



# Canadian Holmes

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More of her work can be seen at <https://behance.net/amdownsart>

Canadian Holmes

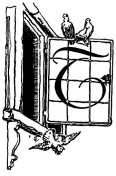
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One-hundred seventy fifth issue

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# Graces of Bootprints

## *A ritual that's fit for a king*

Ancient ritual and sacred oaths were the foundation of the coronation of Charles III, a ceremony that was also full of pageantry and had some modern touches.

As the new king was crowned, Sherlockians may have been thinking about the original St. Edward's Crown, rather than the 17th-century replacement that was used at Westminster Abbey in May. History says the original crown was destroyed during the English Civil War. However, as Sherlockians we know better.

For it was Sherlock Holmes who helped bring that first diadem to light, deciphering a mysterious riddle that had cost Brunton the butler his job, then his life. Reginald Musgrave, whose ancestors were the keepers of the forgotten crown, had to fight to retain the relic after it was found at the bottom of the lake. He paid a handsome sum for it to remain at the Sussex manor house, where its existence remained a secret.

When we recite the words: "Whose was it? His who is gone," et cetera, we acknowledge an old family custom as being our own. The ritual is reminiscent of a religious rite and, as some may have noticed this spring, not out of place during the crowning of a king.

In this issue, Barbara Rusch also writes about another royal celebration in her Bow Window column, looking at what Holmes would have thought of the spectacle. Donny Zaldin takes a 50-year retrospective view of the Bootmakers. This is followed by Ron Levitsky's examination of a small but telling aspect of *A Study in Scarlet*. Paul M. Chapman writes his first article for *Canadian Holmes* with a deep dive into the influences Conan Doyle took from Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone*. Singer songwriter Jim Ballinger tells us about the rabbit hole he went down when investigating a name found in "The Abbey Grange." Your co-editor Mark then looks at Conan Doyle's Canadian land purchase. Rob Nunn weighs in on Irene Adler, or should we say, Irene Norton? Mark Jones returns with his regular column, this time casting his eye upon "The Man with the Watches" and "The Lost Special." Richard Krisciunas goes under the microscope this time in Strictly Personal and the issue is rounded off with reviews and the Bootmakers Diary. Enjoy your summer reading.

# *The view from the bow window*

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



It was by far the grandest spectacle Britain had ever seen. By 1887, Victoria had reigned for half a century, and Golden Jubilee festivities were taking place throughout her vast Empire, marked by numerous services of thanksgiving, splendid court balls, parades and fireworks. Certainly no one expected her to live another 10 years, long enough to celebrate an even more glittering occasion, her Diamond Jubilee. By 1897, Britain had arrived at a position of power and wealth unsurpassed in its history, and Victoria remained its most enduring symbol, champion of the work ethic and model for women in public life. In her tiny, stout frame, millions found the embodiment of the stability, authority and consistency which characterized the moral code of the age to which she lent her name.

In London, houses were decked out in flags and bunting, and business premises were hung with thousands of electric and gas-powered lights. Loyal subjects purchased commemorative souvenirs of every description. From plates to pincushions, there was scarcely an object which did not bear her image.

It was the pinnacle of her reign, though she survived another four years, long enough to usher in the 20th century, but it was far from her greatest accomplishment. Though she has not gone down in history as a trendsetter, she was innovative in numerous ways. It was Victoria who popularized the white wedding gown, while she and Albert introduced the Christmas tree to England and promoted the Christmas card industry practically singlehandedly. Perhaps even more significantly, she jumpstarted the entire science of anaesthesiology, giving birth to her last two children with the aid of chloroform, despite the objections of the Church of England. In addition, she and Albert presided over the emergence of modern technology, beginning with the Great Exhibition of 1851, later known as the Crystal Palace, the prototype for all future trade fairs. By the end of her reign in 1901, the horse and carriage had given way to trains and automobiles, while the telegraph and telephone had revolutionized communications around the world. Perhaps not quite as positive, she presided over a perpetual cult of mourning, with its strictures and

prohibitions, as well as a cult of Empire which allowed for the abuse of native peoples and the wholesale theft of foreign resources. Though universally beloved, she was the target of seven assassination attempts.

Hilton Cubitt met his wife Elsie at the Queen's Jubilee. Though it's unclear which one, it was likely the Diamond, a year before the tragedy which cost him his life. As to the manner in which Holmes and Watson marked either occasion, no doubt they joined with their fellow subjects in suitably patriotic fashion. That Holmes was an admirer of the Queen, whom he referred to obliquely as "a certain gracious lady," there can be little doubt, his allegiance perhaps best expressed in verse:

In her name Sherlock Holmes pledged the villains to foil  
The holes in the wall were proof he was loyal.  
Her initials in bullet-pocks one still can see  
Adorning the walls of 221B.  
For him the *other* woman she always would be.

Of his expertise she was known to avail,  
Assured that good would always prevail.  
He refused a knighthood, thought it almost a sin,  
But he did accept an emerald tie-pin.  
Said the Queen, "No worries. For me it's no hassle.  
Come pay me a visit at Windsor Castle."  
For this faithful subject who had passed every test,  
She pinned his reward right onto his chest.  
An award that might just as well be a medal,  
For like a brave soldier he'd proven his mettle,  
For lack of fealty he can never be faulted.  
Over any obstacle he'd gladly have vaulted.  
This steadfast servant was ever keen  
To be of service to his Queen.

After each an age was named,  
A legacy burned in hearts enflamed.  
One the Sherlockian, the other Victorian,  
Their names in posterity shall be ever entwined,  
Of their eternal glory us to remind.  
Two giants whose monuments were built to last,  
The mould was broken from which they were cast.

Let us pay tribute now, glasses in hand,  
And drink to the noblest in all the land.  
To the gracious lady Holmes faithfully served,  
And to the reward he so well deserved.

# *The Bootmakers: A half-century retrospective – 1972 – 2022*

By Donny Zaldin

*Donny Zaldin has been a Bootmaker since 1983 and has served the society in various roles over the years. One of his proudest Bootmaker achievements is being the co-winner in the same year, 2013, of the society's three major annual awards: the Derrick Murdoch, the True Davidson and the Warren Carleton.*

**T**he Bootmakers of Toronto takes its name from the sole (pun intended) reference in the Canon, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, to “an old, black boot with the name of its maker, ‘Meyers, Toronto,’ printed on the leather inside.” Our current president/Meyers, since 2017, is Mike Ranieri.

The Bootmakers, Canada’s oldest and largest Sherlockian society, began playing the “Grand Game” in 1972. Founding members included Donald Redmond, Edwin Van der Flaes, Maureen Green, Hartley Nathan, Cliff Goldfarb and Christopher Redmond, of whom the latter three are still active, contributing members. The first meeting was also attended by Eric Silk, Derrick Murdoch and S. Tupper Bigelow.

The Bootmakers are closely associated with the Toronto Public Library, which since 1971 has housed and grown “The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection,” one of the world’s largest and finest assemblages of the writings and the writings on the writings on the creator and his creation. The four Curators of the Collection over half a century are: Cameron Hollyer, Victoria Gill, Peggy Perdue and now Jessie Amaolo. The Collection was founded in 1969-70 by donations from what is now termed the four pillars: the Baillie, Mortlake, Bigelow and Bengis Collections.

The Bootmakers currently number about 175 members, hold about six meetings annually, each devoted to a particular story, with presentations, quizzes, and musical and dramatic performances. They are attended by 50-75 members and guests, held in-person until 2020, but virtually since the beginning of the pandemic.

## *Tips of the deerstalker*

From its inception in 1972, the Bootmakers have published a scholarly, internationally renowned Sherlockian journal titled *Canadian Holmes*, published quarterly, with three principal Editors over its long history:

1. Christopher Redmond & Kate Carlson Redmond (1979-86), Christopher Redmond (1986-92, and one issue in 2009);
2. Trevor Raymond (1992-2009); and
3. Mark & JoAnn Alberstat (2009/10 to date).

Other Editors were: Cameron Hollyer, inaugural issue in 1973 (no. 1); Irving Kalushner, 2 issues in 1978 (nos. 2-3); and Barbara Roden, 2 issues in 2007-08.

Each Meyers – from our first, Derrick Murdoch (1972-73) to our current, Mike Ranieri – is listed below:

1972-73 – Derrick Murdoch	1995 – Geoff Ewing
1973-74 – True Davidson	1996 – Gordon Dawe
1974-75 – Hartley Nathan	1997 – Douglas Wrigglesworth
1975 – David Skene-Melvin	1998 – Philip Elliott
1975-76 – Paul Hornbeck	1999 – David Sanders
1977 – Paul Clark	2000 – Dayna Nuhn
1978 – Clifford Goldfarb	2001 – Ted Gurr
1979 – Kenneth Sayce	2002 – Barbara Rusch
1980 – Edwin Van der Flaes	2003 – Bob Coghill
1981 – J. Christopher Kyle	2004 – Karen Campbell
1982 – Bob Coghill	2005 – Kathy Burns & Margot French
1983 – Mary Campbell	2006 – David Dunn and Philip Elliott
1984 – Maureen Green	2007 – Ray Rawlings & Dave Drennan
1985 – David Skene-Melvin	2008 – Bruce Aikin
1986 – Kate Karlson	2009 – Trevor Raymond
1987 – Peter Grieve	2010 – Douglas Wrigglesworth
1988 – Thelma Beam	2011 – Dayna Nuhn Lozinski
1989 – Doug Elliot	2012 – David Sanders
1990 – Donald Zaldin	2013 – Philip Elliott
1991 – Linda Mazur-Jack	2014-15 – Thelma Beam
1992 – Edwin Van der Flaes	2016 – James Reese
1993 – Margaret Murray	2017-23 – Mike Ranieri
1994 – David Dunn	

Recent long-serving members of the Executive, which assists Meyers, include: Doug Wrigglesworth, David Sanders, Philip Elliott, Kathy Burns, Thelma Beam, John Gehan and Mimi Okabe.

Recent long-serving Treasurers include: Thelma Beam, Philip Elliott, Bruce W. Aitkin, and Michael Brown.

Mrs. Hudsons, who have provided us with food and drink at in-person meetings over many years, include: Ann Rothery Skene-Melvin, Kathy Burns, Margot French, Mary Campbell, Donna Brown, Barbara Rusch, Philip Elliott & David Sanders, Dayna Nuhn & Michael Lozinski, Thelma Beam and Edith & James Reese.



