leaders from Saturday, 28 September any more promising—the Sleaford election, Archdeacon Farrar on brotherhoods, a royal commission on town markets, and the educational children's tale Sandford and Merton. Several commentators have previously raised doubts about the very existence of this supposed leader. In their introductions and notes to "A Scandal in Bohemia" and *The Hound of the Baskervilles* respectively in the Oxford University Press version of the Canon, Owen Dudley Edwards and W.W. Robson dismiss this (and other newspaper extracts) as pastiche or parody. The phrase "it stands to reason" is certainly below the level of argumentation normally found in *Times*' leaders during this period.

Drawing on British economic history, Gavin Brend says that an article on free trade as early as 1889 "would surely be right out of the question." (4) Brend is on shaky ground historically. As early as 1888, in a speech to the London Chamber of Commerce, Joseph Chamberlain was speaking of the importance of the Empire for Britain's survival and as its forming "natural markets for our trade." This was the core of Chamberlain's policy of Imperial Preference, which was anathema to free traders. When later crystallized, Chamberlain's views caused deep divisions in the Tory party that led to its rout in the 1906 election. So it is not inconceivable that some serious London newspaper might have been moved to take up the subject in September 1889. (For additional evidence about free trade being a live issue in 1889, see the relevant footnotes in the Oxford *Hound* and in Klinger's *Annotated Hound of the Baskervilles*.) Yet six months worth of leading articles as recorded in *Palmer's Index to The Times* from 1 July to 31 December 1889 contain none indexed under free trade and only one, on 16 July, about "Trade, state of." Even Holmes with his well-known fear of discarding papers was unlikely to have a two-month-old newspaper lying around.

So perhaps it was a leader in another newspaper entirely and Watson simply misremembered. However, the evidence of the Canon suggests strongly that *The Times* was the paper that commanded the most time from Holmes, while *The Telegraph* did the same for Watson. In addition to his dubious display of typological prowess in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, (5) Holmes is twice described as reading *The Times* ("Engineer's Thumb," "Missing Three-quarter"), and once comments that he has noted an advertisement in the paper every day ("Blue Carbuncle").

Against Holmes's four citations, there are none for Watson, who is never associated with reading *The Times* or being familiar with its contents. For Watson the paper of choice is the *Daily Telegraph*. Three times there is direct evidence of his reading it (*A Study in Scarlet*, "Silver Blaze,"

"Second Stain") and once highly suggestive evidence (the paper is on his knee in "Norwood Builder"). Holmes is described reading the *Telegraph* directly only once ("Copper Beeches") but also identified clippings of the agony column by the print style and paper quality ("Bruce-Partington Plans"). And since he and Watson shared the same railway carriage on the way to King's Pyland in "Silver Blaze," it seems likely that he also read *The Telegraph* account of the disappearance of Silver Blaze.

No matter, say the word "newspaper" and Watson thinks first of the *Daily Telegraph*. Unfortunately, this elegant thesis is slain by the ugly fact that no leader about free trade appeared in *The Telegraph* over those three days either. Still, absence of proof of existence is not proof of the absence of existence. The free trade editorial of the 30 September 1889 *Times* may, like the elusive Higgs boson of particle physics, simply be undiscoverable with our present searching abilities. For instance, the leader on free trade could have been what's known as a "space holder"—an editorial written to meet first-edition deadlines when editors know they will have a late-breaking news event demanding editorial comment in later editions. In this instance, a free-trade leader could well have yielded to a late editorial about the Washington conference, with the time difference. Since the British Library's newspaper collection at Colindale preserves only the final editions of most newspapers as a matter of policy, it would have no copy there of the free-trade editorial. However, there is a good chance the early edition was received by Beryl Stapleton's hotel (as well as the final edition).

And who can doubt that Holmes instructed the nearby news agent that he was to get every edition of certain papers, such as the *Times* and the *Star*. Something similarly frustrating happened once before. For decades, Sherlockians have pestered the offices of the *Journal de Genève* for reproductions of the issue of 6 May 1891 only to fail to find the account of Holmes's death that Dr. Watson writes is recorded there ("Final Problem"). Yet a translation of that very news item appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of *Canadian Holmes* (6) and, presumably, it will not be too long before the original surfaces.

The paper next morning

Laura Lyons says that she did not write Sir Charles to say she had no need for the money because she saw the news about his death "in the paper next morning," which would have been Wednesday, 5 June. However, Barrymore did not discover the body in the Yew Alley until around midnight. Several hours more would have elapsed before the police came and word could possibly have reached any reporter. That would have been far too late to be included in any West Country newspaper that Lyons

could have read the next morning, particularly the region's most prominent dailies, the *Western Morning News* (7) and *The Western Daily Mercury*, both published in Plymouth.

News of Sir Charles's death could have been published by an afternoon newspaper. Reporters would likely have been tipped off by a well-rewarded sergeant while doing their rounds on the morning of 5 June and had time for at least a "stop press" item. Two papers are the leading candidates to have printed that news and to also have been read by Lyons in Newton Abbot.

The first is *The Western Guardian*, a paper published once or twice weekly in numerous localized editions around the West Country. In 1889 the Totnes edition of the *Western Guardian* came out on Wednesdays and Thursdays, according to that year's edition of the *U.K. Press Directory*. (8) It likely began its print run well before noon.

The second candidate is *The Star*, the largest circulation daily in Britain, which was published in London and gave extensive coverage to the doings of Sherlock Holmes. It was classed as an afternoon paper, but the early edition was for sale on the streets in London around 10 a.m., and would be available in the main centres of the West Country the same day. If the *Star*'s correspondent in Plymouth was on the ball, a telegraphed "stop press" item about Sir Charles could have made that first edition.

This afternoon-newspaper explanation fits if Laura Lyons simply was mistaken about the time of day when she read the newspaper account. It also fits if Dr. Watson, being most familiar with morning newspapers in London, interpolated the "morning" word when Lyons said "in the paper the next day." The most likely newspaper for someone trying to keep up with business opportunities would be *The Guardian*.

Notes

(1) According to the 1887 *Bradshaw's Guide* (reprint, David & Charles, 1968), the sole Sunday train to Paddington from Newton Abbot took 101/2 hours, leaving at 8:24 a.m. and arriving at 7:05 p.m. During the week, however, there was a daily express that made the same journey in a mere five hours, leaving Newton Abbot at a more civilized 9:44 a.m. and reaching Paddington at 2:45. This express was limited to first- and second-class coaches. A wealthy man in his 50s would certainly choose to save five hours and travel in more comfort.

(2) From the 1840s to the 1880s, leading articles of *The Times* had regularly carried— as well as commentary on political developments—the news reporting about the development itself whenever the information came from the editor's own confidential sources. On 24 April 1880, for example, readers discovered in the leading article the exclusive

information that Gladstone was to be Prime Minister. By 1885, however, a political correspondent had been appointed and the leaders were limited to comment on news presented elsewhere. A list of the day's contents was added immediately atop the leaders in February 1887.

(3) We can dismiss the mélange of the real *Times* with an obviously pasted-in leading article on free trade that appears in Simon Goodenough's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (London: Webb & Bower, 1984), an often-inspired dossier of artifacts and Watson's accounts for Holmes.

(4) Brend, Gavin, *My Dear Holmes,* London, George Allen, 1951, p.102.

(5) "Leaded bourgeois type" specifies only the size of the type ("bourgeois") and the fact that a thin lead spacer was inserted between lines. Holmes fails to specify the type font, the most important identifying characteristic.

(6) See "Sherlock Holmes Missing in Swiss Alps" in Peter Calamai, "A Peek in Mrs. Hudson's Scrapbook," *Canadian Holmes*, Vol. 23, No. 3, Lady Day (Spring) 2000, pp.4-30, especially 28-30.

(7) For an excellent history of the *Western Morning News*, see Margaret Sutton, "A History of the Western Morning News," *The Hound*, Vol. 3, Hampshire, Sherlock Publications, 1994.

(8) By 1892, there were nine such editions, including a Wednesday Ashburton version. The original proprietors were two brothers, T. and A. Mortimer, who became quite well off from the venture. *The Western Guardian* continued publishing in some form until December 1967. There is no evidence that the Mortimer brothers and Dr. James Mortimer were related.

Tallying cab costs in the Canon

This article first appeared in the Winter 2009 edition of The Baker Street Journal, Vol. 59, No.4.

The England of Sherlock Holmes was a horse-drawn society. Yet the ubiquity of the horse is underrepresented visually in the Canon. Only 15 of Sidney Paget's 357 *Strand* illustrations include horses. More importantly for this article, just one of those (in "The Speckled Band") shows what must have been a very common occurrence, Sherlock Holmes paying a fare to a cabman.

