



Special points of interest:

- Cadogan West is Money
- Bruce-Partington a hoax
- The play is the thing
- Reviews — Holroyd, Pointer
- Hey, I thought it was funny...

Issue IV
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Baker Street Essays



From the Roll Top Keyboard

I'm pleased to present the fourth issue of *Baker Street Essays*.

The *Bruce-Partington Plans* is one of my favorites in the Canon and, I think, the strongest of the latter stories. So it's back for an encore appearance. I borrowed the case format I use for the *Solar Pons Gazette*. On the odd chance I receive favorable feedback on this, I will incorporate the style into some future story discussions.

Before he played a menacing

Moriarty opposite Arthur Woner's Holmes, Lyn Harding was another great villain from the Canon, as I discuss.

And the first of a pair of parodies appears in *Sherlock Holmes & the Case of Ineffable Twaddle*. It is to be followed by *The Singular Affair of the Aluminum Crutches*.

Phil Cornell is a talented Sherlockian artist, which is amply proven in this issue's 'Illustrators of the Canon,' as always, found on the back cover.

Frederic Dorr Steele was featured in the last issue. Note his use of different shades of 'dark' to contrast Holmes' cloak, the bushes, the ground and the house, while still providing a burst of color in the doorway. This is certainly a suitable illustration for *The Creeping Man*.

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More Thoughts Regarding The Bruce Partington Plans (BRUC)

The Case

The body of Arthur Cadogan West, a clerk at the Woolwich Arsenal, is found beside the Underground tracks near the Aldgate Station. Apparently West has stolen the plans for the experimental Bruce-Partington submarine and only seven of the ten pilfered pages are found on his body.

In an espionage case with grave international consequences, Holmes pursues the German master spy, Hugo Oberstein, with his brother Mycroft playing a major role.

Quotes

Holmes: *Mycroft has his rails and he runs on them. His Pall Mall lodgings, the Diogenes Club, Whitehall – that is his cycle. Once, and only once, he has been here. What upheaval can possibly have derailed him?...A planet might as well leave its orbit.*

Mycroft: *You must drop everything, Sherlock. Never mind your usual petty puzzles of the police-court.*

Mycroft: *Give me your details, and from an armchair I will return you an excellent expert opinion. But to run here and run there, to cross-question railway guards, and lie on my face with a lens to my eye – it is not my métier.*

(Hmm, reminds me of Nero Wolfe)

Comments

Mary Money was a young, unmarried female clerk found dead in a tunnel, apparently thrown (or fallen) from a train, in 1905. Her killer was never found and it is quite possible that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle discussed this unsolved mystery as a member of The Crimes Club (subject of a future Baker Street Essay).

Thus, it is no surprise that we find elements of this murder in the *Bruce Partington Plans*, as Cadogan West is a young, unmarried clerk, found dead next to the tracks, apparently fallen from a train.

August Derleth clearly borrowed the [specifics of the Mary Money murder](#) (page 21) for the December 14, 1919, entry in “From the Notebooks of Dr. Lyndon Parker.” This Solar Pons pastiche can be found in *A Praed Street Dossier*.

In June, 1894, *The Strand* featured Arthur Morrison’s tale of Martin Hewitt, *The Adventure of the Dixon Torpedo*. The story involved the theft of top secret plans, this time for a torpedo, not a submarine. A superficial evaluation might

lead one to think Doyle had ‘borrowed’ Morrison’s idea and used it in *The Bruce Partington Plans*. Except for the fact that Doyle was actually drawing on his own work.

In October and November of 1893, *The Strand* presented Holmes in *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*. Which, you guessed it, involved stolen top secret government documents. *The Naval Treaty* was the last story before Doyle shocked the world by (seemingly) sending the world’s only private consulting detective off a cliff into the Reichenbach Falls in *The Adventure of the Final Problem*.

The Dixon Torpedo was part of the 1971 British television series, *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*, and is included on set one of the recent DVD release. Oddly, this episode does not actually include Hewitt.

Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s more brilliant elder brother, is a major player in this tale. Holmes had revealed little of Mycroft to Watson during their first meeting, which occurred in *The Greek Interpreter*.

However, here, Holmes intimates Mycroft is a very important person. What else could one make of such

Experimental submarine development plays a key role in Michael Kurland’s pastiche, *The Infernal Device*, as well as in the movie *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, starring Robert Stephens. In that film, Christopher Lee, who had already portrayed Sir Henry Baskerville and Sherlock Holmes, was cast as Mycroft Holmes.

More Thoughts Regarding The Bruce Partington Plans (BRUC) cont.



Charles Grey (Blofeld in *Diamonds are Forever*) and Jeremy Brett as the Holmes Brothers.

phrases as “occasionally he is the British government,” and “he remains the most indispensable man in the country”?

Lestrade offers a perfectly reasonable explanation, which, as Holmes says, “holds together.” But Holmes dismisses it by saying that the case would be over. And Mycroft simply says, “All my instincts are against this explanation.”

Since Lestrade’s theories pretty much always contain major flaws, it is odd to see him dismissed quickly when he comes up with a valid solution.

So, Mycroft tells us that the Bruce Partington submarine is “the most jealously guarded of all government secrets.”

This is only a few moments

after stating that he “thought everyone had heard of it.”

This isn’t exactly brilliant dialogue. It seems more likely to have been uttered by Nigel Bruce’s Watson than Holmes’ brother.