Quizmasters include: Brian Gibson & David Sanders, George Vanderburgh, Karen Gold, Barbara Rusch & Donny Zaldin, James & Edith Reese, and Karen Campbell.

The role of “Lassus” – Canonical composer and performer of “polyphonic motets” – has been performed melliflously in original, creative song parodies over four decades by Jim Ballinger, Craig Brtnik, Karen Campbell and Karen Gold.

From about 1987 to 2007, “The Bootmaker Players” staged Sherlockian melodramas written by Ray Rawlings and performed by: Dave Drennan (as Sherlock Holmes), David Sanders (as Dr. Watson), Rawlings (as a Scotland Yard detective or constable), Mary Campbell (as Mrs. Hudson), and Marmy Rawlings, Karen Campbell, Jordie Telfer, Kathy Shorney, and Jim Ballinger as villains, victims or other characters.

Bruce Aikin has served as Bootmaker photographer for over 40 years, from 1983 to date, at society meetings, special events (such as banquets and conferences) and “Silver Blaze” races at the track and “Silver Blaze” conferences at the Library.

#### *Special Bootmaker Events:*

In 1989, The Bootmakers made a personal presentation in London, England, of engraved plaques to Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke, who portrayed Sherlock Holmes and (the second) Dr. Watson in the (1984-94) Granada Television series, which adapted 41 of the 60 Canonical stories.

To mark the society’s 25th anniversary, The Bootmakers celebrated a quarter-century of scholarship and fellowship in 1997, with their first international conference, “Lasting Impressions,” the proceedings and presentations of which were published in book form.

Since then, the Bootmakers have hosted four international Doylean/Sherlockian conferences with The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society at the Toronto Public Library:

- Footprints of the Hound – chaired by Doug Wrigglesworth in 2001
- ACD@35 – chaired by Cliff Goldfarb in 2006
- A Study in Scandal/SinS – chaired by Barbara Rusch in 2011
- Jubilee@221B – co-chaired by Mike Ranieri and Cliff Goldfarb in 2022 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ACD Collection and The Bootmakers of Toronto.

Donny Zaldin and Barbara Rusch served as our Colonels Ross from 1989 to 2019, organizing 32 consecutive “Silver Blaze” Races at Woodbine Race Track in Toronto and three triennial Can-Am Bootmaker-BSI “Silver Blaze Conferences” in 2013, 2016 and 2019.

Following Linda Mazur-Jack in the 1990s, Philip Elliott became Bootmaker “Pubmeister,” arranging the society’s Annual Pub Event at The Red Lion, The Artful Dodger and The Duke of Kent pubs until 2010. Commencing in 2011, David Sanders arranged the event for eight years to 2018 at The Duke of Kent pub, skipping 2019-2022. The event resumed on June 3, 2023 at the wheelchair-accessible Duke of Cornwall pub.

Over the past 64 years, 28 Bootmakers have received investitures in the Baker Street Irregulars, the world’s first literary society dedicated to the study of Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, founded in the U.S. in 1934:

S. Tupper Bigelow 1959	Kate Karlson 1996
Christopher Redmond 1966	Douglas Elliot 2000
Donald A. Redmond 1969	Mary Campbell 2002
Eric H. Silk 1977	Christopher Roden 2002
Cameron Hollyer 1978	Douglas Wrigglesworth 2004
Hartley Nathan, 1980	Peter Calamai 2005
David Skene Melvin 1981	Barbara Roden 2005
Bob Coghill 1983	Trevor Raymond 2006
Clifford Goldfarb 1984	Dayna Nuhn 2007
Edwin Van der Flaes 1984	Barbara Rusch 2009
Wilfrid M. de Freitas 1985	Peggy Perdue 2011
Peter Wood 1985	Donald Zaldin 2012
Maureen Green 1992	Mark Alberstat 2014
Michael W McClure 1992	Charles Prepolec 2017

Outside of Toronto, the Sherlockian movement in Canada is carrying on in accordance with the motto of our official coat of arms, “From Sea to Sea” / “A Mari Usque Ad Mare” – as follows:

Moving from the Atlantic to the Pacific, there are currently five other active Sherlockian societies across Canada:

- The Spence Munros of Halifax founded in 1982 by Mark Alberstat, who still heads the society, (HalifaxSherlock@gmail.com);
- The Bimetallic Question of Montreal, founded in 1979 by David Dowse and Wilfrid de Freitas, (info@bimetallicquestion.org);
- Stratford On Avon Sherlock Holmes Society, founded in 2015, headed by Jack Winn, (jack@jackwinn.com);
- The Cesspudlians of London, founded in 2015, headed by Ian Bennett, (cesspudlians@gmail.com); and
- The Stormy Petrels of (Vancouver), founded in 1987, headed by Fran Martin since the mid-1990s, (stormy petrels@gmail.com)

# *Drebber's dirty book – Boccaccio's Decameron in A Study in Scarlet*

By Ron Levitsky

*Ron Levitsky is a retired educator and mystery writer. He is a member of several Chicago-area Sherlockian societies. This is his second article for Canadian Holmes.*

**A**rthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) offers many Sherlockian firsts – such as the initial meeting between Holmes and Watson, and Holmes's remarkable demonstrations of analytical reasoning. Also, the reader encounters the Canon's first corpse, victim, and villain – all conveniently in the person of Enoch Drebber.

At the crime scene, little is revealed about the dead American but Conan Doyle introduces some interesting foreshadowing. Drebber's face is described as being locked in a “malignant and terrible contortion,” which added grotesqueness to his facial features, giving him “a singularly simious [piggish] and ape-like appearance.” Drebber's greed is suggested by his gold watch, chain, ring, and pin. In addition, he had been carrying “a pocket edition of Boccaccio's *Decameron* with the name of Joseph Stangerson upon the fly-leaf.” (1)

This last object is of particular interest, in part because no one at the crime scene makes any remark about the book. Why is that? From the hideous description of Drebber and his apparent love for gold, did Conan Doyle want the reader to have a negative view of the dead man? Did a 14th-century collection of stories have such an indecent reputation that it immediately would have tarred the possessor of such book as wicked?

This article proposes that Conan Doyle wanted his readers to judge Drebber harshly for reading an indecent work of literature. However, the *Decameron* was a far too sophisticated work of art for such a boorish bully. As such, Conan Doyle's choice of this book says more about his own character than it does about Drebber's.

*Victorians, Mormons, and Pornography*

Conan Doyle's audience would have read *A Study in Scarlet* with certain moral assumptions. Victorian England was a patriarchal society in which the man was expected not only to be virtuous but to provide for, instruct,

and protect his wife and children. In contrast, by overseeing the house, women "...helped create space free from the pollution and corruption of the city." (2) Women were viewed as "emotional, yielding, highly sensitive, messy-minded, and attractively weak in character." (3) They needed guidance and protection.

Victorians would naturally have been critical of a society that did not share their values. Drebber had been a leader of the Church of the Latter-day Saints, or Mormons. Like many other contemporary Englishmen and women, Conan Doyle loathed what he regarded as



*Portrait of Giovanni Boccaccio by Raffaello Morghen, circa 1822*

two major aspects of Mormon life. The first was its closed and secret political order dominated by a few fanatical religious leaders, who used an armed band to keep their followers in line. The second perception was promulgated by the British press and publishing houses. The public had a voracious appetite for novels and the memoirs of ex-church members who described the "strange customs" of Mormon society. Most repulsive to Victorians was its "licentious" polygamy. Mormon men were portrayed as "...unforgivably lecherous." (4)

However, what was publicly condemned as perverse frequently caused private titillation. In fact, Victorian society was replete with pornographic literature. As Sir Richard Burton's biographer states, Victorian England had "an unbridled underground licentiousness such as few ages have seen." (5) So much so, that the British government passed the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 which, for the first time, made the sale of obscene material (that likely to corrupt the morals of youth) a statutory offence. Yet, this law faced overwhelming challenges.

Particularly during the decade in which Conan Doyle wrote *A Study in Scarlet*, a great number of pornographic literary works were available to the public. For example, *The Pearl* was an erotic magazine circulating

from 1879-81, until shut down by the government. The first part of *My Secret Life*, purportedly an Englishman's experience with various forms of sexual entertainment in London, was published as a private edition in 1888. Burton, a diplomat, adventurer, and travel writer, published a translation of the Indian sex manual *Kama Sutra* (1883), the sexually explicit *Arabian Nights* (1885) and the 15th-century Arabic sex manual *The Perfumed Garden* (1886). This last book contained even more "heavy-handed sex" than the *Kama Sutra*. (6)

Each of the Burton translations was offered at a limited subscription. However, pirated editions were widely circulated. As Burton's biographer notes, although originally only 500 copies were printed for private circulation, "...[Burton's] *Kama Sutra* is probably one of the most popular best sellers of all time." (7) To show the pervasiveness of pornographic literature, in 1886 London police seized "...five cab loads of indecent books totaling in weight over a ton..." (8)

Victorians would not have been surprised to find the Mormon Drebbler reading a licentious novel. However, with at least over a ton of pornographic books from which to choose, why did Conan Doyle place the *Decameron* in Drebbler's pocket?

*"A man's mind and character depend upon what he reads...."* (9)

In 1907 Conan Doyle published *Through the Magic Door*, identifying the literature that inspired him as a youth and the values that shaped him as a writer. Preeminent among these values was "manliness." He identified Sir Walter Scott as the exemplar of this quality. Conan Doyle said of Scott, "What a love of all that is manly and noble and martial!" Author Michael Dirda argues that what Conan Doyle meant by manliness was not engaging in combat with a lance and sword, but rather being a "more courtly" human being. (10)

As such, writers needed to be moralists. Conan Doyle abhorred an author who put lewdness in a positive light. For example, as good a writer as Henry Fielding was, in *Tom Jones* he portrayed the protagonist merely as a "lusty, brawling good-hearted, material creature." Sadly, Fielding failed to give his character even "one touch ... of spirituality, of nobility." "This cheapens the novel." Any writer who writes sympathetically of lewdness "... is a wicked man." (11)

Thirdly, in *Through the Magic Door*, Conan Doyle lauded Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* as a great example of the "modern masculine novel" that does not follow the "hackneyed ending of a conventional marriage." Although 90 per cent of British fiction celebrates "love and marriage as the be-all and end-all of life," reality tells us otherwise.