Paying a cab fare seemed such a mundane event in Victorian London and environs that neither the author of the stories nor the illustrator considered it worth much notice. But it was a mundane event mostly for the well-to-do. The least expensive ride in a hansom cab would have cost Holmes and Watson one shilling, with a three penny (3d) tip expected. By contrast the minimum omnibus fare was 2d (there were 12d to the shilling and 20s to the pound), and the maximum was nine pence within central London limits. As Sherlockians know well, a shilling was a day's wage for a street urchin to be Holmes's eyes and ears.

Sidney Paget's 1892 illustration from The Strand Magazine *showing Holmes paying a cabman in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band."*

It was also a bite out of Watson's daily wound pension of 11 shillings, six pence.

Holmes didn't always get around London by paying for some sort of cab. As Michael Harrison notes, he would have been more likely to have opted for an omnibus to stay in character when disguised as "a Nonconformist clergyman, a loafer, a plumber, an Italian priest, a sailor, a vagabond, an old woman, a dope collector and a workman." (1) Often he walked. Once at least, in "The Red-Headed League," he and Watson travelled by Underground. And in *A Study in Scarlet* he boasted of hitching a free ride by jumping on the rear of a four-wheeler, "an art which every detective should be expert at."

Yet the bulk of Holmes's adventuring in London and environs was horse drawn and overwhelmingly the horse was pulling a hansom cab. The attractions of the two-wheeler hansom were its privacy and maneuverability. (2) The latter translated into speed through clogged streets that in 1886 were home to 7,020 hansoms, 3,997 four-wheelers, and 1,663 omnibuses, according to the Public Record Office. (3) Speeds recorded in the Canon vary from a rate of a mile every five minutes ("The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax") to a mile every six minutes or every 10 minutes (both "The Six Napoleons").

Several Sherlockian scholars have contributed well-researched expositions about the hansom and other horse-drawn Canonical conveyances such as the growler, brougham, trap, dog-cart, and even carriages with paper-covered windows! (4)

Missing from most of the writings, however, is an attempt to assess how much was spent on cab journeys by Holmes and Watson. The calculation is not a simple one. The first challenge lies in drawing up an inventory of rides in any sort of horse-drawn vehicle in London and environs either mentioned explicitly in the Canon or that can be confidently imputed. My tally from the 56 short stories and four novellas is 129 journeys, which is almost certainly an underestimate.

I arbitrarily divided these into the following categories:

Course of investigations	68
Physically launching cases	22
Other trips to/from 221B	13
Simple transport	12
Transporting prisoners	8
Flight ("The Final Problem")	4
Mysterious	2

In the first two categories, which I consider the most important, 79 of the 90 rides in horse-drawn vehicles involved either Holmes, Watson, or, usually, both men. (5) Sixty-seven of those were probably by hansom cab.

The second challenge is calculating the fares for these 67 hansom cab journeys.

As outlined in guidebooks from the period, hirers of hansom cabs could choose to pay by distance or time, the choice specified at the start of the journey.

The fare rates varied depending on whether the entire journey was within a four-mile radius of Charing Cross, or started outside that circle and ended inside, or began inside but ended outside. Such complexity favoured someone like Holmes who prided himself on having "an exact knowledge of London." It has even been proposed that Holmes may have initially worked as a cab driver himself while awaiting clients and to learn his way around the metropolis. (6)

For those without such exact knowledge, one option was suggested in the *Dickens Dictionary of London 1879*: "It will be found that a penny per minute is fair to both parties. For fifteen minutes one and sixpence should be paid, and fourteen minutes may be taken within the shilling. This is not an official rate but will save trouble and generally prove right." (7) Each piece of luggage carried outside the carriage cost an additional 2d. Fortunately there was no charge for luggage taken inside, even if it was a harpoon ("Black Peter"), a dog or a treasure chest (*The Sign of the Four*), or burglary tools ("The Bruce-Partington Plans," "Charles Augustus Milverton.") There was also a charge of 2d for each passenger above two in a hansom, which may have been incurred when Holmes, Watson, and Inspector Lestrade shared a "cab" to 131 Pitt Street in "The Six Napoleons." (8) That cab had been kept waiting outside 221B, for which the charge was 8d for every completed 15 minutes.

Only once in the Canon is there a mention of the amount paid by Holmes for a fare. Hot on the trail of Godfrey Norton and Irene Adler in "A Scandal in Bohemia," Holmes promises a cabbie a half sovereign (10s) to get him from St. John's Wood to the Edgeware Road area within 20 minutes. This was indeed munificent. The hourly rental for a hansom inside or outside the four-mile circle was 2s 6d. The charge by distance is more difficult to calculate, since we do not know for sure the location of Serpentine Avenue nor of St. Monica's Church, but it would most likely have been no more than 3s. Godfrey Norton was slightly more munificent, paying half a guinea (10s 6d); but his journey to the church included a stop at a Regent Street jewelers. The other specified hansom fare was also well over the top. A disguised Jack Stapleton paid two guineas to cabbie John Clayton

to shadow Dr. Mortimer and Sir Henry Baskerville. As Clayton tells Holmes, "I was glad enough to agree." (9)

For the rest of the fares, we are in the land of deduction and sometimes surmise, especially since Watson often disguises the end points of journeys. However, our task is somewhat eased by the fourth edition (1890) of *Ward & Lock's Pictorial Guide to London*, which devotes 62 pages to listing 35,000 hansom cab fares within a four-mile radius of Charing Cross. (10) Those tables reveal, for example, that the fare for arguably the most important hansom ride in the Canon—the one shared by Watson and Stamford from the Criterion Bar at Piccadilly to the Holborn at 218 High Holborn—was a shilling. (11) Indeed, the bulk of those 67 important hansom journeys likely cost between one and two shillings, including all those from Baker Street to railway stations. (12) Some of the most famous journeys, however, fall outside these parametres. Wherever Briony Lodge was located in "A Scandal in Bohemia," it couldn't have been as close to Baker Street as St. John's Wood. The hansom carrying Nonconformist clergyman Holmes and Watson needed 35 minutes for the journey. Even for a slow hansom, that suggests more than three miles, at least double the actual distance.

Perhaps Holmes and Watson dallied through Regent's Park. In any event, the fare by distance would have been no more than 2s 6d.

The maddest hansom dash in the Canon is from Baker Street to Poultney Square in Brixton to save Lady Frances Carfax, which Watson records as taking 45 minutes. The initial portion to Westminster Bridge is roughly two miles and took just 10 minutes. The horse must have slowed, however. No matter where the real Poultney Square was in south Brixton, the distance from Westminster Bridge can be no more than another four miles. Because it was before 8 p.m. when he engaged the hansom, Holmes would have been wise to opt for the hourly rate of 2s 6d. By distance, the fare would have been at least three shillings.

At the informal rate of a penny a minute, the fare would likely have been rounded up to 4s. In any case, it seems a small amount to save a life. Similarly, the continued outlay on hansom cabs, while too onerous for someone on a wound pension, was trifling for Sherlock Holmes.

Acknowledgements: The author wishes to thank Peggy Purdue of the Toronto Reference Library and Doug Wrigglesworth, BSI, for assistance.

Notes

1. Harrison, Michael, *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*, Newton Abbot, David & Charles, 1971, p.59.

2. The disadvantages included winter chills and summer sweats. The jarveys, or drivers, also drank. In 1894, 1,340 cabmen were convicted of drunkenness on the job, scores of them multiple offences. Jerry White, *London in the 19th Century*, London, Vintage Books, 2008, p.213.
3. Curjel, Harald, "Canonical Horse-Drawn Vehicles," *Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring 1979), pp.18-24.
4. Iraldi, James, "The Victorian Gondola," *The Baker Street Journal* [N.S.j, Vol. 1, No. 1 (July 1951), pp.99-103. Henry C. Potter, "Reflections on Canonical Vehicles and Something of the Horse," *The Baker Street Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Dec. 1971), pp.200-206.
5. A Word file listing details of all the journeys is available from the author by e-mail.
6. Jordan, Anne, "Was Holmes a Cab Driver?" *The Ritual*, No. 11 (Spring 1993), pp. 8-12.
7. Dickens, Charles, *Dickens Dictionary of London 1879*, London, Howard Baker Edition, 1972, p.29.
8. In "The Red-Headed League" two hansoms are used, rather than a fourwheeler, to transport Holmes, Watson, banker Merryweather, and Detective Jones from Baker Street to Saxe-Coburg Square. This appears to be the sole example in the Canon of a hansom convoy.
9. Understandably, since a driver could hire a cab from a yard like Tilling's for a day for 16s. White, p.241.
10. Even more complete information is probably contained in the one-penny booklets of cab fares published in the 1890s by Tallis & Co. of 22 Wellington Street, Strand, but so far these have proven elusive.
11. Not forgetting the customary 3d tip, as explained by Michael Harrison in "Baker Street Harrisonia," *Baker Street Miscellanea*, No. 47 (Feb. 1986), p.20.
12. The Ward & Lock's guide lists the nearest "hackney carriage standing" to the most likely 221B location as Baker Street at King Street or at Portman Square.