The Royal Scandal is the third (and far and away the best) of Matthew Frewer’s four turns as Sherlock Holmes. The engaging plot combines elements of *A Scandal in Bohemia* and *The Bruce Partington Plans*. This is even carried so far as to include Cadogan West, albeit a more sinister version than is

Kenneth Welsh played an underrated Watson to Frewer’s Holmes.



found in the original story.

Unfortunately, the fourth (and final) installment in the series, *The Case of the Whitechapel Vampire*, represented a serious regression and the Frewer project came to an unsatisfying end.

Brett and Frewer are not the only actors to star as Holmes in adaptations of *The Bruce Partington Plans*. Eille Norwood made a silent version back in 1922, while Douglas Wilmer’s BBC series featured this tale in 1965.

The Wilmer episode was

scripted by Giles Cooper and re-used for the German 1967-1968

Holmes television series starring Erich Schellow.



A Letter to The Editor Of *The Strand Magazine*

January 14, 1909.

To Martin Greenhough Smith, Editor, *The Strand Magazine*, I can no longer sit idly by and read the allegedly factual accounts published by your periodical regarding one Mister Sherlock Holmes. Of course, it is quite possible he has played no part in misleading the public and that the blame lies fully at the feet, or rather, should I say, the hands, of his biographer, Doctor John Watson.

I am referring to your issue of last December (1908) containing a remarkable piece of fiction entitled "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans." It is clear that you, sir, do not cast a critical eye on the accounts of Sherlock Holmes that your magazine has long rushed to print at every opportunity.

According to Dr. Watson, in the very first sentence of his tale, he states that events regarding the Bruce-Partington Plans occurred "in the year 1895." This is com-

plete poppycock!

Anyone who has read this story knows that it deals with the theft of top secret plans regarding the developmental Bruce-Partington submarine. But how could this possibly be?

The Admiralty has admitted that it did not encourage home-development of this new class of naval vessel. The esteemed Engineer-In-Chief of the Royal Navy, Sir Durston, acknowledges that the first British submarines were based on the design of the American "Holland" submarine. The first Holland was sold to the United States Navy in 1900. There were certainly no advanced British submarine plans in 1895!

And the Woolwich Arsenal is an army facility. Why would the Royal Navy be developing a top secret sea vessel there? Apparently logic and accuracy are not requirements for submissions to your magazine. So, what are we to make of this story? Allow me to provide an answer.

Robert Whitehead developed a self-propelled torpedo. Though he was a British subject, the Admiralty's lack of interest in the weapon resulted in White-

head presenting it to the Austrian government. However, research and development in the field continued, with production of the first British torpedoes occurring at the Woolwich Arsenal in the early 1870's. Woolwich was a key research facility for the development of explosives. Shortly after, the first torpedo boats were constructed.

What does this have to do with Watson's fanciful tale? You may recall, sir, that in 1894, your magazine published my own account of how Martin Hewitt prevented an international incident and recovered the plans for the Dixon Torpedo. Unlike the tale spun in "The Bruce-Partington Plans," I can assure you the account of "The Dixon Torpedo" is true. Even Mycroft Holmes would be forced to admit such.

Sherlock Holmes is currently retired and living on the Sussex Downs, passing his days by studying bees. Dr. Watson, I understand, is also retired. Obviously needing to supplement the meager income from his writing royalties, he occasionally publishes some case from Holmes' past. In this instance, he has spun a tale from whole cloth.



A Letter to The Editor... cont.

Having in some fashion remembered my account of the Dixon Torpedo, he changed the weapon involved to a submarine and fabricated a pale copy of my own writing. The fact that he dated his tale in a year when there was no submarine development in the works, and placing it in Woolwich (valid for torpedoes, but not submarines) just shows what a work of fiction it all is. Truly, such lazy writing by Doctor Watson.

There you have it. Being a former journalist myself, I would expect your magazine to have verified at least some elements of the story you published. Now, of course, one might wonder how truthful the other Holmes and Watson adventures that you published were.

But I can categorically state that "The Bruce-Partington Plans" is a work of fiction, based in large part on my own "The Case of the Dixon Torpedo." I trust that this letter proves such.

Brett

Some Thoughts Regarding The Red Circle

Meh

The Red Circle is somewhat unsatisfying. Holmes gets spotted by the subject of his spying expedition. In the time it takes him to go across the street, a killer gets away from the murder site. No one is arrested or jailed. The female lead gives a long, rather boring speech. As with the Dying Detective, there just isn't too much to this story.

The Holmes Effect

One way to assess Sherlock Holmes' role in a case is to ask what would have happened if he hadn't been involved. Now, sometimes events are a direct result of his actions and plans, but generally, you can take him out of the case and ask, "What changed?"

John Clay almost certainly succeeds in *The Red Headed League* without Holmes' intervention. There is no suspicion of Stapleton's plans to murder Sir Henry Baskerville absent Holmes. John Hector MacFarlane probably remains unhappy as the murder charge that the police hang on him sticks in that small matter in Norwood. Jonathan Small? I don't think Athelney Jones is going to solve that

one! You get the idea. I call this principle 'The Holmes Effect.'

But in *The Red Circle*, other than knowing what went on, does Holmes' intervention make any difference? Holmes does not prevent any crimes. He does not catch any criminals. He doesn't even look for the killer. Holmes can explain to the mysteriousness of her lodger to Mrs. Warren. And Gregson can explain how Giorgiano (who is not wanted for any crimes in England) came to his end. But I'd have to say that The Holmes Effect in this case was minimal.