Marriage is but one of many incidents in a man's life. In fact, "Love will often play a subordinate part in his life." (12)

For Conan Doyle, a man walked through the world as if, like Ivanhoe or characters in *The White Company*, he was a knight living in the Middle Ages. In many ways, Conan Doyle's ideal world was largely feudal, based on hierarchy, gallantry, strict gender and social roles and, above all, order.

A world that, for many Victorians, was already slipping away.

"...no fine distinction between love and lust" – *The Decameron*

In 1886, the same year that Conan Doyle wrote *A Study in Scarlet*, the "first truly complete translation in English" of the *Decameron* was published by the Villon Society, "by private subscription for private circulation." (13) Author Giovanni Boccaccio was one of the giants of world literature. Master of prose both in Latin and the Italian (Tuscan) vernacular, Boccaccio is credited with having influenced Chaucer, Cervantes, and Shakespeare.

The *Decameron*, written in the mid-14th century, is a framing story (stories set within the larger framework of another story). Seven ladies and three gentlemen flee Florence to escape the Black Death. While spending 10 days in the countryside, each day each person tells a story – 100 tales in all.

John Payne, the 1886 book's translator, also had translated the Persian poets Hafiz and Omar Khayyam, as well as the *Arabian Nights*. For the *Decameron*, Payne included detailed notes explaining the book's sexual overtones. This attention to the book's sexuality was something new.

According to George McWilliam, a later translator of the *Decameron*, "Before the appearance of John Payne's magniloquent English version, Boccaccio's taste for the erotic and profane had been consistently glossed over or toned down in varying degrees by his English translators, so it would be quite wrong to attribute his enduring popularity to this particular aspect of the book." (14)

Perhaps Conan Doyle had an opportunity to read Payne's "erotic and profane" translation. However, with the book sold privately in a limited edition, it's doubtful that, by the time Conan Doyle had completed *A Study in Scarlet*, his general readership would have been familiar enough with the *Decameron's* indecencies to connect them with Drebbler. Something more substantial caused Conan Doyle to choose that book for Drebbler's reading pleasure.

Just as Conan Doyle's writing was based on his view of the world, so was Boccaccio's. How ironic that Conan Doyle extolled the chivalrous behavior exhibited in his novel *The White Company*, set from 1366-1367 during the Middle Ages. This was almost exactly when Boccaccio

completed his *Decameron* (1353). Even more ironic, while Conan Doyle admired the feudal values of the Middle Ages, Boccaccio's writing reflected the values of a mercantile class replacing the more structured, stable, and hierarchical society of feudalism. There is a moral *laissez-faire* attitude in the *Decameron*, premised on a belief that because of the Black Death, instead of a feudal structure, "...the laws of God and of man had broken down and been extinguished, and that consequently everyone was free to behave as he pleased." (15)

One significant value emphasized in many of the *Decameron's* stories is the importance of commerce. Although not necessarily a pursuit for gentlemen, trade gave many a man of lowly birth an opportunity to get rich quickly and enjoy the comforts that great wealth allowed.

This celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit also extolled intelligence for its own sake over familial connections and status, even if such intelligence might be used for immoral purposes. In the *Decameron's* very first story, a biting and blasphemous satire, a priest is convinced by a thoroughly corrupt dying man that the latter is, in fact, so holy that, after his death, he is worshipped by the community as a saint.

Unlike the medieval belief in beneficent divine providence, random fortune plays a crucial force in the lives of Boccaccio's characters. Good fortune can come to a young man losing all his wealth, only to win the heart of the English king's daughter (Day II, Story 3); to a lowly page visiting the queen's bedchamber undetected (III, 2); or to a gentleman stumbling upon the vision of a horrific curse that helps him win the lady he loves (V, 8). On the other hand, a respected physician can find himself befriended by thieves who dump him into a filthy ditch (VII, 9).

Unlike Conan Doyle's world, the *Decameron* admires not the chivalrous knight but the trickster. Often, this takes the form of a man seducing a woman, frequently someone else's wife. For example, an abbot convinces a man that the cave in which the latter sits is really Purgatory so that the abbot can spend time alone with the man's wife (III, 8). A full 25 per cent of the 100 stories deal with adultery. (16)

Many of these seducers are priests and nuns who use their positions of authority to satisfy illicit sexual urges. While Conan Doyle was no supporter of organized religion, he doubtless would have been disgusted to read story after story mocking one of the great moral pillars of society.

The *Decameron's* view of women is contradictory. On the one hand, many of its stories are strongly "anti-feminist." (17) Generally, women are viewed as weak, malleable, amorous and, by nature, faithless creatures. However, there are also stories where women exhibit ingenuity, fidelity and great courage. For example, a woman about to be executed for adultery demands a trial and argues that, since she has never denied her

husband her favours, why should she not get additional pleasure for herself? Due to her cleverness, the law is rewritten and the woman released (VI, 7). In another story, a noblewoman is able to outwit the King of France and thus save her virtue (I, 5).

In his view of women, Conan Doyle differed greatly from Boccaccio. As part of knightly behaviour, one is constant and caring to one's wife. For 10 years after falling in love with Jean Leckie, Conan Doyle remained faithful to his wife Louisa, helping care for her during her illness with tuberculosis, until her death in 1906. Only then, one year later, did he marry Jean. For Conan Doyle, the only kind of love was honourable.

In contrast, "Boccaccio...draws no fine distinction between love and lust, in the manner of the Christian moralist, and in this respect, he stands decisively apart from his medieval predecessors and contemporaries." Man is part of nature and, therefore, "...only answers to instincts and impulses and biological phenomena that fall outside the scope of ethics." (18) If Conan Doyle had been a character in the *Decameron*, he would have found a way to cheat on his first wife, or young Jean would have found a way to seduce him. Boccaccio would have shown no criticism. Rather, the trickster would have been celebrated. That may have been one reason why Conan Doyle connected the evil Drebber with the *Decameron*.

While many stories in the *Decameron* are misogynistic, others were able to do what the Sherlockian Canon did not – reveal a better understanding and, therefore, more sympathy to the feelings of women. If Boccaccio conflated love and lust, at least he demonstrated that women were not commodities to be sold off in arranged marriages and expected to remain faithful to men they did not choose and did not love. In Boccaccio's world, a royal princess still could insist on marrying a commoner solely because of love.

Unlike Conan Doyle, there were Victorian authors who, like Boccaccio, were interested in examining the depths of a woman's feelings. George Meredith, a favourite writer of Conan Doyle's, wrote about "...the limited opportunities for women, the stifling box that marriage could sometimes be." (19) Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, written the same year as *A Study in Scarlet*, showed the superior moral strength of the protagonist's wife and daughter. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) revealed how the restrictions of Victorian morality could drive women insane or to their death. But this was not what the "modern masculine novel" cared to explore.



*Boccaccio v. Sherlockio* –

The Victorian reader of *A Study in Scarlet* might have assumed that, by being found in Drebber's pocket, the *Decameron* was a pornographic piece of trash, similar to other "dirty books" circulating within a seemingly polite society. Yet, in Conan Doyle's opinion, the *Decameron* was far more than licentious. Just as he perceived the entire Mormon society to be immoral for its political structure and licentious sexual behavior, so too did Conan Doyle view Boccaccio's as a topsy-turvy world of chaos and rampant vice.

Perhaps it was, in part, to uphold chivalric "manliness" that Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes. Holmes was a Victorian knight in shining armour. For example, he was constantly ready to help a damsel in distress, whether Lady Frances Carfax, Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope from "The Second Stain" or Lady Brackenstall from "The Abbey Grange." His interest in these women was purely chaste and unselfish. He worshiped the photo of Irene Adler, not the woman herself. (20)

Holmes disdained the pursuit of money, choosing a photograph of Adler over an immensely valuable ring proffered by the King of Bohemia. In "Thor Bridge" he rebuffed Senator Gibson, who tried to impress him by saying that, for Holmes's fee, money was no object.

Generally, the worst villains in the Canon were those patriarchs who betrayed their responsibilities and, instead of protecting their charges, sought to betray them for personal gain. Among these scoundrels were Dr. Grimesby Roylott, Jephro Rucastle and James Windibank.

Significantly, Holmes's primary interest is not upholding society's laws. Rather, "Holmes serves as the supreme architect over his own overarching system," and as such "...restores order to his universe." (21) This sense of order is personal, as was that of his creator. The detective frequently breaks society's law, such as engaging in burglary, because he must adhere to his own chivalrous code. Holmes cannot brook society interfering with his personal restoration of order.

Great writers generally show rather than tell. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Conan Doyle used foreshadowing to demonstrate what the reader would later learn about Enoch Drebber – that he was an evil man. But in associating Drebber with Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Conan Doyle went too far. Rather than a work of pornography, the *Decameron* was a challenge to the kind of world Conan Doyle believed in as a writer and as a man. A kind of world that needed no less a knight than Sherlock Holmes.

References:

- (1) One wonders why the book belongs to Stangerson. Perhaps this is symbolic of Stangerson acting as a procurer for his wealthier and more powerful friend.
- (2) “Victorian Morality,” Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian\\_morality#cite\\_note-9](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_morality#cite_note-9)
- (3) Lutz, Deborah, *Pleasure Bound: Victorian Sex Rebels and the New Eroticism*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2011, p95.
- (4) Dearing, Lindsay, “A Study in Scarlet – Colonization on the Frontiers of Sherlockian Logic,” *CEA Critic*, Vol. 76, No. 1, March 2014, pg.55-56, 61.
- (5) Rice, Edward, *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990, p446.
- (6) *Ibid.*, p467.
- (7) *Ibid.*, p446.
- (8) Lutz, p218.
- (9) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *Through the Magic Door*, Pleasantville, New York, Akadine Press, 1999, pv.
- (10) Dirda, Michael, *On Conan Doyle – or, the Whole Art of Storytelling*, Princeton, New York, Princeton University Press, 2012, p77.
- (11) Doyle, Arthur Conan, pg.145, 152-153.
- (12) Doyle, Arthur Conan, pg.265-266.
- (13) “The Decameron.” Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Decameron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Decameron).
- (14) Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Decameron*, translated by G.H. McWilliam, New York, Penguin Books, 2003, p.cxliv.
- (15) *Ibid.*, p.cxiv.
- (16) *Ibid.*, p.ciii.
- (17) *Ibid.*, p.cxiii.
- (18) *Ibid.*, p.civ.
- (19) Lutz, p156.
- (20) Aitkinson, Michael, *The Secret Marriage of Sherlock Holmes and Other Eccentric Readings*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 1999, p59. Note also that, while Holmes helped women of various social standings, several were ladies both by gender and noble birth. That certainly would have appealed to a knight.
- (21) Dearing, p63.