Not a shot fired – in anger: ACD as a war correspondent

This article first appeared in the Summer 2008 edition of Canadian Holmes, Vol. 31, No.1.

Two decades before his well-publicized reporting forays to three fronts in the Great War, and five years before he was to combine battlefield sightseeing with hospital duties in the Boer War, Arthur Conan Doyle signed on as a war correspondent in one of the last of Victorian Britain's Imperial conflicts.

In March 1896 the Salisbury government in London finally surrendered to public clamour and private pressure and ordered the commander of the Anglo-Egyptian army, Sir Herbert Horatio Kitchener, to put down the 'Mohammedan fanaticism' in Sudan, a region previously under Anglo-Egyptian suzerainty. (Later, as a grim-faced Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, he was to declare "Britain Needs You" from First World War recruiting posters.)

The British public was counting on Kitchener to avenge the killing of General 'Chinese' Gordon a decade earlier by those 'fanatics,' a death in the best traditions of doomed British heroes. Anticipating good copy from the slaughter of satisfying numbers of infidels and stoic heroism by the Tommies, 26 special correspondents and artists for British publications quickly descended upon Cairo. Conan Doyle was already there, having arrived the previous November with Louise, his tubercular wife who enjoyed the dry climate and the relatively cool days, and her younger sister Caroline, known as Lottie. He instantly offered his services as a 'special correspondent' to *The Westminster Gazette*, and the paper accepted by return cable.

The *Gazette* had been founded only three years earlier as a Liberal afternoon newspaper in London by journalists who had quit *The Pall Mall Gazette* when Conservative owners took control. The founding proprietor of *The Westminster Gazette* was none other than Sir George Newnes, owner of *The Strand* (1).

Unfortunately, Conan Doyle wasn't to hear a shot fired in anger, despite spending nearly two months on the job and following Kitchener to the most forward British base. Even without battlefield action, the Sudan experience left its mark on Conan Doyle's creative life, and he mined it for the short story "The Three Correspondents" and the novel *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (also known as *A Desert Drama*). These connections have

often been noted; but the eight dispatches from Conan Doyle that appeared in *The Gazette* between 1 April and 4 May 1896 have never before been considered critically.

Writing in the trying circumstances of not having any real news to report, Conan Doyle acquitted himself admirably. He effortlessly adopted the traditional Victorian war correspondent's camouflage of appearing to be familiar with the intricacies of a situation and country in which he was a newcomer. He yoked appropriate amounts of jingoism with gushing admiration for the British administrative overlords in Egypt and for the allegedly superb fighting qualities of British soldiers. In the face of considerable physical challenge and Kitchener's open displeasure, Conan Doyle made his way with a handful of other correspondents to the most forward base just across the Egyptian-Sudan border. And, most important of all, he managed to get his copy to the paper in what was good time under the circumstances. In effect, as a detailed examination of his reporting will demonstrate, Conan Doyle bested some of the outstanding Victorian war correspondents of the day at their own game.

For such men, this was not just another vainglorious colonial conflict of the type so devastatingly satirized later in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*. The first dismal Sudan campaign from 1883 to 1885 had seen not only the celebrated demise of 'Chinese' Gordon but also the deaths of seven correspondents for the British press. To their latter-day fellows, these men had died in the service of the British Empire just as surely as Gordon and his men. It's a safe bet that Conan Doyle would have been familiar with their names, inscribed on a tablet in St Paul's Cathedral: battlefield artist Frank Vizetelly; St Leger Algernon Herbert, CMG, of the *Morning Post*; William Henry Gordon, of *The Manchester Guardian*; Frank J. L. Roberts of *Reuters*; Edmund O'Donovan of the *Daily News*, (2) Frank Power of *The Times*, and John Alexander Cameron of the *Evening Standard*.

Arthur Conan Doyle's journalistic heritage can be traced back to his godfather and grand-uncle, Michael Conan, after whom he was named. Initially a barrister, Michael Conan was best known as a music and drama critic, including 15 years as the French correspondent for *The Art Journal* of London. In 1832, however, Conan was dispatched to Belgium as a war correspondent by the *Morning Herald* (3) of London to cover the French siege of Antwerp. He reported the conflict from The Hague for a year. (4) Did that foray into war reporting evoke an interest in journalism when Conan Doyle visited his uncle in Paris? Pierre Nordon suggests Conan may have "envisaged a literary career for his nephew, perhaps beginning with journalism" (5). Arthur Conan Doyle had not followed that path; and the Sudan journalistic experience could be seen as validating that decision.

To start with, Kitchener hated the press. "Out of my way, you drunken swabs," he cursed after forcing them to stand in the sun awaiting his arrival at Wadi Halfa, the main British base in the south of Egypt. He limited their telegraphic access to 200 words a day, forced them to run the same risks as his soldiers (many ran greater risks), gave them no help, no briefings, no guidance, and little courtesy (6). As Conan Doyle demonstrates in "The Three Correspondents," a lot of information can be encrypted in a cable of just 13 words. But you need at least a nugget of news for such cablese to work. (7)

Unfortunately for eager would-be war correspondent Conan Doyle, Kitchener was nowhere near ready to begin any sort of major incursion into the Sudan. He first had to move men, materiel, and camels over hundreds of miles of sand from Aswan to Wadi Halfa (8) and then wait for a railway to be built across 230 miles of desert. Nothing of any military consequence was going to happen before May, when Cairo would be too hot for Louise's delicate health. Instead of reporting the clash of arms and the expected British triumphs, stories which almost write themselves, Conan Doyle had the far harder task of capturing and holding public interest when nothing was happening. Biographer Charles Higham summarizes Conan Doyle's predicament like this:

> To his sexual frustration must now be added the frustration of another expression of his manhood—rangling [sic] with the dervishes in a war. In addition, he would have some highly embarrassing explanations to make to the editor of *The Westminster Gazette*, for which he had written little. (9)

Had Higham carried out even the rudimentary research of checking *Palmer's Index to the Times Newspaper*, he would have found that that paper's correspondent had only four dispatches printed during the same period when eight were published from Conan Doyle in *The Gazette*. And had Higham read both sets of dispatches, he would have seen that the *Gazette* editor had every reason to be highly satisfied with his neophyte correspondent.

First, and most important, Conan Doyle's copy got through, and in reasonably good time. Telegraphed dispatches from Cairo could have reached *The Gazette* within two days. But closer to the action, the delay between Conan Doyle's filing the dispatch and its appearance in print was much greater, ranging from 17 to 21 days. The 1 April 'Letter from Cairo' is essentially a scene-setter with atmospheric references to 'red-tarbooshed officers,' a *tarboosh* being a high Egyptian fez. Yet barely 200 words into his first article, Conan Doyle has already flagged a crucial journalistic and military question: would Britain's Egyptian soldiers fight or falter? A

decade earlier, these *fellaheen* (peasants) had flung down their arms and cowered on the ground whimpering in the face of a Dervish attack.

In contrast, contemporary reports by the *Times'*s correspondent heaped uncritical praise on the fighting fervour of the fellaheen. In a subsequent dispatch printed 7 April, Conan Doyle continued to ask whether "the best men whom England could supply. . . have .. . succeeded in stiffening that supple Oriental back . . . against a swarm of wild-cat Dervishes." His skepticism timed out to be justified. After the early fighting, Kitchener demanded more "white" troops, more than doubling the number of British forces before making the final push against the rebel stronghold.

Conan Doyle lays down another important journalistic marker in this first article. He makes it clear that he expects readers of *The Gazette* to be knowledgeable about current affairs and about the movers and shakers in the Anglo-Egyptian cosmos, throwing off as many as eight surnames in quick succession, with the barest hint of who they might be. Yet some of the reporting seems little better than transcribing bar talk at the Turf Club, the home-away-from-home for the British bureaucratic overseers and army officers. Take for instance Conan Doyle's off-hand allusion to 'Rogers who stamped out the cholera.' Far from being stamped out, however, cholera was 'all over the country' by May. J. G. Rogers, director-general of the Egyptian Sanitary Department, was to write in a letter to *The Times* [August 17, 1898] that he expected the death toll from the current epidemic would reach 20,000. There is no evidence that the severity of the epidemic was being concealed during Conan Doyle's time in Cairo.