Holmes did a real bang up job of staking out the lodger in this one. It appears she realized someone was watching and ducked back inside her room.

Mandate for Murder, from the Baker Street Irregulars, contains a facsimile of the original manuscript, as well as essays on The Red Circle.

The Speckled Band

An Adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes

One of the many titles that can be applied to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is “playwright.” One failed attempt led directly to a very successful property. In 1909, Doyle resumed work on a previously abandoned effort. He completed *The House of Temperley*, which Doyle himself said was an adaptation of his own novel, *Rodney Stone*, though R. Dixon Smith disputes the assertion in his excellent essay, *The Speckled Band: The Story, the Play and the Snake* (1997, Calabash Press). It was a boxing story, and the sport was illegal in England at the time.

This proved to be a problem, as Doyle could not find a backer. Resolute as always (and often to his own disadvantage), he chose to finance the play himself, taking a six-month lease on the Adelphi Theater. Hubert Willis was in the cast. He would go on to play Doctor Watson opposite Eille Norwood’s Sherlock Holmes in over forty silent pictures.

The opening on February 11, 1910 was received favorably. However, attendance quickly dwindled. Doyle added his own *A Pot of Caviare* as a one-act curtain raiser. However, the Adelphi closed after the death of King Edward VII and the *House of Temperley* folded its tent not long after the house reopened in June. Doyle was stuck with pay-



ing the remainder of the lease. Once again, Sherlock Holmes would come to his financial aid. In less than a week he adapted *The Speckled Band* into a play.

H.A. Saintsbury, who finished his career with over 1,000 portrayals of the great detective in William Gillette’s play, *Sherlock Holmes*, was cast for the lead. Claude King played Watson. But it was the casting of Lyn Harding as Dr. Grimesby Rylott (the last name was changed from Roylott in the short story) that all but ensured the play’s fortune.

During rehearsals, Harding continually “ratcheted up” the degree of villainy in the character, until it could almost be described as over the top. This greatly annoyed Doyle and tension settled in between the two. J.M. Barrie (of *Peter Pan* fame) was a friend of both men and was invited to rehearsal to settle the dispute. After watching the

first two acts, he turned to Doyle and said, “Let Harding have his way.”

The play opened on June 4, 1910 and was well received. Saintsbury and Doyle each received a standing ovation. But Harding was the star, taking over a dozen curtain calls. Doyle sent him a congratulatory telegram, acknowledging that Harding’s portrayal was proper. The play later moved to The Globe (without Harding) before finally ending its run with 169 shows. However, two touring productions continued on, as well as an American production. The play was revived in 1911 and once more in 1921. The 1921 production, again starring Saintsbury and Harding, was struggling financially, so Doyle told Harding to withhold his royalties until it was turning a profit.

Doyle’s quick thinking resulted in his making a profit on the aborted *House of Temperley* drama. There are numerous plot chang-

In 2005, Dwight Schultz, best known as ‘Howlin Mad Murdock’ in the A-Team tv series, gave a well-received performance as Roylott in a radio production of the play.

The Speckled Band An Adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes cont.

es, but anyone seeing the play would immediately recognize that it was an adaptation of the popular short story. Harding would capture his performance on film, starring in the 1931 movie version, with Raymond Massey as Holmes. He would also play Professor Moriarty in three films opposite Arthur Wontner in the thirties.

The Speckled Band must be considered a success, and far superior to the only other Holmes play solely authored by Doyle, *The Crown Diamond*. Jack Tracy's excellent *Sherlock Holmes, the Published Apocrypha*, contains the complete *Speckled Band* play, as well as *The Crown Diamond*.

Lyn Harding twice appeared as a non-traditional Professor Moriarty opposite Arthur Wontner's Sherlock Holmes.



The Mazarin Stone: Reinvented by Granada



Jeremy Brett was in ill health when it came time for Granada to begin production on its adaptation of *The Mazarin Stone*. The script was extensively rewritten from Doyle's original story.

Count Sylvius possessed the stolen Mazarin stone, but that was about the only similarity. Sherlock Holmes was barely present and played no part in solving the case. His brother Mycroft stepped in and recovered the missing gem. There was also no wax dummy or violin recording either (which was actually an improvement over the story). Sylvius' associate, the boxer Sam Merton, is also left out of the show.

The episode opens with a weird dream sequencing mixing the Reichenbach Falls, Sherlock

Holmes and a third eye in the middle of Brett's forehead. We see a haggard looking Brett again at the end of the episode, congratulating Mycroft on finding the gem. There is more mumbo jumbo mysticism in this episode than in any other of the Granada series.

This story was a strange choice for adapting in the first place, and the choice seems even odder when considering the extent to which it was completely reworked. Granted, part of the extensive revision was due to Brett's illness, but even if he had been healthy, how good could this adaptation have been, based on the source material?

A script for *The Reigate Squires* had been written for *The Adventures* but never filmed. Surely it would have been more suitable for the series. Charles Gray is a more than satisfactory Mycroft, and it is nice to see him at center stage, but for a series about Sherlock Holmes, this episode is certainly outside the normal bounds.



Charles Gray (left) played a grave Mycroft.

Review: *Baker Street Byways* James Edward Holroyd

As with the previously reviewed Vincent Starrett books, *221B Baker Street* and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, this is one of the books in Otto Penzler's Sherlock Holmes Library, a reissue of nine previously hard to find classics from the earlier age of Sherlockiana. This was originally published in 1959.