# *Mysteries, signs and tainted legacies: Conan Doyle's Moonstone trilogy*

By Paul M. Chapman

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**A**lthough it would be an overstatement to claim that the great Victorian mystery writer Wilkie Collins was the father of the modern detective story – that honour surely lies more with Edgar Allan Poe or Emile Gaboriau – there can be no doubt that his 1868 novel *The Moonstone* was crucial to the development of the genre and well deserves T.S. Eliot's oft-quoted (or misquoted) aphorism that it was “the first and greatest of English detective novels.” (1)

Amongst its innovations it was the first significant country house mystery in which a cast of characters/suspects are assembled to be quizzed and assessed by a mannered and perspicacious detective; in this case a professional, Sergeant Cuff. It also includes a “least likely suspect” scenario, and an air of Orientalist exoticism and culture clash, all of which would become mainstays of the Golden Age of crime fiction in the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s.

*The Moonstone's* central plotline revolves around the eponymous yellow diamond, a significant religio-cultural artefact that was looted by a British officer, Colonel John Herncastle, during the storming and sacking of Seringapatam in India in 1799. He brings the cursed gem home and later bequeaths it to his niece, Rachel Verinder, as an 18th birthday gift. As a presentation party assembles at the family home of Frizinghall in Yorkshire, three mysterious Indians are seen in the vicinity but are warned off. The diamond is presented and displayed, and that very night it is stolen. The rest of the intricately plotted story is spent investigating and unravelling the events leading up to the theft, examining the suspects, identifying the criminal and tracking down the gem itself.

*The Moonstone* was the second runaway success of Collins's career (after *The Woman in White* in 1860) and helped to perpetuate the lasting cultural phenomenon of ‘detective fever,’ to use a phrase employed in the

book itself. Some years later a young doctor and apprentice writer, Arthur Conan Doyle, fell under *The Moonstone*'s spell. Although he makes little mention of Collins in his published comments on his own literary favourites and influences, it is clear that he had read Collins's work closely and absorbed its lessons. Conan Doyle's first completed novel, *The Firm of Girdlestone* (written in the mid-1880s, but not published until 1890), is an experiment in the already outdated school of Victorian 'sensation' fiction and borrows both form and incident from Collins, Charles Dickens and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. More specifically, however, the direct influence of *The Moonstone* is readily discernable in three of his subsequent works; "Uncle Jeremy's Household" (1887), *The Mystery of Cloomber* (1888) and *The Sign of the Four* (1890), in each of which it feels as though he has deconstructed Collins's novel in order to examine its workings before re-configuring them in his own style. He would do the same with Poe's Dupin trilogy when creating the character and universe of Sherlock Holmes.

Conan Doyle had definite ambitions for "Uncle Jeremy's Household," a short story which he submitted to the prestigious *Blackwood's Magazine* in August 1885, asking that it might be "found worthy of a place." (2) In this he was to be disappointed and the story would eventually appear in the rather more down market *Boy's Own Paper* in early 1887.

The tale is set around the fictional village of Dunkelthwaite, located in the remote countryside of the Yorkshire/Cumbria borderlands of north west England, an area Conan Doyle knew well because his mother lived there in a cottage on the Masongill estate of family friend Bryan Charles Waller. Waller's own home, Masongill House, provided the model for Uncle Jeremy's dwelling, and Waller himself makes an offstage appearance in the story as Orientalist savant B.C. Haller.

The narrator, Hugh Lawrence, is visiting his friend John H. Thurston, whose name clearly foreshadows that of the soon-to-be-created John H. Watson. Thurston's driving passion lies in experimental chemistry, presaging a similar enthusiasm in Holmes (and perhaps reflecting *The Moonstone*'s Colonel John Herncastle's meddling with "strange things in chemistry"). (3) However, Lawrence also notes that Thurston, unlike Holmes, "was never a very observant man." (4) They share the household with Thurston's elderly Uncle Jeremy, an eccentric amateur poet; his sinister secretary, Copperthorne – who "stalks behind [Jeremy] like the monster in Frankenstein"; (5) Jeremy's infant nephew and niece, and their governess, a glamorous Anglo-Indian beauty named Miss Warrender.

Just as the Moonstone itself provides the central thread linking Collins's plot and sub-plots, so Miss Warrender – whose very name is a sly, or possibly subconscious, reference to *The Moonstone*'s Rachel Verinder –

connects the twin plots of “Uncle Jeremy’s Household”; the main storyline, in which Copperthorne schemes to supplant Thurston in Jeremy’s will, and the secondary plot involving the activities of a mysterious itinerant Indian around the environs of Dunkelthwaite. Her centrality is clearly recognized and advertised in the perhaps over-revelatory title of a 1909 French translation: *Notre Dame de la Mort*.

By the standards of Victorian genre fiction, Miss Warrender has certainly been ceded a brutally picturesque and morally contaminated heritage. Her mother (whose name she carries) was an Englishwoman. But her father: “... was Achmet Genghis Khan, a semi-independent chieftain somewhere in the Central Provinces. He was a bit of a heathen fanatic in spite of his Christian wife, and he became chummy with the Nana, and mixed himself up in the Cawnpore business, so Government came down heavily on him.” (6)

He was in fact “killed in the mutiny ... and his estates being seized by Government, his daughter, then fifteen, was left almost destitute. Some charitable German merchant in Calcutta adopted her ... and brought her over to Europe with him together with his own daughter.” (7)

Miss Warrender, then, is a dispossessed exile, in England through force of circumstance rather than choice. But, like the Moonstone, she has devoted followers who long for her return to India, one of whom appears unexpectedly in the main street of Dunkelthwaite:

It was certainly a curious sight which met our eyes when we joined the little circle of rustics. It reminded me of the description of the opium-eating Malay whom De Quincey saw in the farmhouse in Scotland. In the centre of the circle of homely Yorkshire folk there stood an Oriental wanderer, tall, lithe, and graceful, his linen clothes stained with dust and his brown feet projecting through his rude shoes. It was evident that he had travelled far and long. (8)

Not only is this incongruous apparition reminiscent of Thomas De Quincey’s “opium-eating Malay,” he also brings to mind the three Indian “jugglers” – in reality disguised Brahmin priests – who appear in Frizinghall at the time of the Moonstone’s delivery to the Verinder house.

The Dunkelthwaite traveller’s business is to persuade Miss Warrender to assume her rightful place as her father’s successor; both as “semi-independent chieftain” and heir to his role as a leader of the Thugs, the infamous strangler-robbers of Central India, whose criminal network was targeted and largely dismantled by the British authorities throughout the 1830s and 1840s. (9)

Conan Doyle took this particular plot element from Philip Meadows Taylor’s phenomenally successful Anglo-Indian Gothic novel *Confessions*

*of a Thug* (1839), which was based in part on Taylor's own experiences as a military and political officer in Hyderabad. Conan Doyle's familiarity with the novel is shown when Hugh Lawrence, in a moment of realization, exclaims: "The Thugs! ... I remember an account of them which I had read in the works of Colonel Meadows Taylor." (10)

Despite its catchpenny title and sensational reputation, *Confessions of a Thug* is unexpectedly serious and controlled. It is certainly violent, but that violence is often presented as matter of fact and psychologically harrowing rather than gleefully gory, and, in a surprisingly modern twist, the eponymous Thug, Ameer Ali, is (like Miss Warrender) as much a morally compromised anti-hero as villain. (11)

In his own depiction of the historical background, however, Conan Doyle chose to follow the path of Gothic melodrama and in "Uncle Jeremy" depicts the Thugs as the bloodthirsty religious fanatics of popular culture (what else could be expected, with a leader called Achmet Genghis Khan?), rather than the well-organized robber gangs of reality, who veiled their pragmatically murderous rapacity behind a misguided devotion to the Hindu goddess Kali. (12)

Yet, this is popular fiction, after all, not anthropology. Even Collins, who tried to present his Indian characters sympathetically, appears to reinforce certain cultural prejudices through the pronouncements of *The Moonstone's* learned and well-travelled Orientalist, Mr Murthwaite:

In the country these men came from, they care just as much about killing a man as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe. If a thousand lives stood between them and the getting back of their Diamond – and if they thought they could destroy those lives without discovery – they would take them all. (13)

Noting the predictable response of the Verinders's butler, that the Indians were "murdering thieves," (14) Murthwaite (possibly musing comparatively upon the murderous greed of "Honourable John" Herculastle) teasingly and ambiguously retorts that he finds them "a wonderful people." (15) Doubtless he is unsurprised – probably even a little satisfied – when the thief is tracked down and punished by the three Brahmins.

Nemesis, in the form of the wandering Thug, similarly dogs the footsteps of the scheming Copperthorne, who has been foolish enough to use his knowledge of Warrender's sinister past and proclivities in an attempt to blackmail her into hastening Jeremy's death. Instead, she arranges his own, and then disappears, presumably to reclaim her Indian inheritance.

The themes of sacrilege and vengeance are also central to *The Mystery of Cloomber*, in which, in common with *The Moonstone*, the original crime

is committed on the Indian subcontinent and its consequences played out in the transgressor's British refuge. In contrast to Colonel John Herculane, however, *Cloomber's* General John Berthier Heatherstone is a fearful and repentant man.

Borrowing its narrative framework from *The Moonstone*, the tale of Heatherstone's transgression and judgement is related via a number of first-person accounts, unravelling the story from the elderly general's arrival in Scotland, back to his fateful service in the First Afghan War (1839-42). In this ill-omened conflict, young Lieutenant Heatherstone had led a small expedition into the Teruda Pass in pursuit of hostile hillmen, during the course of which he and an artillery sergeant, Rufus Smith, killed a holy man, Ghoolab Shah, who was, apparently, "one of the highest and holiest of Buddhists," (16) despite his Muslim-sounding name and Hindu ascetic appearance.