With Conan Doyle's references to 'Wingate' and 'Slatin,' however, we move onto an entirely different plane. When he was observing the two men at the Turf Club, Sir Francis Reginald Wingate was the director of military intelligence in the Egyptian Army and Sir Rudolf Carl von Slatin was his deputy. (10) Behind Slatin's 'cheery ruddy face' (as observed by Conan Doyle and captured in a caricature by Spy in *Vanity Fair*) lurked the soul of an opportunistic double-dealer. Far from wishing the Khalifa (Caliph) at his sword point, as Conan Doyle confidently declared, Slatin had in fact written secretly to the Khalifa only 12 months earlier assuring the ruler of 'his loyalty and love.' He had previously served the Khalifa for a dozen years until 1893 and offered to return to that service as soon as he received a letter of pardon. *The Dictionary of National Biography* notes that both men 'excelled cultivating the press,' so perhaps Conan Doyle was simply snowed.

The next article, published on 7 April, is replete with more atmospheric padding, ending "With a fringe of waving helmets as the train lurches round the curve, and England has moved another pawn upon the

chessboard of the world." This closing sentence demonstrates that Conan Doyle did not expect to suffer the common correspondent's indignity of having his dispatch trimmed from the bottom to make it fit.

In his dispatch published on 9 April, Conan Doyle took readers of *The Gazette* on a geographic tour of the difficult terrain on the trek south that confronted the Anglo-Egyptian force, enlivening an otherwise dull theme with second-hand battle stories from the earlier Sudan conflict. He also engages in some casual dehumanizing of the enemy by contrasting Cairo at one end of the Nile with 'black barbarism' at the other. Yet Conan Doyle was not an uncritical propagandist or apologist for the Salisbury government, as this sentence shows:

> At the far end of this sixty miles of desert is the hollow of Akasheh, which is one of the most insanitary [correct] and indefensible positions possible. It is quite certain that, whatever assurances may be given in Parliament, a *force majeure* will cause any commander to abandon a position which is commanded on all sides and without shelter from the sun...

When war correspondents have no news to report, they turn to reporting rumours, and when there are no rumours, they resort to the desperate ploy adopted by Conan Doyle in his dispatch published on 13 April:

> Of the campaign you at home probably know more than we who are at the edge of it. Even rumours have ceased to circulate, and there is an absolute dearth of any kind of news.

Conan Doyle truly hit his correspondent's stride with three articles—published on 20 April, 27 April, and 4 May—recounting an unauthorized expedition to the front with four other special correspondents for British newspapers. They undertook a perilous overland journey of more than 200 miles from Aswan, reached uneventfully by train and river steamer, south to the border stronghold of Wadi Halfa. Conan Doyle refers to the party as 'storm petrels' representing 'three great dailies and the two penny evenings.' Although he does not name these 'body-servants of the Press,' the descriptions are obviously drawn from life and would later find echoes in "The Three Correspondents."

> Here is the *Times*, tall, straight and muscular, famous yachtsman and treasure-seeker, traveller, fighter and scholar. Here, too, is the *Daily News*, small, compact, mercurial; full of life, fire and pluck; a man of many campaigns and singular ventures, with that strange combination of ruddy hair and black eye that is the outward sign of the splendid neuro-sanguine blend. And lastly, the *Standard*, thin

> but wiry, with the slightly *blasé* pince-nez look of a man who has seen much of life; cool, alert; a useful man to have by your side in a tight place. These are our comrades, and could a man wish better?

After some detective work I have concluded that *The Times* correspondent was most likely Edward Frederick. Knight, who is described in the official *Times* history for this period, as "the experienced War Correspondent." (11) But the two correspondents for the *Daily News* and the *Standard* remain unidentified, and there is a mystery Fifth Correspondent, who must have worked for a morning paper judging from the reference to "three great dailies," of which *The Times* and the *Daily News* were two, since only the morning papers were ranked as great then.

There is no need, however, to confirm the identities of the four other correspondents in order to compare their various accounts of their shared expedition. Only *The Times* is readily available for consultation in Canada, however, so analyzing the other three must await a visit to the Colindale newspaper division of the British Library and several days of eye-straining microfilm. But it would undoubtedly pay dividends, since comparing just the two accounts suggests that either Conan Doyle or *The Times* correspondent was embellishing in one instance. Both filed reports about catching a river steamer at Korosko to go upriver. In Conan Doyle's version, the waiting correspondents had already turned in for the night when a steamer unexpectedly appeared, causing them to dress frantically and assemble their kits in a rush. In *The Times* man's version, the steamer was expected and the correspondents boarded in an orderly fashion.

Conan Doyle again displayed his keen journalistic eye and ear in the final dispatch, which appeared on 11 May but was likely transmitted 23 April, judging by the dating of a dispatch about the same visit by the *Times* correspondent. He took up the question of the Lee-Metford, the standard-issue rifle for the British-Egyptian army, whose ten-shot magazine held a .303 cartridge. "The universal opinion seemed to be," Conan Doyle wrote, "that the rifle's small light bullet would not stop a charging Dervish." Yet Conan Doyle, and *The Times* correspondent, both missed the real scandal, which was reported from the front lines by Bennet Burleigh, the famous correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph*:

> Under superior orders . . . large details from each regiment were engaged daily in filing off the tips of the Lee Metford bullet. One million rounds had to be so dealt with. They were doing the same in Cairo arsenal. It is little short of a scandal that an army in the field has to sit down whilst the men re-make its ammunition. [Wilkinson-Latham, pp. 227-8] (12)

Filing off the tips transformed the .303 cartridge into a dumdum bullet which flattened on impact and would definitely stop a charging Dervish. Dumdums were eventually banned by The Hague Convention, but not until the year after the infamous Battle of Omdurman on 2 September 1898. In that bloodbath an estimated 16,000 Dervish tribesmen perished, compared to 51 killed among the British invading forces, some of whom were no doubt firing the modified Lee-Metford bullets. One participant called it "the most signal triumph ever gained by the science of arms over barbarians." (13) Based on his brief output as a frustrated war correspondent, it is difficult to believe that Conan Doyle would have made such a jingoistic judgment had he stayed on the job in Sudan.

References

(1) *The Times, A Newspaper History 1785-1935*, reprinted from the 150th Anniversary Number of The Times, January 1, 1935, The Times Publishing Company, 1935, p100.

(2) The perilous economics of newspaper publishing has resulted in the disappearance of several of these once proud names. In 1937 *The Morning Post* was folded into *The Daily Telegraph*. In 1928 the *Daily News* merged with *The Westminster Gazette*, continuing as the *Daily News and Westminster Gazette* for two years before morphing into the *News Chronicle*, which was finally incorporated into the *Daily Mail* in 1960. The *Evening Standard* underwent seven name changes between 1905 and 1987 when it reverted to the *Evening Standard*.

(3) Ceased publication 31 December 1869

(4) Doyle, Georgina, *Out of the Shadows: The Untold Story of Arthur Conan Doyle's First Family*, Calabash Press, 2004, p11.

(5) Nordon, Pierre, *Arthur Conan Doyle*, translated by Frances Partridge, John Murray, 1966, p24.

(6) Knightley, Phillip, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker from the Crimea to Vietnam*, Andre Deutsch, 1975, p54.

(7) For a fascinating look at the rapidly vanishing special vocabulary of telegraphed and telexed stories see Richard M. Hatnett's *Wirespeak: Codes and Jargon of the News Business*, especially Chapter 6 on cablese.

(8) Spelled Assouan and Wady at the time.

(9) Higham, Charles, *The Adventures of Conan Doyle: The Life of the Creator of Sherlock Holmes*, Hamish Hamilton, 1976, p146.

(10) For lively mysteries set in this era, read any of Michael Pearce's books about the Mamur Zapt, the British official who was Wingate's counterpart for the civilian intelligence service. Pearce was raised in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

(11) *The History of The Times, Vol. III: The Twentieth Century Test,* London, 1947.

(12) Wilkinson-Latham, Robert, *From Our Special Correspondent: Victorian War Correspondents and Their Campaigns*, Hodder, and Stoughton, 1979, pp.227-8.

(13) Roberts, Andrew, *Salisbury, Victorian Titan*, Phoenix, 2000, p697.

Looking beyond the Moss-rose to the green consulting detective

This article was originally published in The Hounds Collection, Volume 10, 2005. *The book is a collection of writings, articles and thoughts posted to The Hounds of the Internet, a list-serve group begun in 1992. More information on them can be found at: https://www.sherlockian.net/sharing/hounds/. On this email group, Peter posted as Horace Harker.*

By "Horace Harker"

It is sometimes alleged that Sherlock Holmes lacked any real affinity with the environment, citing as evidence Dr. John Watson's observation that "neither the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction" to the detective. Holmes preferred letting his filaments stretch out through London's five million people, writes Watson, who concludes: "Appreciation of nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his back from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country." This stark judgment gains extra force by being delivered twice in the Canon, in the opening scene duplicated in "The Cardboard Box" and "The Resident Patient."