Holroyd helped establish the Sherlock Holmes Society of London in 1951, the original London Sherlock Holmes Society having been disbanded some years earlier. He was also the first editor of the Society's Sherlock Holmes Journal. This collection of essays reads as a combination of personal reminiscences and musings about a topic that was certainly dear to his heart.

Where it All Began gives us a picture of how Holroyd came to become a Sherlockian and also states his claim that he provided the genesis for the popular Sherlock Holmes Exhibition of 1951. The Westminster Library has a page dedicated to the Exhibition on Sherlock Holmes.

Two essays discuss Sidney Paget, Frederic Dorr Steele and other illustrators of the Canon. It is easy to forget in this internet age that the average individual did not have access to thousands of pictures and nearly unlimited information with the click of a button. Holroyd helped provide

illumination in a darker time.

There is the seemingly obligatory pondering about the actual location of 221B Baker Street, a topic that most Sherlockians never seem to tire of (I exclude myself from this category and skip over such articles). Fanciful Furnishings includes some humorous asides indicating that Holroyd's wife was less than supportive of his dream to some day construct a version of Holmes' sitting room within his own establishment. The man who believes that he is king of his own castle should try telling the queen that he is going to build a Victorian-era sitting room, based on some fictional stories, in the basement.

The final essay, A Baker Street Portrait Gallery, contains character sketches of several persons in the Canon. This is a nice idea and a longer version of the article with speculative wonderings would not be amiss, even today. Baker Street Byways is a pleasant, lightweight diversion but is perhaps the least of the volumes included in Penzler's Sherlock Holmes Library, excluding John Kendrick Bangs' *R. Holmes & Company* (a terrible book). I believe that Holroyd's collection is the only such book I have not read more than once and I would classify it as being for completest only.

The Otto Penzler SH Library

Otto Penzler is a larger than life name in the mystery field. He is the man behind New York City's Mysterious Bookstore as well as Mysterious Press. A mystery maven.

From 1993 through 1995, under the Otto Penzler Book's imprint, he reissued nine hard-to-find works of Sherlockiana. The Otto Penzler Sherlock Holmes Library consists of the following books, originally published between 1906 and 1967:

221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes—Vincent Starrett

Baker Street By-Ways—James Edward Holroyd

Baker Street Studies—Ed. By H.W. Bell

Holmes & Watson—S.C. Roberts

My Dear Holmes—Gavin Brend

The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes—Vincent Starrett

R. Holmes & Company—John Kendrick Bangs

Seventeen Steps to 221B—Ed. By James Edward Holroyd

Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?—T.S. Blakeney

Bear in mind, every bit of anything you ever wanted to know wasn't available on the internet back when Penzler republished these books. Heck, the Baker Street Journal wasn't even available as a collection on CD yet. This collection of Sherlockiana was uncommon for the time.

Some entries are better than others, but they are all an affectionate part of my Sherlockian bookshelf.



Matt Laffey gives Baker Street Byways a sterling review at his blog, Always 1895.

<http://always1895.net/post/10630026948/baker-street-by-ways-classic-review>

Review: The Pictorial History of Sherlock Holmes

By Michael Pointer

Michael Pointer's *The Pictorial History of Sherlock Holmes* stands out on any bookshelf. I can confidently say that because this book is nearly 15 inches tall. The average large coffee table format book is about twelve inches. I have not seen an explanation of why such an oversized format was chosen.

I am an avid Pointer fan, with *The Sherlock Holmes File* and *The Public Life of Sherlock Holmes* two of the most treasured tomes on my bookshelf. Any fan of Sherlock Holmes as portrayed on stage or screen will love this book.

Chapter one discusses the publication of the first two Holmes novels and is focused on the illustrations, primarily by Sidney Paget, of the great detective. There is a glorious full-page (remember these are 15 inch pages!) color picture of the original Beeton's Christmas Annual, including *A Study in Scarlet*. There is also the only color picture I've seen of James Greig's drawing for the Windsor Magazine version of that tale.

Chapter two includes pictures of William Gillette and Eille Norwood on stage (Norwood did one Holmes play after his remarkable run of silent films) and even a picture of Leonard Nimoy from his turn as the great

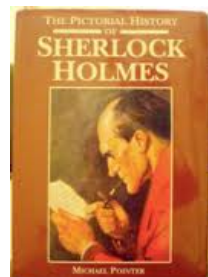
detective in a Chicago production of the Gillette play. These are sharp black and white stills and photos.

Chapter three takes us into the world of films. Georges Treville, Viggo Larsen, James Bragington, Eille Norwood, John Barrymore, Clive Brook, Robert Rendell, Raymond Massey, Arthur Wontner, Hans Albers, Herman Speelman, Bruno Guttner and Reginald Owen: there are LARGE, clear photos of these pre-Rathbone actors.

Of course, there are several photos of Basil Rathbone (and Nigel Bruce), then more stills of Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, John Neville, Robert Stephens, Nicol Williamson and Christopher Plummer. There are just so many pictures and some posters.

It is more of the same with television Holmes' up next. The book finishes out with parodies, comics and advertisements. Pointer's text is relevant, though because of the format, much truncated from his other two books mentioned earlier. Any Sherlockian who considers the

screen personae of Holmes a field of interest should have a copy of



A Gaudy Death

By Arthur Conan Doyle

A Gaudy Death: Conan Doyle Tells the True Story of Sherlock Holmes' End appeared in *Tit Bits Magazine* on December 15, 1900.