Shortly after this event, Heatherstone had received a quietly threatening visit from one of the guru's followers, and from then on seldom knows a peaceful moment. An astral bell tolls at constant intervals to remind him of his crime and to warn him that the reckoning remains unpaid.

He finally retires (accompanied by his long-suffering family) to a remote refuge on the west coast of Scotland, where he retreats behind the forbidding walls of Cloomber Hall, enhancing its already gloomy reputation. In the words of one of the dour local fishermen: "It hasna a guid name after dark, yon hoose." (17)

The last act opens with storm and shipwreck, and – echoing *The Moonstone's* Brahmin trio – the arrival of three exotic strangers. They announce themselves to be "Buddhists of the higher school," (18) through their spokesman, Ram Singh.

As with "Uncle Jeremy's Household," so with *The Mystery of Cloomber*. The ethnic and religious profiling is not simply incongruous, but wrong. Given his name and appearance Ram Singh – like the ambivalent killer Warrender and the sadhu Ghoolab Shah – is no Buddhist. Neither are his companions, Lal Hoomi and Mowdar Khan, who are characterized as "swarthy faced and black haired, of a type that I was familiar with among the Sikhs and Afridis." (19)

To compound this, the story's "well-known Oriental and Sanskrit scholar," (20) James Hunter West – father of the principal narrator – is no Murthwaite (and certainly not the intellectual heir to his own professed scholarly models, Sir William Jones and Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall), if the following pronouncement typifies his standard of scholarship:

[Ram Singh] is one of those holy men who, under the various names of sannyasis, yogis, sevras, qualanders, hakims, and sufis, have

devoted their lives to the study of the mysteries of the Buddhist faith. He is, I take it, a theosophist, or worshipper of the God of knowledge, the highest grade of which is the adept. (21)

This garbled and inaccurate statement reflects Conan Doyle's own unsystematic and ill-digested reading into Eastern religions and esoteric traditions during the 1880s, under the influence of his early Spiritualist mentor, General Alfred Drayson.

Collins had the storyteller's sense to keep the energies of the Moonstone's three guardians focused upon the practical rather than the mystical aspects of their mission. Conan Doyle, instead, clutters *Cloomber's* plot with poorly understood but impressive-sounding religio-philosophical discourse, and posits an unlikely trio of vengeful and cruel "Buddhists" who deliberately lead Heatherstone and Smith to a lingering death in the bottomless and hellish Hole of Cree (a forerunner of the Grimpen Mire in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and perhaps inspired by the ominous Shivering Sands in *The Moonstone*). This despite Heatherstone's contrition over Ghoolab Shah's death, a death which was the unintended consequence of a military action, and from which Heatherstone did not benefit.

Conan Doyle was fully aware of the book's faults. In a letter to his mother in 1899 he described it – together with *Uncle Bernac* and *The Firm of Girdlestone* – as a "failure," which, if possible, "must be suppressed." (22) In 1930 *The Mystery of Cloomber* – unlike *Uncle Bernac* and *The Firm of Girdlestone* – was pointedly excluded from the Crowborough Edition of his fictional works.

*Cloomber's* flaws, however, did not lie with its author's borrowings from Collins, and he turned once more to *The Moonstone* when writing the second Sherlock Holmes adventure, *The Sign of the Four*, in 1889. This time India as a wellspring of mystical wisdom is replaced by the equally powerful and alluring cultural construct of India as the source of illimitable wealth, and Collins's single gem is inflated to become the great Agra treasure, which falls into the scheming hands of a trio of Sikh guards (three conspirators, again) who are attached to the besieged garrison of Agra during the Indian Mutiny, or Rebellion, of 1857-59. Three become four when they are forced by circumstance to draw a British comrade-in-arms, Jonathan Small, into their criminal plot.

In contrast to the privileged and grasping John Herncastle, Small is the classic lower-class European drifter in Asia – "I was never much of a credit to the family [and] was always a bit of a rover," (23) he tells Holmes and company during his Baker Street confessional scene. (24) Having joined the British Army after getting "into a mess over a girl," (25) he was posted



to India, where he lost his leg to a crocodile in the Ganges, but subsequently found work as an overseer on the indigo plantation of Mr Abel White (a clear nod to *The Moonstone*'s Godfrey Ablewhite), only to be displaced by the outbreak of the Mutiny and forced to seek refuge in the ancient fort of Agra.

Initially he has qualms, as the plot involves the murder of the treasure's carrier, Achmet, but one of the Sikhs, Abdullah Khan, (26) tries to reassure him, reasoning that:

... if this man is taken by the commandant he will be hung or shot, and his jewels taken by the Government, so that no man will be a rupee the better for them. Now, since we do the taking of him, why should we not do the rest as well? The jewels will be as well with us as in the Company's coffers. (27)

He has a point. When the treasure of the rebel leader Dhondu Pant, known as the Nana Sahib, was confiscated by the British authorities in 1857 the engineers and soldiers who effected its recovery went unrewarded. (28)

The murder accomplished, the conspirators inspect their prize, which includes what Small calls: "the Great Mogul," and is said to be the second largest stone in existence." (29)

The Great Mughal is a real diamond and not a fiction. Collins, too, used the known, and legendary, histories of famous gems, gleaned from C.W. King's *The Natural History of Precious Stones and Gems* (1865), in the creation of his fictitious Moonstone, as he made clear in his 1868 Preface to the novel:

With reference to the story of the Diamond [the Moonstone] ... I have to acknowledge that it is founded, in some important particulars, on the stories of two of the royal diamonds of Europe. The magnificent stone which adorns the top of the Russian Imperial Sceptre was once the eye of an Indian idol. The famous Koh-i-Noor is also supposed to have been one of the sacred gems of India; and, more than this, to have been the subject of a prediction which prophesied certain misfortune to the persons who should divert it from its ancient uses. (30)

The former of these stones is known as the Orlov Diamond, after Count Grigory Orlov, one of Catherine the Great's lovers, who gifted it to the Empress in an attempt to retain her favours. Collins reworked the legend of its supposed theft from an Indian idol by a French soldier into the background story of the Moonstone, which was prised from a Hindu statue

by an officer of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and re-mounted in the hilt of a dagger subsequently plundered by John Herculastle during the spoliation of Seringapatam.

Sadly, perhaps, recent scholarship has discounted the Orlov Diamond's legendary origins, and it is now widely believed to be none other than the Great Mughal itself, which was seen and sketched by the French jeweller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier in 1665, when it was part of Aurangzeb's treasury. His sketch clearly resembles the Orlov, which also has the "same type of cut, and the same pattern of facets" (31) as the Great Mughal. This stone was later seized by the Persian warlord Nader Shah when his forces sacked Delhi in 1739, and after his assassination in 1747 it found its way, via the markets of Turkestan and Amsterdam, into Count Orlov's possession.

It seems, then, that Jonathan Small was mistaken in his identification of the "Great Mogul" as one of the centrepieces of the Agra treasure, and presumably his mysterious and otherwise unrecorded "diamond of the first water" still lies in the silt of the Thames, unless carried out to sea by the tide.

The even more celebrated Koh-i-Noor is now part of the British Crown Jewels, after its seizure by treaty from the last Sikh maharaja, Duleep Singh, in 1849. (32) As noted by Collins it apparently carries a curse, as does the Moonstone, whose "deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem and to all his house and name who received it after him." (33)

John Herculastle (who has led "a solitary, vicious, underground life" (34) since his return from India) knows this, and his gifting of the Moonstone to his niece is a cynical and vindictive gesture towards the family who have disowned him. The events which engulf Rachel Verinder during her brief possession of the diamond leave her thankful for its theft.

Mary Morstan feels a similar relief when she learns of Jonathan Small's disposal of the great Agra treasure into the waters of the Thames. "Thank God," she says, echoing Dr Watson's sentiments about the loss of her tainted inheritance which has, to their knowledge, already cost the lives of Mary's father, Captain Arthur Morstan; Major John Sholto and his son Bartholomew; the treasure carrier, Achmet, and the Andaman Islander, Tonga – not to mention the liberty of Small and his three Sikh confederates.

There is, as Collins and Conan Doyle emphasize, a toll to be exacted for willful ignorance, greed and lust. Whether the coveted prize is financial, corporeal or even philosophical, the East is not simply an open treasure house waiting supinely to be plundered by any passing adventurer. In "The Blue Carbuncle" (1892) Holmes muses that the titular gem, which was "found in the banks of the Amoy River in Southern China," is "a nucleus

and focus of crime. Every good stone is.” (35) Crime, certainly, but also, perhaps – as the Moonstone and the Agra treasure intimate – other, darker and more mysterious forces, protecting the sacred from the profane via agencies infinitely more dangerous and cunning than even the most audacious and sanguinary of common criminals.

## Notes and References

- (1) This is from the dustjacket of a 150th anniversary edition of *The Moonstone* issued by HarperCollins in 2018. The actual quote is: “The first, the longest and the best of modern English detective novels.” See Julian Symons, *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, Faber & Faber, London, 1972, pp. 52-53.
- (2) Lycett, Andrew, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2007, p107.
- (3) Collins, Wilkie, *The Moonstone*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.31.
- (4) Doyle, Arthur Conan, “Uncle Jeremy’s Household,” in *Gothic Tales*, ed. by Darryl Jones, Oxford University Press, 2018, p124.
- (5) *Ibid.*, p114.
- (6) *Ibid.*, p119.
- (7) *Ibid.*, p115.
- (8) *Ibid.*, p134.
- (9) Although female Thugs were very rare they do appear in the literature. See George Bruce, *The Stranglers: The Cult of Thuggee and its Overthrow in British India*, Longmans, London, 1968, p25.
- (10) *Op. cit.* (4), p141.
- (11) See Philip Meadows Taylor, *Confessions of a Thug*, Oxford University Press, 1986. Much of the violence did have to be toned down from the manuscript. In *The Story of My Life*, Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press, 1920, Meadows Taylor admitted that “a great deal was pronounced really too horrible to publish,” p141.
- (12) For an accessible modern account of the phenomenon of Thuggee, see Mike Dash, *Thug: The True Story of India’s Murderous Cult*, Granta Books, London, 2005.
- (13) *Op. cit.* (3), p73.
- (14) *Ibid.*
- (15) *Ibid.*
- (16) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *The Mystery of Cloomber*, Hesperus Books, London, 2004, p110.
- (17) *Ibid.*, p8.
- (18) *Ibid.*, p75.
- (19) *Ibid.*, p95.