In his mass-market *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, the indefatigable Les Klinger reaches a similarly harsh verdict that "Few would regard Holmes as a nature-lover."(1) Klinger then quotes another commentator to the effect that Holmes's admiration of the moss-rose in "The Naval Treaty" marks the only time he is recorded even noticing flowers. (2) There is also no suggestion in the Canon that Holmes had any aptitude for or interest in horticulture, other than the ability to conceal himself behind the rhododendrons in "The Naval Treaty." "Knows nothing of practical gardening," Watson wrote dismissively in his famous list in *A Study in Scarlet*.

Yet digging in the ornamental border or preferring the country to the city are not the real hallmarks of a nature-lover. Those with a true affinity with the environment strive to live their lives in harmony with their surroundings, urban or rural. In particular, they attempt to keep their ecological footprint to a minimum, (3) curb unsustainable consumption (4) and embrace the interrelatedness of all life. (5) Their way of loving nature is by respecting it.

By these standards, Holmes was not only a nature-lover, he was also what today would be called an environmentalist and, as such, the first

"Green" Consulting Detective. As Holmes himself would have advised, commentators should have taken a closer look at the data before reaching their verdicts.

First, there is the overwhelming evidence that Watson was not always very insightful, including in his assessments of his long-time companion ("You see, but you do not observe" — "A Scandal in Bohemia"). According to Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes not only knows nothing of practical gardening but has "nil" knowledge of philosophy. Yet in the preface to "His Last Bow," the good doctor informs readers that the now-retired detective is dividing his time between "philosophy and agriculture." (6)

A more perceptive observer might have concluded that Holmes chose the city and devoted his energies to toxicology rather than gardening out of practical necessity, not personal predilection. He shaped everything in his learning and experience toward a career as a private consulting detective. There would be time later — should he live — for his true interests to come to the fore.

And indeed, Holmes himself confirms this while introducing "The Lion's Mane," one of the two stories he narrates in the Canon: "It occurred after my withdrawal to my little Sussex home, when I had given myself up entirely to that soothing life of Nature for which I had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the gloom of London." Even earlier, while still professionally active in "The Creeping Man," Holmes is upset at having missed obvious clues and exclaims to Watson, "It's surely time that I disappeared into that little farm of my dreams." Those may be the most straightforward indications of Holmes's innate greenness, but they are far from the only ones.

Consider also in "Black Peter," where Holmes says, "Let us walk in these beautiful woods, Watson, and give a few hours to the birds and the flowers." There is no suggestion here that the attraction of nature is only a ploy to conceal sleuthing, as it may have been in "Wisteria Lodge" when Holmes spoke of instructive days with "a spud, a tin box and an elementary book on botany". Watson noted that his friend brought back a "poor show of plants of an evening."

The detective also displays an empathy with domesticated animals that goes beyond his normal keen observation of the world. He understands what dogs do, and don't do, in the nighttime as demonstrated in "Silver Blaze," how they reflect family life in "The Creeping Man" and "the beautiful faithful nature" that causes them to pine and die for dead masters in "Lion's Mane." He also speaks with considerable admiration of the olfactory talent and persistence of Toby in *The Sign of Four* and Pompey in "The Missing Three-Quarter." In "Silver Blaze," Holmes demonstrates

that he is equally familiar with the habits of the horse, "a very gregarious creature." (7)

Bartlett D. Simms makes a convincing case that Holmes was an accomplished fly fisherman, which would certainly bring him into intimate contact with gills, becks and rivers and all their denizens. (8) A less convincing argument by Simms in the same article is his speculation that Holmes was able to live off the land after Reichenbach Falls because of a volume published by Murray, the orderly who saved Watson's life.(9)

Holmes's interest in the environment is also apparent in his reading habits. In "The Lion's Mane" he credits his success in identifying *Cyanea capillata* as the killer to being "an omnivorous reader with a strangely retentive memory for trifles." In this case, the trifle was the sobriquet "lion's mane" which the Rev. John George Wood used in describing his own near-death encounter with *capillata* in his book *Out of Doors*. Yet that incident was just one of the essays gathered in the book, published in 1874, and *Out of Doors* was but one of the 60 volumes on natural history that Wood wrote after ill-health forced him to give up full-time clerical duties. It stretches credulity to accept that Holmes happened to read just that particular essay or happened to possess merely that one volume from Wood's considerable output.

Far more likely is that Holmes also read, and probably owned, such other of Wood's books as *Bees: Their Habits and Management* (1853), *Common British Beetles* (1870), *The Lane and the Field* (1879) and *The Romance of Animal Life* (1887). (10) If so, then Holmes must have enjoyed rhapsodic passages about "the real, dear, genuine, old-fashioned English lane, with its bank of flowers, its little rippling streamlets, its shady hedgerows; its feathered trees, with their gnarled roots thrusting themselves out of the bank in strange knotty contortions, and occasionally making their appearance in the centre of the footpath, as if for the express purpose of flinging the heedless passenger on his nose; its pleasant hum of busy insect wings, and its cheerful twitter of little birds." (11)

However, in "The Greek Interpreter" Watson characterizes Holmes as "a brain without a heart." Is this the sort of person who would care about the "cheerful twitter of little birds"? To answer that question we need to look at the three traits which I argued at the onset define the true environmentalist:

- keep ecological footprint to a minimum
- curb unsustainable consumption
- embrace the interrelatedness of all life.

Holmes lived at the height of the Industrial Age and of the British Empire, a time which James (now Jan) Morris described in *Pax Britannica* as one of "muddled grandeur." No one other than scientists talked about

ecology (12) and no one had even thought of an individual's ecological footprint, the demands that their way of life imposed on the natural world.

Now consider Holmes. Until retirement to a cottage on the Sussex Downs, he lived most of his professional life in a set of rented rooms. Certainly, after the £6,000 payment from the Duke of Holdernesse in "The Priory School" he was no longer "a poor man" and could easily have kept a much grander establishment in London as well as a country retreat, perhaps near the soothing glades of the New Forest for Watson's sake. Yet Holmes chose to stay in his modest digs, with their minimal contribution to an ecological footprint.

Similarly, his preferred mode of transportation in London was the hansom cab, long after omnibuses plied the streets and the Underground chugged beneath. A horse is powered by renewable energy and its waste can be — and was by the Victorians — effectively recycled. In the country, Holmes got around by dog-cart, bicycle and, most often, shank's mare (aka his own two feet). His arrival and departure in a Ford at an isolated dwelling while posing as the American spy Altamont in "His Last Bow" is the only Canonical evidence for Holmes using a car, and he was merely Watson's passenger.

It is true that Holmes often travelled by train, with coal-burning locomotives belching soot and carbon dioxide. But a train is mass transit and his personal ecological footprint per mile travelled was far less than the later alternative of a petrol-fuelled automobile.

Most important in this regard was Holmes's views on the place of man in the bigger picture. The Victorians were convinced that mankind's manifest destiny was to subjugate the natural world, to bend it and its occupants to man's uses. The two men who shared rooms on Baker Street also shared a more realistic appreciation of where that balance lay. Watson writes about "the great elemental forces which shriek at mankind through the bars of his civilization" in "The Five Orange Pips," and of feeling the "iron grip of Nature" even in the centre of the great metropolis and being "conscious that to the huge elemental forces all London was no more than the molehills that dot the fields" in "The Golden Pince-nez." There can be little argument that Holmes felt much the same, although the only direct evidence comes when he refers in *The Sign of Four* to a "curious but profound remark" in the writings of Jean Paul Richter: "It is that the chief proof of man's real greatness lies in his perception of his own smallness."(13)

As for curbing consumption, we are talking about a man whose living habits in the field Watson characterized in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as "Spartan" and who wasn't much different at home. The Canon records more than a half-dozen incidents where Holmes neglects to even eat and

Watson even says that the detective has fainted "from pure inanition." (14) The production and consumption of food can, of course, be carried out in an ecologically sustainable fashion but that was most definitely not the case in Britain in the late Victorian era. (15) Among his "vast store of out-of-the-way knowledge without scientific system" as recounted in "The Lion's Mane," Holmes had likely acquired an appreciation of this state of affairs.

Food is, however, merely an indicator that Holmes's appetite for personal consumer goods of all sorts was restrained, in an era when consumption among the middle class and wealthy was conspicuous. There is no evidence of purchasing new clothes despite more than two decades of down-on-the-knees detecting; even his dressing gown is retained so long that it fades from one colour to another. Admittedly Holmes was a voracious consumer of newspapers, but forests can be a sustainable resource. He also fishes, but again that can be a sustainable use of the environment.

It is in the final category of embracing the interrelatedness of all life that the true ecological beacon of Holmes's nature shines most brightly. "One's ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Nature," Holmes tells Watson over dinner in *A Study in Scarlet*. That March 4, 1881 day had begun at 221B with the doctor reading this passage in a magazine article titled "The Book of Life": "From a drop of water a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it."