Tit Bits was the sister publication of the *Strand Magazine*. 1900 was after *The Final Problem* and before *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, meaning that Sherlock Holmes was dead: at least to Doyle.

This is a fine interview in which Doyle discusses how he came up with the idea for Holmes, and why he switched from novels to serial adventures for the detective. He then moves on to explain why he killed off Holmes. "My lower work" (Holmes) "was obscuring my higher" (*The White Company*) "is as good a summary of his feelings as ever he uttered.

It's hard for us to *imagine a Canon that ended with The Memoirs*. A paltry 26 Sherlock Holmes adventures! So imagine the thrill that the discerning reader of this essay experienced at the following sentence from Doyle: "That does not say, however, that because he is dead I should not write about him again if I wanted to." I get a tingle myself.

BTW, I don't recommend doing a web search of *Tit-Bits*: certainly not at the office!

Sherlock Holmes & the Case Of Ineffable Twaddle

I feel that the time is now right to reveal to you, dear reader, the circumstances behind the singular incident that I have titled *The Case of Ineffable Twaddle*, or *The Rose That Wasn't There*. It was a cloudy, blustery, sunny, gray, clear day with a light snow upon the ground, without which, as any trained investigator knows, footprints would be impossible to detect. I stood in the center of our sitting room at 221B Baker Street and immediately challenged Holmes to tell me about the owner of a hat, which I had brought into our lodgings. I provided the hat, that is, not the owner.

Setting aside his pipe, riding crop, syringe, microscope, news clippings and violin, Holmes peered closely at the hat, unlimbered his long, lanky frame and arose, looking more closely at the headgear. Whipping out his magnifying glass, he made several grunts and then sat back down in his chair with a blank expression. "Ah, Holmes," I said, "You are stumped."

"Not at all, my friend. The owner of that hat is a middle-aged man,"

"Rubbish," I exclaimed.

"Stout,"

"Rot," I snorted.

"Of military bearing,"

"Poppycock," I replied.

"Has served in Afghanistan,"

"Blather," I interjected.

"Is a doctor and a writer of some distinction,"

"Ludicrous," I retorted.

"Has a moustache,"

"Balderdash," I interposed.

"Sleeps late,"

"Drivel," I vociferated.

"Walks with an occasional limp,"

"Idle speculation," I blurted.

"Unmarried,"

"Nonsense," I blatted.

"And once kept a pit bull," he finished, with that smug smile which I knew so well. Once again, I had a momentary urge to wipe it off of his face with the end of my steel-shod cane.

"Amazing!" I ejaculated. "How could you possibly determine all of that simply by looking at a hat?"

"Elementary, my dear Watson. It is your hat. I bought it for you just last Christmas, and even now it is sitting upon your own rather dense noggin."

I could not dispute a single point. Truly, my friend's powers of observation and deduction were mind-boggling.

"Now Watson, since I am done, once again, showing how your pitch-black intellect is a natural conductor for my own bright luminescence, let us turn our attention to the matter of the missing roses of Lady ShimshackCrippenshaw, Duchess of Lake-Near-the-Pond Down by the Old Mill Stream."

"The Duchess is in London for BritanniaFlora, the largest flora and fauna show in the history of our great Empire. Her rosa rosaceae are considered among the finest in the realm."

"Ah yes, the delicate rose, nature's most esteemed and beauti-

ful flower. I recall, as a lad in Scotland, that I would often..."



Holmes' voice rose and cut off my ruminations. He was obviously focused on the case at hand, great thinking machine that he was. "AND the exposition starts tomorrow. However, last night, Lady ShimshackCrippenshaw's prized roses vanished!"

I caught my breath at his sudden pronouncement. At that moment, Holmes decided we could learn more at the scene of the crime. Due to our long association and deep friendship, he did not need to convey this with words. It was implicitly understood. I also gained full cognizance of his plan of attack when he threw my coat into my face and hurried out of the room. I arranged myself for travel as I heard him step out the front door and yell for a cabbie in their own street vernacular: "Dammit man, get that broken-down nag over here before I have it turned into glue!"

We arrived at the exposition and gained entry through the strategic use of Holmes' famous name, along with the two tickets that I gladly purchased, Holmes never cluttering his incredible mind with mundane matters as the paying of bills and such.

We made our way past vegetation of countless varieties, the humidity of the close-set aisles wilting my own carefully affixed dandelion. As we approached an empty table, I saw an obviously distraught female talking with Inspector Lestrade. This must

Sherlock Holmes & the Case Of Ineffable Twaddle cont.

be the Duchess. She was a handsome woman, and my thoughts immediately turned to matters of romance, as they so often did. I would have to determine her marriage status: subtly, of course.

“Madame,” I unctuously said. “Where is your husband?” She explained that she was widowed, and my smile grew a trifle larger. I noticed that Holmes gave me a sideways glance and sighed. Someone who was not as familiar with the man as well as I might think it was some kind of disapproval on his part. Of course, I knew better. It was a sign he often gave when I showed my prowess with the fair sex, which he acknowledged was my department. It always pleased me to receive his high regard in this matter.

Lestrade turned towards us. I have described him as ‘ferret like’ in the past. I do not yet have a better term. His face looked like nothing more than a weasel trying to burrow out from between his ears.

“Ah Mister Holmes, Doctor Watson, good to see you.” It sounded as if he added, “Just what I needed” under his breath. Obviously he did not want to embarrass us by indirectly pointing out his own inadequacies, so he made the comment sotto voice. That is Latin for ‘under the breath,’ esteemed reader (It’s spelled “sotto voce.” Sigh: Editor).