(20) *Ibid.*, p4.

(21) *Ibid.*, p89.

(22) Lellenberg, Stashower and Foley (eds.), *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, Harper Press, London, 2007, p415.

(23) Doyle, Arthur Conan, *The Sign of the Four*, Oxford University Press, 1997, p96.

(24) Small's capture is partly due to Holmes's deployment of his Baker Street Irregulars; the street urchins led by their "captain," Wiggins, who can "go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone" (*Ibid.*, p.67). Similarly, the Moonstone's thief is kept under observation by the lawyer Bruff's errand boy, Octavius Guy, nicknamed "Gooseberry," who, according to his employer, "is one of the sharpest boys in London" (*Op. cit.* (3), p429).

(25) *Op. cit.* (23), p97.

(26) Once more Conan Doyle's knowledge of India is found wanting. He gives his Sikhs Muslim names – Abdullah Khan, Dost Akbar and Mahomet Singh (Singh, at least, *is* a Sikh name). The 1987 Granada television version, adapted by John Hawkesworth, re-named Small's co-conspirators; Khartar Singh, Inderjit Singh and Jagardish Singh. For more on Indian nomenclature, see Chris Redmond, "Good and Faithful Servant: Hindoo (sic) Meets Sikh" in the *Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Vol. 34 No. 3, Winter 2019.

(27) *Op. cit.* (23), p104.

(28) Ward, Andrew, *Our Bones are Scattered: The Cawnpore Massacres and the Indian Mutiny of 1857*, Henry Holt, New York, 1996, p492.

(29) *Op. cit.* (23), pp. 107-108.

(30) *Op. cit.* (3), p. liii.

(31) Dalrymple, William and Anand, Anita, *Kohinoor: The Story of the World's Most Infamous Diamond*, Juggernaut Books, New Delhi, 2016, p41.

(32) Maharaja Duleep Singh was 10 years old when he was dispossessed of his Indian territories. He was exiled to Britain and there became a favourite of Queen Victoria. During his exile he lived in various locations, one of which was Mulgrave Castle, near Whitby in North Yorkshire, where he resided between 1858 and 1862. Wilkie Collins took a holiday in the area in 1861, and doubtless heard exaggerated stories about the Maharaja of Mulgrave. The Verinder estate at Frizinghall may have been modelled in part upon Mulgrave.

(33) *Op. cit.* (3), p2.

(34) *Ibid.*, p31.

(35) Doyle, Arthur Conan, "The Blue Carbuncle," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p157.

# *What was the name of that sea captain?*

By Jim Ballinger

*Jim Ballinger is a long-time Bootmaker, retired scientist, and amateur musician. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the March 28, 1992, meeting of the Bootmakers.*

My investigation of this matter started with an expletive. I was rereading “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange” from the Coles edition (1980), which is a pirated reprinting of the Doubleday edition (1930). When I came to the introduction of the sea captain, I said, “Oh, no!”, or slightly stronger words to that effect. For there in black and white it said, “Captain Crocker”, when I knew that in my song I had used “Captain Croker”, which conveniently rhymes with the murder weapon, a poker. Had I got the name wrong? Would I have to find a rhyme for Crocker? I hurried to my rhyming dictionary: blocker, clocker, cocker, docker, Fokker, knocker, locker, mocker, rocker, shocker, soccer, stocker, knickerbocker. Perhaps:

“The handsome Captain Crocker, dressed in knickerbockers...”

No shortage of rhymes, but none as appropriate as:

“With the help of a poker wielded by Jack Croker...”

Had my lust for a cheap rhyme seduced me into misreading the name?

I first turned to Jack Tracy’s *The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana* (1977), where the entry for “Crocker” says “See Croker”, which in turn ends with the sentence, “In many editions the name appears as Crocker.” Aha! Vindication. I’m not going crazy after all, at least not on this point.

This made me curious as to why the name would be different in some editions. Surely there would be lots written about it. This is not some minor textual variant due to a careless typesetter, but a character’s name deliberately and consistently changed. Well, I could find very little written about it. *The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia* (1962) by Orlando Park lists only Crocker and does not even admit the existence of Croker. A search of the card index in the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library turned up little more information beyond Colin Prestige’s comment in *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* that the Crocker version showed up in “some American editions.” Don Redmond in *A Study in Sources* (1982) has a little more to say and I will return to it in a moment.

“The Abbey Grange” first appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in September 1904 and then collected in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, with illustrations by Sidney Paget. As anyone can see in the numerous facsimile editions of *The Strand* that are available, the name of the sea captain was Croker. The 13 stories in *The Return* were published in book form by George Newnes Ltd. in 1905, and in this and, as far as I can ascertain, in all subsequent British editions the name is Croker. Indeed, the original plates seem to have been used at least until 1918.

Now, what about the American editions? “Abbey Grange” first appeared on this side of the Atlantic in *Collier’s Weekly Journal* of December 31, 1904 with illustrations by Frederic Dorr Steele. Unfortunately, the Toronto library does not have a copy of that issue of Collier’s magazine, but when the series was complete, Collier’s printed a book edition of *The Return* in 1905. In that edition, the name has become Crocker. The same plates appear to have been used for at least nine editions, as late as 1941. The two-volume Doubleday edition of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1930) used Crocker and this has continued in the pirated Coles edition and the one-volume Penguin edition (1981).

Thus, it appears that not just some, but virtually all American editions use Crocker, including Project Gutenberg. However, there are four notable exceptions, each of which aspires to be the definitive text and each of which, significantly, uses Croker. They are: Edgar W. Smith’s Heritage Press edition (1957), which Don Redmond erroneously reported as using Crocker; William S. Baring-Gould’s *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (1967); The Mysterious Press reprinting of *The Return* with the original Frederic Dorr Steele illustrations (1987); and Les Klinger’s *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (2005).

To return to Redmond’s book *A Study in Sources*, he gives a number of possibilities for the origin of both names. Indeed, there were both Crockers and Crokers among Conan Doyle’s neighbours in Norwood. Don Redmond speculates that the Crocker/Croker confusion may have been deliberate on Conan Doyle’s part. I’m afraid I disagree on this point, but concur that the original manuscript would be helpful in shedding light on this puzzle.

And where is that manuscript? Fortunately, we can now answer that question. The fate of the manuscript has recently been traced by Catherine Cooke in the facsimile edition published by the Sherlock Holmes Society of London (2016). Conan Doyle donated the original 26-page folio to the British Red Cross Society and the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem. The charities auctioned it as a fundraiser in 1917, when it was possibly bought by David G. Joyce of Chicago. It was next sold at auction in New York City in 1923 for \$105, with the buyer believed to be William

Randolph Hurst, who sold it to Scribners in 1940. In 1954 it was purchased by James Montgomery of Philadelphia, composer of “An Irregular Song” and purported nephew of “Aunt Clara.” He sold it shortly before his death in 1955. By 1960 it was owned by Rollin Van Nostrand Hadley of Boston, a prominent collector and benefactor. It was auctioned for the last time in 1966, this time fetching \$5400. The buyer was Martin Bodmer, a Swiss collector who established the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana in Geneva. That is where the manuscript remains.

What do I think happened with Croker vs Crocker? Conan Doyle wrote the character as Croker; the evidence is pretty clear on that. But the American publisher, Peter Collier, deliberately changed it to Crocker, possibly to avoid embarrassment to a public figure at that time. I would like to suggest that this public figure might have been one Richard Croker, a Democratic politician in New York City. In 1865 he joined the Democratic party organization known as Tammany Hall. Over the next 35 years he progressed from being an alderman to city coroner to fire commissioner to boss of Tammany Hall, controlling the appointment of city officials and the awarding of contracts. He was forced to resign in 1902 after the election of a reformist mayor. He retired to Ireland, his birthplace, living another 20 years as a country gentleman raising racehorses. I would suggest that Collier, who, like Richard Croker, had been born in Ireland in the 1840s, wanted to avoid having a murderer with the same name as a recently retired public figure who had been accused of just about every crime except murder.

There is one final aspect in which the choice of name can affect the interpretation of the story. Croker is one who croaks, used as a transitive verb in gangster parlance meaning to murder, as opposed to its colloquial use as an intransitive verb meaning to die. Crocker is one who delivers a crock. Is his story a crock? Was it actually a premeditated murder? Croker or Crocker? Murderer or liar or both?

reast. chokinq down some overmastering emotion.  
" Sit down, Captain Croker. You got my telegram?"  
Our visitor sank into an arm chair, and looked from  
of us with <sup>questioning</sup> ~~profound~~ eyes.  
" I got your telegram and I came at the hour you said."

*A fragment of the original Conan Doyle manuscript showing the name Croker.*

# *Conan Doyle's Canadian investment at the Lakehead*

By Mark Alberstat

*Mark Alberstat is co-editor of Canadian Holmes and has contributed to other journals and books. He has also given talks on ACD and sport through Zoom across North America and England.*

Conan Doyle enjoyed his trips to Canada. His first visit was in 1894 and was just a short stop in Toronto as part of a larger American tour. However, in 1914 he returned after the Canadian government invited him to see the country by promoting the opening of the new Grand Trunk Pacific railway.

Conan Doyle and his wife Jean arrived in New York on board the *RMS Olympic* on May 27, 1914. On June 3, they arrived in Montreal and stayed at the Ritz Carlton Hotel on Sherbrooke Street.

Four days later the Conan Doyles were well on their way across the country and arrived in Fort William, Ontario. On June 9, *The Winnipeg Tribune* featured an article about Conan Doyle in which he said:

So great is my belief in the future of this country that if Lloyd-George had left me any money I would have been tempted to buy a corner lot in every town through which we have passed. In any event, I intend, before leaving for England, to have securely packed in my grip, the title deeds to quite a little bit of Canada. (1)

Although he didn't return to England with "quite a little bit of Canada" he did return with the deed to one property.

On June 24, Conan Doyle and his wife stopped in Fort William on the return leg of their trip. This stop only lasted five hours as they arrived at 1:30pm and left at 6:30. However, in that short time, Conan Doyle bought a plot of land on Victoria Avenue, which at the time had a house on it, for approximately \$20,000 in cash. (2)

The ACD Collection at the Toronto Reference Library owns Conan Doyle's notebooks from this trip. On the date in question Doyle wrote:

Sunday

Reached Port William after thunder storm followed by fog. Met [Mr.?] Whelan who will invest £2000 for me.