Holmes wrote that unsigned article, an authorship Watson discovers only after dismissing the musings as "ineffable twaddle." Here at the very start of their relationship, and in his introduction to the public, Holmes is putting down his ecological marker: everything is interconnected and you cannot pick up one link without affecting the entire chain. It would be 72 years, not until 1953, before Watson and Crick revealed that the chain was actually a double helix. No doubt that announcement came as no surprise to a certain Sussex beekeeper.

"Life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent," Holmes says to Watson in the opening of "A Case of Identity." He then waxes poetic about the two of them peering inside homes "at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outré results."

At several points in the Canon, Holmes also expresses a horror over abuse of the environment or tinkering with the course of nature. Can we doubt his views on today's genetic manipulation after reading this verdict

about Professor Presbury in "The Creeping 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." The definitive evidence of Holmes's aversion to man's polluting the environment should be "Sherlock Holmes on The Environment" by Norman M. Davis. (16) According to De Waal's *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*, this essay consists of an imaginary interview with the great detective, drawing on 85 actual quotations from the Canon. The interview is admittedly very clever but there is nothing directly from Holmes about pollution beyond decrying London's yellow fogs.

The essay does contain, however, the moss-rose passage from "The Naval Treaty" to which I alluded at the start of this article. Can anyone read these words and not believe that Holmes was, indeed, the first Green Consulting Detective, and perhaps the only one: "Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it."

Acknowledgments: This article could not have been completed in the time available (a weekend) without the assistance of Peter Blau, who scanned the more obscure references from his personal library and transmitted them electronically. I also received valuable suggestions from Bill Barnes, Doug Elliott, Les Klinger, Peter Wood and Doug Wrigglesworth. J.A. ("Sandy") McFarlane yielded his usual sensitive editorial pencil.

References

1. Klinger, Les, *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. II, WW Norton, New York, 2004, p.1254, note 18.
2. Mitchell, Humphrey, "The Sartorial Sherlock Holmes," *A Baker Street Four-Wheeler*, ed. Edgar Smith, Maplewood N.J and New York, 1944, p.33, footnote 3.
3. For an introduction to this concept see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_footprint
4. *Our Common Future, The World Commission on Environment and Development*, Oxford University Press, 1987.
5. *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Synthesis Report*, March 2005.
6. Identified by Owen Dudley Edwards in the notes in the Oxford edition as an allusion to Virgil's Georgies, where the last discussion focused on bees.
7. Sherlock Holmes does not come off as well in his understanding of India's swamp adders, lions and, I suspect, giant rats in Sumatra.

8. Simms, Barlett, "Sherlock Holmes, Proto-Ecologist," *The Noble Bachelor's Red-Covered Volume*, ed. Philip A. Shreffler, St. Louis 1974, pp.27-29.
9. The presumably tongue-in-cheek reference is "Adirondack Murray," Forest & Stream, 1880.
10. King, Daniel F., a review of *Out of Doors* in *Notes from a Notorious Card Club*" Vol. 3, No. 2, 1978, pp.4-5.
11. From "A Summer Walk Through an English Lane" in *Out of Doors*, quoted in King, op. cit.
12. Still spelled cecology in the main portion of the 1933 OED, but ecology in the supplement.
13. William Baring-Gould speculates in *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, Vol. I, p.648, note 112, that this allusion originated from Richter's "The Grandeur of Man in His Littleness" which was included in the 1867 edition of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*.
14. In "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder." Other inanition references include "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Adventure of the Five Orange Pips," "The Adventure of the Second Stain," *The Valley of Fear*, "The Adventure of the Dying Detective," and "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone."
15. The literature is extensive but consider just one statistic. Tilled acreage in Britain declined from 9.6 million acres in 1872 to 6.5 million in 1913, largely because of cheap food imports from countries who were ravaging their soil to grow grains.
16. In *The Sign*, the National Catholic Magazine, Vol. 53, No. 6, March 1974, pp.28-31.

The Curious Encounter of Lord Peter Wimsey and Sherlock Holmes

This article first appeared in the Winter 2018 edition of The Baker Street Journal, Vol. 68, No.4.

Today we might say that Dorothy L. Sayers was "channeling" Sherlock Holmes when she created her aristocratic detective Lord Peter Wimsey. But the real-life relationship between the two detectives could well be more complicated. At the superficial level, several commentators have catalogued the many parallels between the two, most notably Trevor H. Hall (1) and John Linsenmeyer. (2) Hall goes furthest by contending that right at the beginning Sayers planted two deliberate clues pointing to her—or Lord Peter's—indebtedness to Holmes.

First consider the addresses of the two detectives: 221B Baker Street and 110A Piccadilly. Divide 221 by two, writes Hall, and you get 110 with one over, and A is the first letter of the alphabet. A less fanciful parallel is the secondary title of *Whose Body*, the novel that introduced Lord Peter. That subtitle is "The Singular Adventure of the Man with the Golden Pince-Nez." This is, as Hall avows, "pure Baker Street," especially the adjective "Singular." (3)

Not to be outdone, Linsenmeyer points out that both men became detectives "quite incidentally"—Holmes through his association with Victor Trevor at university ("The Gloria Scott") and Wimsey through the efforts of his manservant, Bunter, to find something to shake him out of a terrible depression caused by his war experience and an unhappy love affair. Thus the Attenbury Emeralds Case.

Hall writes that this indebtedness is even more striking in the second Wimsey novel, *Clouds of Witness*. In Chapter 11, Lord Peter is described as "the Sherlock Holmes of the West End." Skip forward nearly two decades to "Talboys," the final Wimsey short story, and Hall finds Lord Peter actually saying "Elementary, my dear Watson," a universally known (mis)quotation.

Clouds of Witness is also where Linsenmeyer detects a resounding Holmes–Wimsey echo. After examining a footprint, Lord Peter tells the police: "You just scour the railway-stations for a young man six feet one or two with a No. 10 shoe, and dressed in a Burberry that's lost its belt,

and with a deep scratch on one of his hands." Surely that could be Holmes speaking. To itemize all the Holmes–Wimsey similarities catalogued by the two authors would be tedious. Neither speculated about the reasons for these similarities, but Linsenmeyer concluded by asking, "Did they ever meet?" He was doubtful, pointing out that when Wimsey was demobbed in 1919, Holmes was 65 and retired to the Sussex Downs. "One would like to think that they did, and do, meet; Holmes would so enjoy Wimsey's library, and the prospect of their violin-piano duet is Elysian. But *Vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare langam*. (4) "We can only muse."

However, Linsenmeyer was looking through the wrong end of the telescope. Lord Peter not only met Holmes but also engaged his professional services, paying a fee of two-and-ninepence and receiving a signed receipt "For professional services rendered." The incident took place when Lord Peter was "rising eight," and the details were first revealed by Sayers in a short playlet written especially for a BBC broadcast on the occasion of Holmes's 100th birthday on 8 January 1954. But the page-and-a-half script was not made publicly available until November 2001, and then only in a little-known volume, *Sayers on Holmes* (The Mythopoeic Press), where the untitled work was published as "The Young Lord Peter Consults Sherlock Holmes." High prices are demanded for copies of this slender volume, but most of the contents are available elsewhere and, most importantly, the text of the playlet is online (https://mayhap.livejournal.com/147571.html).

In the broadcast, Dennis Arundel, the actor who had played Lord Peter in "Busman's Holiday," narrated the story as the adult Lord Peter recounting how at age 8 he had sneaked out of the Wimsey mansion at Number 2, Cavendish Square, and made his way across central London (5) to 221B Baker Street in order to consult Sherlock Holmes about a missing black kitten called Seneca.

> Whether my tender years, my flaxen hair, or my distracted appearance persuaded the good Mrs. Hudson to admit me I do not know. It can scarcely have been my title, for on that staircase up which so many crowned heads had carried their troubles, the younger sons of dukes must have been as silver in the days of Solomon. But admit me she did—and there I beheld the great man, pipe, violin, dressing-gown and all, seated before the fire with Dr. Watson in attendance. He greeted me kindly, saying: "Well, my little man, what can I do for you?" I replied modestly, that I had supposed that he would wish to tell me that himself. He laughed and said: "I am not so omniscient as my friend here makes out. Beyond the obvious facts that you are in distress of mind, that your parents

> take in *The Strand Magazine*, and that you left home hastily without consulting them, I know nothing about you." Somewhat abashed by these inferences (for I had not dared to put on my boots and outdoor apparel for fear of discovery) I laid my problem before him. "You have looked up the chimney, of course," said he. "Oh, yes, sir," said I. "And nobody went into the night-nursery except the maid?" "Nobody, sir," said I. "In that case," said he, "it is possible that your little pet has been accidentally made up in one of the beds." The suffocating picture thus presented to my imagination so overwhelmed me that I burst into unmanly tears; but Dr. Watson was quick to reassure me that very little air would suffice for so small an animal. He added, however, that it would be well to avoid further delay, and in the friendliest manner offered to escort me home in a hansom cab.