Upon our arrival, Holmes had immediately started crawling under, around and over the table and surrounding environs with

his magnifying glass. Occasional outbursts of “Eureka” and “Who’s the Man!” were heard. The Duchess didn’t immediately grasp the genius of my friend’s methods and distanced herself from the area.

Lestrade rolled his eyes, leaned down under the table to look at Holmes and said “Really now, Mister Holmes. There’s no need for your fancy theories and the like. This is a straightforward flowernapping case.”

“On the contrary Les....Sweet bejesus! For the love of!” This from Holmes, who had started to straighten up, but, still being under the table, had smacked his head smartly. I knew that this would only sharpen his wits. He now stood next to me, rubbing his head through his deerstalker, which had been knocked askew.

“Lestrade,” which was said through only moderately clenched teeth. “There is no doubt in my mind that this is far more than a simple floral heist. You, of course, have received no ransom note.”

The inspector shook his head. “Not yet, but it’s only a matter of time.”

Whatever he would have added is unknown, as Holmes held a palm right up to Lestrade’s face. “Nor shall you. I see here the hand of the dastardly Moriarty.”

I beamed, while Lestrade said “Bleedin’ hell, not this Moriarty business again. The man is a math instructor. You’re still not allowed within 200 yards of him

because you tried to throw him off a ledge into a waterfall the last time you saw him. I don’t want to have to bring you in again, Mister Holmes. Criminy.”

My friend stared icily at him. “It is because he is so insidiously clever that Scotland Yard thinks he is nothing more than a mathematician. Whereas I, the world’s first and foremost consulting detective, hold him accountable for all that is evil and nearly half that is undetectable in our great city. Er, that is, half that is evilly discovered and all that is...No, that’s not it. Half of.. Anyways, that’s all totally beside the point. If you could detect his doings, then he would not be a criminal mastermind and would barely be worthy of my attention. I tell you, it is his cunning work that has wrought evil upon the Duchess.”

Speaking of that attractive female, she was watching the proceedings from two tables over, obviously spellbound by Holmes’ brilliant deductions and not wanting to distract him by rejoining us. Reluctantly, she did return at Lestrade’s urgings. What a woman!

“Madame,”

“That’s Lady Duchess, if you please.” I nearly swooned at this assertion of her lofty standing.

Holmes, at ease with all types, from the common beggar to exalted royalty, was in no way flustered, as his response proved. “Whatever. As I was about to say, I understand that you showed up here yesterday,

Sherlock Holmes & the Case Of Ineffable Twaddle cont.

had your staff place your floral arrangements, retired for the evening some time later, and when you came in this morning, your precious roses were gone. Is that correct?"

Sniffing haughtily, she agreed.

I took advantage of the moment to look at the area concerned. There was a wide, deep, wooden table, which was meticulously clean. A small stand with a placard affixed stood near the front, off to one side. It informed passerby that this exhibit held the roses of the Duchess.

Holmes turned to me. "Watson, what do you make of things?"

My ears might have detected Lestrade's quiet "Here we go again," but I'm sure it was just the mingled sounds of the marvelous event that was Britannia-Flora.

"Well Holmes, it is apparent that someone came in the night, removed Lady ShimshackCrippenshaw's stunning rose display," here I smiled ingratiatingly at the lovely woman, "eliminated all traces of the crime by cleaning the area to the point of spotlessness, and then fled with his ill-gotten booty." A discreet glance at the duchess had me thinking of a different kind of booty.

Holmes had sauntered over to the exhibit in the next space, obviously ruminating on my succinct summary of the situation. "Watson, there are a few salient points of interest that you missed in your summation, but I won't bore anyone with them.

Besides, we might wish to eat supper some time today."

I eagerly anticipated his elaboration of my thesis.

"Watson, Lestrade; you see, but you do not observe. You hear, but you do not listen. You buy new clothes but you dress poorly. I have solved the case!"



My heart fluttered as once again, I knew I would be spellbound by his oratorical wizardry in explaining how he had arrived at the solution. Lestrade merely stood with arms crossed and a bored look on his face. Ah, the petty jealousies of the professional.

"As Watson noted, the Duchess' exhibit space is spotlessly clean, as if it were never used. My search for the minutest details yielded some windblown papers, three popcorn kernels, faint traces of brown mud, obviously from the boot heel of a narcoleptic cross-dresser who hated his mother, has one shirt sleeve shorter than the other and snores when he sleeps upon his left side, unless the curtains are closed, and some cannabis sativa that I will investigate further in the privacy of my lab."

"Astounding, Holmes" I cried out. Lestrade shifted his distaste-

ful gaze to me.

"I assimilated all of this information and determined that it had nothing to do with the case at hand. Lady ShimshackCrippenshaw, you have noticed the display of roses here at the neighboring exhibit?"

Looking even haughtier then before, she replied "Yes, I did, though such a sad collection barely deserves notice, or even the name 'roses.' They would wilt when in the shadow of my own missing treasures."

"Yes, of course," he said without the slightest hint of sarcasm, though why Lestrade chuckled at this, I cannot say. "I see by the placard that this is a display of daisies from the esteemed Lord LandGrabber." However, because nothing happens in London that I am not aware of, I know that Lord Landgrabber was gored by an enraged chicken on his estates last week and has withdrawn from this show."