No doubt in his haste, Conan Doyle conflated Fort William with neighbouring Port Arthur but this note undoubtedly corresponds with his land purchase in the area.

In his autobiography, *Memories and Adventures*, Conan Doyle wrote:

I am of the opinion that they [Fort William and Port Arthur] may grow to be a Canadian Chicago, and possibly become the greatest city in the country. All lines converge there, as does all the lake traffic, and everything from East and West must pass through it. If I were a rich man and wished to become richer, I should assuredly buy land in the twin cities. The grain elevators of Fort William are really majestic erections, and with a little change of their construction might be aesthetic as well. Even now the huge cylinders into which they are divided look at a little distance not unlike the columns of Luxor. (3)

The Fort William property remained in the possession of the Doyle family until September 1965.

Currently Holland Bakery is on the property, which is now 1016 Victoria Ave E, Thunder Bay.

#### References

- (1) *The Winnipeg Tribune*, June 9, 1914, p6.
- (2) *The Ottawa Evening Journal*, July 15, 1914, p1.
- (3) Conan Doyle, Arthur, *Memories and Adventures and Western Wanderings*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2009, p310.



*Conan Doyle in 1914 standing at the back of his private railcar.*

# *She is always the woman*

By Rob Nunn

*Rob Nunn is a Sherlockian living in Edwardsville, Illinois, and is the Gasogene of The Parallel Case of St. Louis. He is the co-editor of The Finest Assorted Collection and The Monstrum Opus of Sherlock Holmes, and he interviews fellow Sherlockians on his blog, Interesting Though Elementary.*

Irene Adler, everybody knows the name. Many people outside of this hobby of ours could be forgiven if they think of Miss Adler as a romantic interest for Sherlock Holmes or a shrewd con artist who is always one step ahead of the detective.

“A Scandal in Bohemia” kicks off *The Adventures* and is a first introduction to Holmes for many readers. So, it’s not surprising that Irene Adler makes such a strong impression on many people. Her wit beat the best plans of Holmes, so the contralto does deserve her accolades. But does she deserve the popularity and theories that have grown up around her over the years?

No.

This character has been conflated into someone who has become almost synonymous with Holmes. Irene Adler appears in ONE story giving her only one more Canonical appearance than that heretical phrase, “Elementary, my dear Watson.”

Irene speaks only three lines in the entire Canon:

“Is the poor gentleman hurt much?”

“Surely. Bring him into the sitting-room. There is a comfortable sofa. This way, please!”

and

“Good-night, Mister Sherlock Holmes.”

That’s it! Three lines. Of course, she has that great letter explaining how she outwitted the world’s first consulting detective but is that why she has been lionized over the years? There are plenty of other characters who are wonderfully cunning throughout the Canon, so I doubt it’s the letter that has given her such an over-sized reputation.

Is it because Holmes says that she is “the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet”? Here Holmes is actually quoting all of the men who work on Miss Adler’s street. (A lot of people seem to forget that this phrase doesn’t actually come from Holmes in the first place.)

Is it because she was able to follow Holmes incognito? You don't see us talking about the old lady from *A Study in Scarlet* that fooled Holmes, so I doubt it was her disguise.

I think it's Watson's fault.

Doctor Watson, that helpless romantic, kicks off the first short adventure in this way:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex.

The reader is now primed to elevate this woman to mythical status. Watson even immediately follows those three sentences with, "It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler." But the die had been cast. With those introductory sentences, Irene Adler was catapulted

to a height that no other Canonical character would ever reach. Countless adaptations and pastiches have turned she and Holmes into romantic interests (even though Watson *specifically* says they were not), she's spun off into her own series of adventures, and William Baring-Gould even wrote that Holmes whispered "Irene" with his dying breath.

All of it is nonsense and it's time for everyone to admit that Irene Adler was a great adversary but that is it. Let her live her life unencumbered by Holmes because we have 59 other stories where Holmes is unencumbered by her. Irene doesn't cross his path again, she's not Sherlocked, and they do not have a child named Nero Wolfe. Their paths diverge after she fled the continent, never to return again.

Let it go. And we should also start referring to her correctly. Her name is Irene Norton.



*Irene Adler, Prima donna of the Imperial Opera of Warsaw, as envisioned by Martin Van Maële for the Société d'Édition et de Publications, 1905-1906.*

# *“a few lines upon a sheet of paper”* – *Conan Doyle’s other work for* **The Strand Magazine**

*By Mark Jones*

*Mark Jones is a Sherlockian and Doylean based in York, in the United Kingdom. He writes widely on all matters ACD and is co-host of Doings of Doyle – The Arthur Conan Doyle Podcast.*

**T**he July and August 1898 entries in the ‘Round the Fire’ series, though themselves disconnected, are forever bound together by Sherlockian association. “The Man with the Watches” and “The Lost Special” are railway mysteries that attract the armchair observations of an unnamed amateur reasoner who, in the latter story, seeks to eliminate the impossible to arrive at the truth. While Sherlockian luminaries as august as Christopher Morley and Lord Donegal have traded views on the detective’s identity, the fact that the commentator is wrong in their proposed solution to both cases suggests he is more likely Watson than Holmes.

Sadly, the Game has, here as elsewhere, diverted attention away from what are in fact two extremely good mystery stories that show Conan Doyle’s skill with the genre. Both are detective stories without a detective, in which the business of detection, save for the wayward theories of the reasoner, is dropped in favour of a two-part structure – mystery and confession. In this way, they feel like a conscious reinvention of the genre, with Conan Doyle trolling his audience with the prospect of the Great Detective’s return.

For all they are linked by a railway setting, the two are tonally very different, “The Man with the Watches” being of the private sphere and the social, while “The Lost Special” is ostensibly public and political. Remarkably for the time, “Watches” depicts a criminal partnership that is also a homosexual one, with fleeting references that might easily pass the casual reader. Edward, the young man found dead with six valuable gold watches in his possession, is caught between the controlling love of his brother James and that of his confederate, the improbably named Sparrow MacCoy. The homosexual love between Edward and Sparrow is genuinely expressed, and the tale plays out as a romantic tragedy, with Edward killed accidentally during a tussle. The highly unusual ending has the surviving

enemies conspire together for the shared love and affection of a brother and a lover lost. The watches, which are the proceeds of crime, are incidental details in a story that is fundamentally of the heart. Written three years after Oscar Wilde’s imprisonment, it was a bold choice of topic by Conan Doyle.

“The Lost Special” is played on a much larger canvas, with international political machinations as the backdrop. The magical disappearance of a special train between two stations is as brash a mystery as Conan Doyle ever attempted in the Canon (although *Sherlock* fans will spot that Moffat and Gatiss borrow the central concept for *The Empty Hearse*). Although the means are somewhat mundane, the motive is fascinating, and the story resonates with the sort of scandals that consumed France in the late 1880s and early 1890s. There is a tacit nod to the Panama Canal affair of 1892, in which the French company responsible for the canal’s construction bribed officials to hide its financial troubles. The affair resulted in more than 500 members of Parliament being implicated and contributed to the fall of the Clemenceau government. Played out on the public and political stages, it is a far cry from the domesticity of “Watches” and yet conforms to the same railway mystery format.

So, is it fair that these stories should be consigned to the ‘Apocrypha’ of Sherlock Holmes – as ‘also rans’ of the Canon? Absolutely not. The two stories are more fairly appraised in their own right as they provide yet more evidence of Conan Doyle’s ability to play with genre and reinvent. At times, “Watches” and “Special” owe more to the many non-fiction accounts of true crime that Conan Doyle would write in later years, something that adds to their verisimilitude. Indeed, one can argue that the railway element – with its emphasis on timetables, the testimony of guards, and consideration of tracks and stations – foreshadows the works of Agatha Christie (and perhaps “The Bruce Partington Plans”). As mysteries, they are quite compelling enough without the residents of Baker Street. To paraphrase the Great Detective, Holmes and Watson need not apply.



# *Strictly Personal*

Where a Bootmaker goes under the microscope.

**Name:** Richard Krisciunas

**Age:** 73 in actual years but only 49 in my head

**Birthplace:** Detroit, Michigan

**Occupation:** Attorney and adjunct law professor University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. Part-time city attorney at my local district court.

**Current city of residence:** Northville, Michigan

**Major accomplishments in life:** Emily's Dad and Kathy's husband; 46 years. Practised criminal law; 28 years as a prosecutor in Detroit. Retired as chief of Trial Division in 2004 and then worked as a criminal defence attorney. Adjunct professor Trial Practice and Criminal Trial Clinic at University of Detroit Mercy School of Law - 40 years. MVP Lawyer's Softball League; 1978, 1993. Wayne County "Humanitarian Award" 1999. Coached daughter's travel soccer team 1991-2003; finished in top 10 in Michigan. University of Detroit Mercy Law Alumni "Time and Talent Award, 2015." Invested in Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH) 2022.

**Goal in life:** Stay healthy and live longer than my parents who died in their 80s.

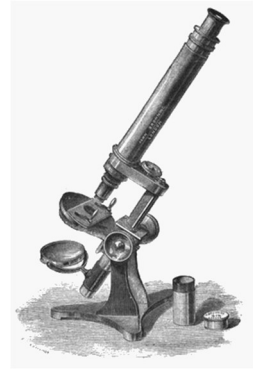
**In school I excelled at:** Math, Journalism, English and Phys Ed. Criminal Procedure in law school.

**A great evening for me is:** Any evening when my daughter returns home, I get a hug, hear her laugh and see her smile.

**Favourite dining experience:** Seafood. Salmon, mussels, lobster, shrimp with pasta.

**Other hobbies and interests:** Golf (two holes in one), fantasy football (Nine Super Bowls and four wins), watching Red Wings and Leafs hockey, Notre Dame football and action movies.

**I'm currently working on:** Writing questions for 2023 John H. Watson Society Treasure Hunt and Beacon Society's next Fortescu Scholarship, "Baron Adelbert Gruner: The Most Misunderstood Man in the Canon,"



“The Trial of Captain James Calhoun,” “Who Killed Herr Heidegger in Priory School?” and “Newspapers in the Canon.”

**Three favourite canonical tales:**

Any stories that involve murders; Charles Augustus Milverton, Six Napoleons and Priory School.