The kitten was found, unharmed, where Holmes had deduced it would be. Yet much more than a kitten was found. For Lord Peter, born in 1890, to be "rising eight" this incident must have taken place around 1898. Holmes had returned alive to 221 Baker Street and was probably engaged in the case of "The Solitary Cyclist."

The broadcast concluded with the adult Lord Peter saying, "If Mr. Holmes is listening to me now, I should like, while congratulating him on his centenary, to thank him for his kindness to the small boy who has since endeavored, however imperfectly, to follow in his footsteps." Could it be more than just following in his footsteps? After all, by 1908 Lord Peter would have been 18 years of age and able to fulfill the role of understudy to an aging private consulting detective. What unrecorded cases might they have worked together?

References

1. Hall, Trevor H., *Dorothy L. Sayers: Nine Literary Studies*, London, Duckworth, 1980.
2. Linsenmeyer, John, "Holmes and Wimsey: A Study in Similarities," *The Baker Street Journal*, 1971, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 207–214.
3. Found only in the first edition, now scarce.
4. Ernest Dowson translates Horace's Ode 1.4 as: "The brief sum of life forbids us the hope of enduring long."
5. Christopher Dean, chair of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society, calculated that the journey would take a young boy between 30 and 60 minutes.

London Scrubbed Clean in the Canon

This article first appeared in the Winter 2016 edition of The Baker Street Journal*, Vol. 66, No.4.*

The oft-remarked prim, personal neatness of Sherlock Holmes contrasts with the equally oft-remarked chaotic untidiness of the sitting room at 221B. Yet there is another, even more striking contradiction, which is not mentioned in the Canon.

In late Victorian times, the streets and pavements outside 221B were awash in boot-sucking muck, a clinging slush comprising dirt, trash, fireplace cinders, and the odorous excrement from dogs and, more important, horses, which in the metropolis numbered in the hundreds of thousands. (1) Clients who braved Baker Street to call on Holmes, such as Mary Sutherland oscillating on the opposite pavement in "A Case of Identity," would have run a gauntlet of filth. So too did Holmes and Watson themselves, whether trailing Sir Henry Baskerville along Baker Street in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* or strolling to the Diogenes Club on Pall Mall in "The Greek Interpreter."

Ordinary mortals in London took precautions to lessen contamination from the detritus underfoot. Men adopted the habit of turning up their trousers to avoid soiling, a practice that they continued even when abroad in cleaner Continental cities. (2) Ladies with their trailing dresses resorted to skirt lifters, consisting of tongs clipped to the dress hem and with a chain running up to the belt. Pulling the chain lifted at least one side of the skirt clear of the filth. (3) Where possible, both men and women would choose to cross roads on the wide granite paths kept (relatively) clean by crossing-sweepers. (4)

The filth came in great variety as well as great abundance. In 1892, Lady F. W. Harberton, a campaigner for dress reform, compiled this illustrative inventory of items adhering to a train allowed to drag along the pavement on Piccadilly: "2 cigar ends; 9 cigarette ditto; A portion of a pork pie; 4 tooth-picks; 2 hairpins; 1 stem of a clay pipe; 3 fragments of orange peel; 1 slice of cat's meat; Half a sole of a boot; 1 plug of tobacco (chewed); Straw, mud, scraps of paper, and miscellaneous street refuse, *ad. lib*." (5)

There was the miasma of airborne soot from ubiquitous household coal fires. Not only did this sully the city's buildings and the clothing of Londoners, it also deposited a fine patina on the skin—so much so that ladies were advised to wash their faces at least three times a day.

A woman with a skirt lifter attached to her dress.

Yet somehow all this pervasive daily filth has been largely scrubbed clean in the Canon. When I detailed extensively the disparity between the images of 1895 Britain in the Canon and the real lives of the Victorian underclass, (6) I paid almost no attention to this particular environmental contradiction. The subject deserves a fuller treatment. (7)

Consider that Watson informs us, when enumerating Holmes's knowledge in *A Study in Scarlet*, of the detective's ability to distinguish different soils from one another, adding, "After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers, and told me by their colour and consistence in what part of London he had received them." (8)

Twice Holmes treats Watson to a display of this geological expertise—"a little reddish mould adhering to [Watson's] instep" acquired at the Wigmore Street post office in *The Sign of the Four* and the absence of dirt on the doctor's boots in "The Crooked Man," indicating that Watson is busy enough with medical rounds to justify a hansom. Yet Holmes only once draws upon this allegedly encyclopedic knowledge of mud-stains when dealing with clients, and then is wrong in his deduction that Horsham is the origin of the clay-and-chalk mixture on John Openshaw's toecaps in "The Five Orange Pips." (9)

For the rest of the stories, however, Holmes appears to be oblivious to the smelly gunk that must have adhered to the footwear of most visitors to Baker Street (and indeed many of the people he saw in London). It's not that he is unobservant of footwear itself. He comments, for instance, that

Mary Sutherland's boots were mismatched and misbuttoned, and that Lord Holdhurst, the Foreign Secretary in "The Naval Treaty," has resoled his boots to economize. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," he also notes cuts in the leather of Watson's left boot where a servant "very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud." So far as I have been able to determine, that reference to the removal of crusted mud is the only time in the entire Canon that Holmes or Watson shows an awareness of the filth through which Victorian Londoners trudged. An exception to this normal daily tribulation is noted in the opening lines of "The Beryl Coronet," where "the grey pavement had been cleaned and scraped" because of a February snowfall.

Perhaps even more striking than the unnaturally clean footwear is the absence of any mention of the numerous items that must have befouled the long skirts of many of the lady clients who called at 221B, unless they alighted from a carriage directly outside the door. Some might be tempted to suggest that Holmes was simply unobservant of women's clothes (although in "A Case of Identity" he declares that his first glance is always at a woman's sleeve). However, Watson was a "couturier at heart," as Jane Nightwork (i.e., Christopher Morley) concluded long ago. (10)

Yet what about the toll that the city's filth took on attire higher than the level of the street and on the bodies of Londoners themselves? After all, if Holmes's trousers showed distinctive dirt splashes, why were no similar splashes recorded on the trousers of other canonical men, or indeed, on the dresses of ladies? Let's agree to exclude "the dirtiest and most ragged street Arabs that ever I clapped eyes on," as Watson describes the first appearance of the Baker Street irregulars (an image reinforced by the amateurish drawing by Charles Doyle, Conan Doyle's father, for Ward, Lock & Co.'s 1888 *A Study in Scarlet*). If so, then the closest we come to general sartorial soiling is Henry Baker's billycock, described as "very seedy and disreputable" in "The Blue Carbuncle."

Note should be taken of the detachable cuffs and collars favoured by the male gentry in Victorian England. Immaculate, even brilliantly white, cuffs and collars were an essential part of a gentleman's attire. (11) The white dress shirt might not be changed throughout the week, but cuffs and collars were regularly renewed. "[A] loaf of bread and a clean collar. (12) What does man want more?" Holmes exclaims to Watson in the stone hut on the moor in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Watson had already noted Holmes's "perfect" linen.

There is a soiled white collar in the Canon. Just one. It is worn by Dr. Thorneycroft Huxtable of "The Priory School" and bears "the grime of a long journey," not that from London's dense particulate matter. Otherwise,

all is antiseptic, even to the "immaculate collar and cuffs" of a corpse, Enoch Drebber, in *A Study in Scarlet*.

As an aside, it seems that this unrealistic societal cleanliness also extends to at least one cinematic adaptation of the Canon. Concerning the 1987 Granada version of *The Sign of the Four*, David F. Morrill comments that Jonathan Small rolls around in the Thames mud "like a dog rolling in dead fish. This leads to a major question. When he is brought to Baker Street, what happened to all the mud that literally cakes his entire body? There are only the faintest traces of filth on his clothing as he tells his story." (13)

Is there an explanation for this pervasive canonical blindness about the filth that permeated late Victorian London? At the most basic level, perhaps Watson (or Conan Doyle) considered such matters as cleanliness in footwear and vestments *de trop*, too vulgar for recording, just as details about the water closets at 221B would have been. Remember, however, that the Canon chronicles adultery, familial cruelty, sexual depravity, drug addiction, forced marriage, blackmail, numerous murders (attempted and successful), and other dark themes that some might have considered even more distressing than reading about horse manure soiling the hems of ladies' dresses.

More likely, in my view, is that Holmes and Watson (and Conan Doyle) simply did not judge the pervasive London filth as worth recording because it was the usual state of affairs. There is nothing outré to attract their attention.