This from Lestrade: "You said nothing happens in London that you are not aware of, but if the accident occurred at his country estates...."

"Yes, thank you Inspector. Always nice to have assistance from the official force. That will be quite enough on that matter."

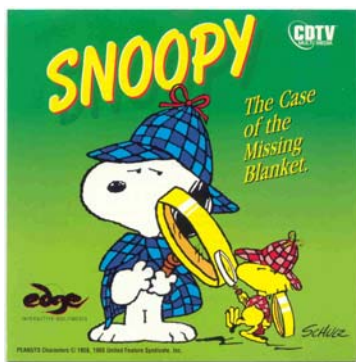
Holmes had me in the palm of his hand. The Duchess was staring vacantly in the opposite direction, clearly trying to avoid lavishing lingering gazes upon myself.

Sherlock Holmes & the Case Of Ineffable Twaddle cont.

"Lady ShimshackCrippenshaw!" Holmes exclaimed. Then, when she apparently didn't hear him, he stalked over and planted himself firmly in front of her, repeating the words.

"Yes? Oh, are you still here?"

"Madame, your roses were not stolen!"



I exhaled so deeply that I found myself hyperventilating. Lestrade had quietly started to amble away.

"Lestrade, get back here!" Glumly, he returned. "Yesterday, the Duchess did arrive and have her display arranged. But she set it up at the wrong table."

The woman, a paragon of intelligence as well as beauty, was obviously a bit confused under the circumstances and replied, "You dolt. You think I wouldn't recognize my own roses?"

My friend strode over to the display and lifted a potted rose and presented it to her. "Do you deny that there is a large paper pasted to the bottom of this jar that says 'Property of Lady Shimshack Crimshaw, Duchess of Lake-Near-the-Pond Down

by the Old Mill Stream?"

"Well, I suppose, if looked at in a particular manner..."

"And do you not see such stickers on every vessel in the display?"

"Well. Now. Um. It would appear that the workmen misunderstood my instructions and put my flowers in the wrong place. How can I ever repay you to keep this quiet?"

Holmes waved his hand dismissively. "I do not perform my work for remunerative purposes. The satisfaction of pointing out the mistakes of my inferiors is reward enough."

He turned to see that Lestrade was walking away, shaking his head and mumbling about Moriarty. Over Holmes' shoulder I heard, "Watson, I'm sure you will recount this little adventure in some sensationalistic way. Perhaps as a sobriquet, you could use 'A rose, by any other name, including 'daisy', is still a rose. Watson? Watson?"

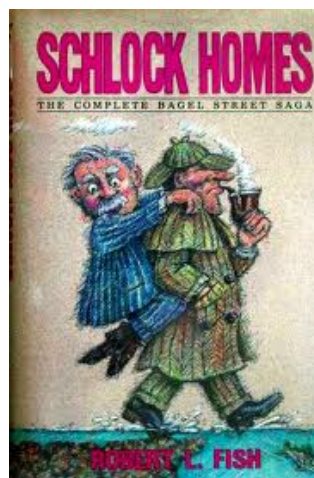
I had turned my attentions to the Duchess, patting her hand and soothing her obviously jangled nerves from this trying affair. There was a future Mrs. Watson to be wooed.

Parodies: the Puns of Fiction

Parodies of Sherlock Holmes have been around almost as long as the great detective himself! Otto Penzler's *Sherlock Holmes Library* (see page 8) includes one from 1906. Raffles Holmes is the son of Sherlock (there's more to him, but you'll have to look it up yourself).

Doyle himself wrote *How Watson Learned the Trick* and *The Field Bazaar*, two short-shorts featuring Holmes and Watson. I think they're too legitimately done to be called parodies, though some categorize them as such.

Doyle's good friend, J.M. Barrie (of *Peter Pan* fame) collaborated with Sir Arthur on a musical titled *Jane Annie*. It was spectacular: as a flop. Barrie wrote *The Adventure of the Two Collaborators* for Doyle. It is a Holmes parody that pokes fun at their unsuccessful collaboration. You can find it on the internet.



Perhaps the most 'revered' of all the parodies are the Schlock Holmes tales penned by Robert L. Fish. He wrote thirty-two tales in the *Bagel Street Saga*.

THE TENT JOKE

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson were going camping. They pitched their tent under the stars and went to sleep.

Sometime in the middle of the night Holmes woke Watson up and said: "Watson, look up at the sky, and tell me what you see."

Watson replied: "I see millions and millions of stars."

Holmes said: "And what do you deduce from that?"

Watson replied: "Well, if there are millions of stars, and if even a few of those have planets, it's quite likely there are some planets like Earth out there. And if there are a few planets like Earth out there, there might also be life."

And Holmes said: "Watson, you idiot, it means that somebody stole our tent."

Why Solar Pons?

The Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street

The first essay in the first issue of my Solar Pons Gazette. If you like Holmes, you will enjoy Solar Pons.

Why Solar Pons? What is it that attracts us to the 70- plus stories that August Derleth wrote featuring "The Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street?" Aren't the Pons stories just imitations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most famous creation? Why read a copy when the original 56 short stories and 4 novels are readily available? And if one tires of the Sherlockian Canon, there are Holmes tales unnumbered written by other authors. Stories featuring Holmes and Watson are plentiful, so why bother with Solar Pons and Doctor Parker?

When deciding upon the style of the Solar Pons stories, Derleth immediately rejected parody, "that ridiculing imitation designed for laughter" and chose instead the less widely practiced form of the pastiche, which he decreed "fond and admiring." This approach laid the foundation for Solar Pons' success.