**Three least favourite Canonical tales:** *Valley of Fear*, *Blanchard*, *Yellow Face*.

**Favourite non-Sherlockian reading:** Hockey biographies; 1972 Russia-Canada Summit Series

**Favourite Sherlockian movie:** *Hound of the Baskervilles* (1939)

**Favourite non-Sherlockian movies:** *Moonstruck*, *Three Days of the Condor*, *Casablanca*.

**Most prized possessions in my Sherlockian collection:** My deerstalker that I bought on my first trip to England in 1979. Derrick Murdoch Award – Best Article in *Canadian Holmes* 2021. *From Holmes to Sherlock* autographed by Mattias Boström.

**If I could live anytime in history, it would be:** 1984. The Detroit Tigers won the World Series and my daughter was born in 1985 and I’d love the joy of watching her grow up again.

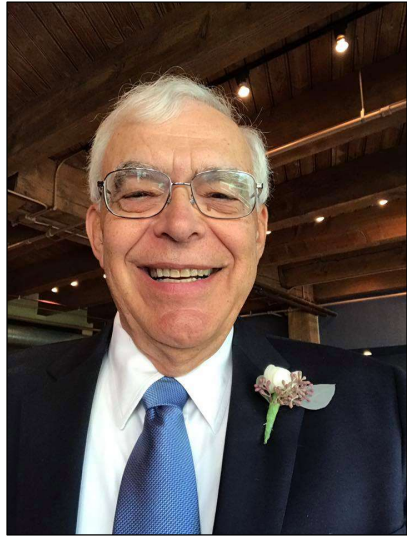
**If I could ask Holmes, Watson and Doyle each one question, it would be:**

Holmes: “Who really shot Charles Augustus Milverton?”

Watson: “Did a woman ever have a special relationship with Sherlock Holmes?”

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: “Can we spend the next four hours discussing your investigations of Oscar Slater and George Edalji.”

**First learned of The Bootmakers:** 2017. First heard about *Canadian Holmes*, joined Bootmakers and made a trip for the Silver Blaze race and gave a presentation at the 50th Jubilee conference.



**I would like my epitaph to read:** “Emily’s Dad and Kathy’s husband. He made a difference in many people’s lives.”

**My last words will be:** “You were right. I can’t eat a dozen Tim Horton’s doughnuts anymore.”

**What question do I wish I would have been asked:** What has been the best thing about Covid?: The pandemic, with quarantines and cancelled in-person meetings, opened the door to virtual meetings on Zoom. Over the past three years, I attended virtual meetings of more than 30 different societies and helped start the “Legion of Zoom” for Sherlockians who attended meetings of at least 17 different societies. As a result, I have made many Sherlockian friends who I never would have met and heard so many wonderful presentations. Being stuck at home gave me more time to listen to old podcasts like “I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere,” “Trifles,” “I Grok Sherlock” and “The Watsonian Weekly,” and read blogs like “Sherlock Peoria” and “The Shingle of Southsea.”

## “*Holmes gave me a brief review*”



“What if Holmes’s most villainous nemesis was actually an innocent man?” This is the question posed by the new Audible Original podcast series “Moriarty: The Devil’s Game.”

Like most everything in the current Sherlockian milieu this is not a new idea. As much as enthusiastic authors (and their publishers) of new Sherlock Holmes stories are reticent to admit—it has all been done before. In fact, reading Sherlockian pastiches will inevitably depress the aspiring author who is looking for that “original” never-before used idea. Today, if you want to write a Sherlock Holmes story ignorance is bliss.

I could be wrong, but it was probably Nicholas Meyer’s 1974 novel, *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*, that first posited a misrepresented Moriarty. But Meyer didn’t spend much time exploring the Professor’s backstory.

In “Moriarty: The Devil’s Game” creator/writer and executive producer, Charles Kindinger (an award-winning writer of film, television, and audio fiction) has produced a 10-part, 11-person cast, full production radio-drama that presents Moriarty’s character arc.

Renewing their endearing chemistry playing the two buddy hobbits, Merry and Pippin from *The Lord of the Rings* is Dominic Monaghan and

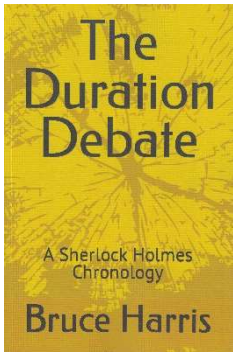


Billy Boyd. Monaghan’s Professor James Moriarty is riveting and compelling, and Boyd’s Colonel Sebastian Moran backs him up with an equally outstanding performance. It is evident that the two actors are real-world friends. Comedian and animation voice-actor Phil LaMarr delivers a forcible and exacting portrayal of Holmes. From the acting to the music to the sound effects, all are top notch. Radio-drama certainly isn’t dead!

What *is* original to the story (at least to my knowledge) revolves around Moriarty’s book, *The Dynamics of an Asteroid*, mentioned in the Canon but here elaborated on. As stated in the trailer description: it purports an “earth-shattering mathematical breakthrough—a formula so powerful, it can predict the future.” This is the catalyst.

With a cliff-hanger ending each chapter, and lots of Easter eggs for the experienced Sherlockian, the story is gripping and exciting. And if this Audible Original Podcast is successful we may expect a sequel.

As much as I love audiobooks read by talented voice actors, there’s nothing like a full-cast radio drama. Yes, you will need a subscription to Audible but it’s worth it—hey, get the free trial! – Mike Ranieri



*The Duration Debate: A Sherlock Holmes Chronology*, by Bruce Harris (Privately published, C\$13.53, trade paperback)

American Sherlockian Bruce Harris falls further down the chronology rabbit hole with this analysis of how long each case in the Canon took to solve. It’s a sequel to last year’s *It’s Not Always 1895*. This time around, Harris examines such questions as: If the story straddled two days over a 24-hour period, is that one day or two days? How should time be tallied when there were periods when Holmes wasn’t

actively pursuing the case?

The chronologist tackles these questions by analyzing the findings of several well-known colleagues, past and present. Then Harris draws his own conclusion of story length. He often agrees with chronology colleagues on duration but not always. There are a handful of stories where he draws an entirely different conclusion.

Whether Harris agrees with fellow chronologists or not, his analysis is succinct and there’s a wry humour to his writing. This helps make the monograph interesting even for those not playing the chronology game. It’s also refreshing to see Harris revise some conclusions made in the previous book, based on further study. The appendices would be a handy reference for those who aren’t experts in this area, with chronological information organized in various ways.

– JoAnn Alberstat

# BOOTMAKERS' DIARY



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

— *The Five Orange Pips*

*Saturday February 25* – “The Devil’s Foot”

At 1:08 p.m. Mike Ranieri, Meyers, called the meeting to order for the 67 who were attending by Zoom. He went on to explain that he had hoped this could have been a combination in-person and Zoom event but was still trying to work things out with the library. So far no luck, thus, for the foreseeable future it will be Zoom only.

Mike hosted a pipe quiz showing various pipe smokers and the audience had to guess their identities. Some were obvious and others less so. The winners were Larry Raisch, Brenda Rossini and Cliff Goldfarb.

Meyers then introduced Larry Raisch, a member of the scion society The Sound of the Baskervilles, coming to us from Seattle, who gave a presentation titled “140 varieties of a Three Pipe Problem.”

Larry began by saying that at one time 75 per cent of smokers were pipe users but now it’s roughly 25 per cent. He then gave an overview of the various pipes mentioned in the Canon, and those which have become associated through various media such as William Gillette’s curved pipe so as not to block his face.

Donny Zaldin introduced Robert (Bob) Katz, Head Mastiff of Philadelphia’s Sherlockian society, The Sons of the Copper Beeches.

As a medical doctor, Bob, going over the description of James Moriarty, particularly his oscillating head, speculated that the professor may have been suffering from Parkinson’s disease. Along with the nodding the disease causes muscles to deteriorate thus instead of a fight to the death at the Reichenbach Falls, all Holmes had to do was give the weakened Moriarty a push. He also speculated that perhaps it was Holmes and not Moriarty who lured Watson away so as not to be a witness to cold-blooded murder.

Next came Karen Campbell’s quiz, won by Bruce Aiken.

Karen Gold sang *The Devil in His Heart*, to the tune of *The Devil in Her Heart*, by The Beatles.

Barbara Rusch introduced Diane Gilbert Madsen who gave an interesting wrap-up of today’s story, “The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot,”

pointing out the various elements found in the story such as the supernatural, greed, revenge and Holmes deducing Mortimer Tregennis's guilt without pertinent information.

Mike closed the meeting with thanks to the presenters.

– David Sanders M.Bt

*Saturday, April 1, 2023 – “His Last Bow”*

The Bootmakers of Toronto met on Zoom to consider “His Last Bow: The War Service of Sherlock Holmes.”

Mike Ranieri, as Meyers, called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. There were 62 people in attendance.

Mike introduced our first speaker, Zach Dundas, the author of *The Great Detective: The Amazing Rise and Immortal Life of Sherlock Holmes*. Dundas belongs to the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and the Diogenes Club. He talked about how he came to write his book. It is an investigation of where the real world meets the world of Sherlock Holmes. His research trip to England proved to be quite an adventure. He noted that the first readers of the stories had an entirely different view of London than modern readers.

Guest speaker Vicki Delany, the best-selling author of more than 50 books, was next on the agenda. She spoke about her Holmes Bookshop series. Her ideas come from many sources. The idea is the spark which she must then turn into a book.

Karen Campbell presented the quiz on “His Last Bow.” The winner was Barbara Rusch, with a score of 19 out of 20. She will receive a prize from George Vanderburgh.

Karen Gold gave us the song about the story, *Secret Agent*, sung to the tune of the Johnny Rivers song. She sang the same song nine years ago, the last time this story was the topic of a meeting.

Meyers then introduced Thomas Drucker, who did the wrap-up for today's story. He is a retired professor of mathematics and computer science at the University of Wisconsin at Whitewater. He wrote the chapter on this story for Chris Redmond's book, *About Sixty*. Thomas said this may not be the best story but it is the most distinctive. It is written in the third person and Holmes makes no deductions. The style and language of the story are much richer. The flavour is that of a shilling shocker suspense story and not a detective story. The story was written to boost British morale. It marked the end of European life as we know it. At the conclusion of his presentation, Thomas answered some questions.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

– Bruce D. Aikin, M. Bt., Sh.D.



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