References

1. Jackson, Lee, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014, p.28. "By the 1890s, it took 300,000 horses to keep London moving, generating 1,000 tons of dung daily. . . ."
2. Ibid., p.29.
3. Rusch, Barbara, personal communication, 25 October 2016.
4. Ryan, P. F. William, "London's Toilet," *Living London, Vol. 2*, ed. by George R. Sims, London, Cassell and Company, 1903, p.199. The article includes an illustration showing two ladies using skirt lifters as they pass a disreputable-looking crossing sweeper.
5. Jackson, p.4, quotes Lady F. W. Harberton, "How It Is We Get on No Fast-er," *The Arena*, Vol. 6 (1892), p.622.
6. Peter Calamai, *The Real World of Sherlock Holmes*, Toronto, The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, Toronto Public Library, 2010.

7. Steve Mason made a much-admired slide presentation, "It Wasn't All Rosy in 1895," on this general topic at the Norwegian Explorers' June 2016 conference, "The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes." Unfortunately, I was not present and have not seen a text.
8. Later, in "The Five Orange Pips," Watson remembers this as a profound knowledge "as regards the mud-stains from any region within fifty miles of town."
9. The 1951 Sherlock Holmes exhibition at Abbey House in London included six geological specimens and a geological map of southeast England (Catalogue, p.29) to show how badly Holmes was in error. Richard Lancelyn Green in his notes in the Oxford *Adventures* (p.337) somewhat more kindly suggests that Arthur Conan Doyle may have been misled by thinking of a real-life deduction by Joseph Bell about chalk on a patient's boots.
10. Nightwork, Jane, "Watson à la Mode," *The Baker Street Journal* [o.s.], Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jan. 1946), pp. 15-20.
11. One of the Victorian advertisements regularly reproduced on the back cover of the early BSJs touted Lion Brand Linen Collars and Cuffs "For Sale by all First-Class Haberdashers."
12. Michael Harrison, *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*, revised ed., Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971, p.91. Harrison opines that "so spruce a dresser as Holmes" would have favoured collars made from linen at four to six pence apiece, which had to be laundered, rather than one-penny paper ones, which were disposable.
13. Morrill, David F., "Reading the Signs: Some Observations and Aperçus on Film and Television of *The Sign of the Four*," *The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual* (2008), p.43.

The Case of the Missing Case

This pastiche was originally published in The Hounds Collection, Volume 5*, April 2000.*

By Horace Harker

Outside the raging winter winds tossed bare tree branches and howled in the chimney like a child. But inside the sitting room, a gas fire leapt in the grate rendering Holmes and me warmly content in our chairs. This peace, however, was soon broken by a stately tread upon the stairs. The door opened to reveal a woman in the prime of life, well-wrapped against the frigid gale and well-shod against the ice and snow underfoot. Without a pause she stomped across the carpet and confronted my companion, who had risen hurriedly to his feet.

"Mr Holmes, I have suffered a grievous loss."

"Pray take a chair, madam and explain your problem."

"To judge from the stories of Dr Watson, you undoubtedly already know everything about it," said the lady, darting a glance at the writing desk cluttered with my labours for the next issue of *The Strand Magazine*, an affair now renowned as "The Problem of the Stopped Commons Clock."

"Other than the fact that you are an accomplished, if somewhat unorganized, seamstress, that you have been married for some three decades, that you drove here yourself in a motor car that has seen better days, that one of your chief pleasures is attending the theatre and that you cherish that magnificent Hermes scarf with an Atlantis theme which you wear I can tell very little."

Our visitor started visibly. "My husband must have communicated with you. How else could you have known all this?"

Holmes took up the blackened cherrywood pipe that he saved for his most disputatious moods. "I must concede that your husband has come to my attention, Mrs. Calamai, but only because of his quite flattering interest in my own modest accomplishments. It would be difficult to be unaware of his scholarly inquiries into the earnings of Victorian beggars presented to the Bootmakers in Toronto. Nor could anyone long remain unaware of how he swept all before him in Tarrytown N.Y. at a gathering known as "Autumn in Baker Street." In addition, he has an apparently insatiable appetite for volumes dealing with my exploits, which swells the royalties of the good doctor." Here Holmes shot a quick glance in my direction and I wager one eye winked briefly.

Undeterred, our visitor pressed on. “The books about Sherlock Holmes certainly do pile up and for them Peter has badly neglected the garden for the third year running. Although the artichokes were the best ever this summer,” she added. “I should not have suspected him, for the Ides of March in 1999 marked 30 eventful years of marriage for us. Not that others haven’t been equally fortunate, as we discovered when many of those same friends who had been at our wedding celebrated this anniversary with us at the McArthurs. But if not from my husband where did you gain such an exact knowledge of me? It is true I am proud of finding this Hermes scarf at a garage sale this summer. I paid only $5, complete with the original box and the Hermes ribbon. I would have paid $5 for the ribbon alone. But your other observations must be simply lucky guesses.”

“I never guess,” shot back the detective. “It’s a shocking abuse of the critical faculties. That you were an accomplished seamstress was instantly evident from the careful cut of your top and trousers made from material obviously personally chosen. The disorganization is equally evident in the two strands of thread still adhering to your trousers, suggesting that the sewing was completed just before you came here.” Our visitor bridled noticeably. She explained that she had only recently taken over the largest bedroom for sewing and, as a result, the customary military orderliness of the Calamai household had suffered temporarily. As well, she was currently preoccupied with the creation of a niece’s wedding dress. Not the least cowed, however, she challenged Holmes to explain his deduction about her love for the performing arts, which she readily conceded.

My colleague stretched out his legs toward the flickering gas. “It is nothing very mysterious. When one sees a priority booking form for the Stratford Festival protruding from someone’s bag and, in particular, notes that 19 tickets have been requested for a single performance alone, the conclusion is obvious.”

“I am not alone in my love for the theatre,” replied Mrs. Calamai. “My husband shares it. This past year we took in productions in London, Stratford, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Toronto and Ottawa. In addition to my annual distaff Festival outing with my 18 sisters, sisters-in-law and nieces, Peter and I also attended a glittering private party arranged by Larry Beare for Stratford’s opening night this past May. No doubt you and Dr Watson too saw William Hutt’s magnificent performance in *The Tempest*.”

Holmes waved a hand, impatiently signalling our visitor to continue. To be frank, his tastes ran much more to the recital hall than to the stage.

Nothing daunted, Mrs. Calamai proceeded to describe with great gusto the Royal National Theatre’s mounting of *Candide* with Simon Russell Beale (all the more memorable because the tickets had been half-price and the production was sold out after the reviews appeared) and the experience

of being surrounded by awe-struck children during *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* at the Barbican Theatre.

"Those weren't all that easy to manage either," she said, rearranging herself in the chair. "Peter could think of nothing but the keynote speech on CP Snow's *The Two Cultures* which he was to deliver in just a few days time for a colloquium at Herstmonceux Castle. With the speech safely past, the conference was quite fun—especially a dinner entertainment by a troupe of opera singers."

Theatre, it turned out, occupied a fair amount of the good lady's time and thoughts. Several minutes passed in an enumeration of numerous other productions and the joy of serendipitously meeting old friends (the Streckers) just seats away at several Shaw Festival plays. "Mind you, getting to Stratford and Shaw was even more of a struggle than usual this summer. Peter was press-ganged into producing a 16-page report in *Saturday Night* magazine about the state of literacy and that ate up every spare minute of June and July."

"But wasn't there also a week at Cape Canaveral reporting about the space shuttle flight of Miss Julie Payette," I interjected.

Holmes and Mrs. Calamai swung round to regard me with some amazement. "I shall never get your depths, Watson," Holmes remarked.

I explained that, next to a good sea yarn, I greatly enjoyed stirring tales about space adventure and that, as a man with experience of women on three continents, it was natural that I should be drawn to Miss Payette.

"We seem to have strayed far from the business at hand," interjected Holmes. "Mrs. Calamai, what was the problem that brought you here?"

"Oh, there is no longer any need to consult you. This discussion has made clear the answer," she said rising to leave. "However, you never did explain how you could know that I drove here in our 12-year-old car."

"The heel of your right shoe, Madam," sighed Holmes. "It is scraped from constant rubbing against the frayed undercarpet where the car's floor mats have worn through."

"That settles it," declared Mrs. Calamai as she headed for the door. "I'm going out and buying that red Volkswagen right now."

"Wait," commanded Holmes in a voice that would brook no defiance. "You must tell us what troubled you enough to seek my advice."

"It was quite ridiculous, really. I was going to ask you to discover where the past year had gone. But now that we've had this talk, I realize that it was devoted to enjoyable pursuits with many friends and family – the best possible use of twelve months. We'll do it all again next year."

CANADA POSTES
POST CANADA
Postage paid Port payé
Publications Mail Poste-publications
40038614

Return Postage Guaranteed
The Bootmakers of Toronto
2045 Lake Shore Blvd. West
Suite 3303
Etobicoke, ON
M8V 2Z6
Canada