Thus, Pons is August Derleth's own literary portrayal of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes is retired and London has changed when we meet Pons. An example that

shows how adeptly Derleth managed these changes relates to automobiles. Pons uses them, but they are unobtrusive in the stories. The reader does not stop and consciously make the distinction that Pons is riding in a car, rather than in the classic horse-drawn carriage of Holmes' prime. The atmosphere is the same: Similar to Holmes, but different. Variations on a theme.

Holmes was critical of the police: especially Scotland Yard. His general feeling was that they were tenacious, but plodding and unimaginative. He uses the term 'imbecile' more than once, and he tells Watson that (official) local assistance is either biased or worthless.

Pons is also frustrated with the official force, but he is usually less harsh than Holmes and generally speaks better of Inspector Jamison than Holmes does of Inspector Lestrade. The razor-sharp personality is blunted a bit. Variations on a theme.

Holmes has no use for the su-

pernatural in his investigations. "This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply," he says. Though all of Pons' recorded cases have conventional solutions (excluding the Derleth collaborations with Mack Reynolds), he is much more open to the possible existence of the supernatural. Pons says, "Ought we not to say, rather, we believe there are certain phenomena which science as yet has not correctly interpreted or explained?" Referring to clairaudience, he tells Parker, "Let us just say it goes against what we know of science at this point of development of man." Pons and Holmes use similar methods of detection, but the former is willing to consider nonscientific possibilities. Variations on a theme.

Of course, some elements of the Pons stories do feature less individuality. In both sets of tales, the doctor (whether Parker or Watson) is an able, dedicated companion, trustworthy in any situation. He is always ready to

Why Solar Pons? Cont.

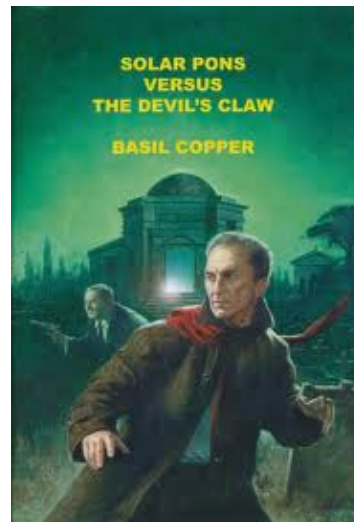
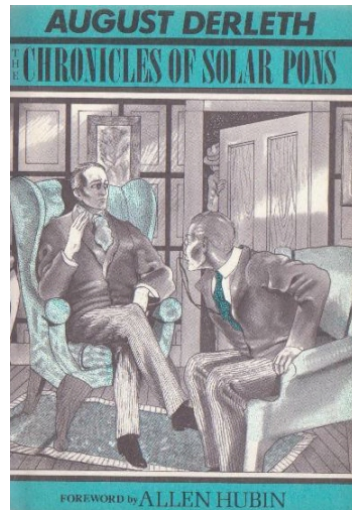
abandon his practice (and sometimes desert his wife) to assist in an investigation. He attempts to emulate the detective's methods, with poor results. And he is often slighted, if not outright insulted, by his more intelligent flat mate. Derleth gives us Dr. Lyndon Parker, a narrator and assistant we easily identify with Doyle's Dr. John Watson. The lodgings at 7B Praed Street include the comforts of 221B Baker Street. There is the mantle above the fireplace, the window overlooking the street, the detective's chemical table, the violin; the reader summons up memories of Baker Street and transposes them onto Praed Street. Landladies Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Hudson are nearly indistinguishable and Pons' army of street urchins, the Praed Street Irregulars, are the contemporary equivalent of Holmes' own Baker Street Irregulars. Derleth gives us a different

version of Holmes, but with familiar elements sprinkled throughout. It is the Hollywood approach to movies: the same, only different.

A reading of the Solar Pons tales shows that he is clearly more than a carbon copy of Sherlock Holmes. There is much that we recognize in the Pons stories, but there is also much that is new. Derleth is a wonderful writer who masterfully blends these similarities and differences to create a vibrant character.

Solar Pons sates our appetite for Sherlock Holmes by giving us a similar, but different flavor. Variations on a theme.

We think we want more Holmes. Why Solar Pons? Because August Derleth gives us what we really want: more than Holmes.



Baker Street Essays

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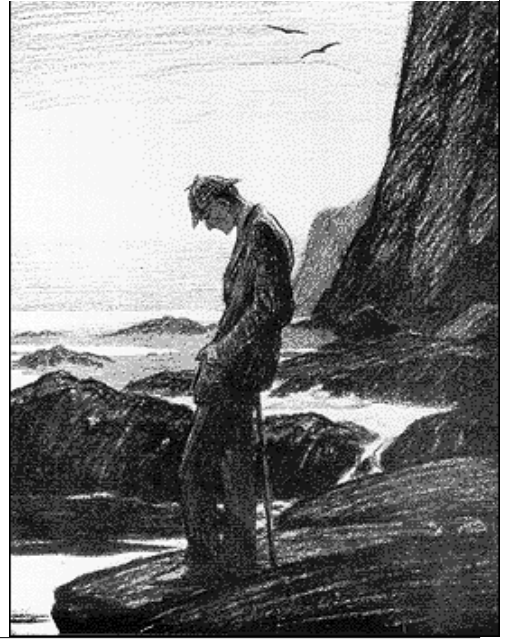


Baker Street Essays is a free, on-line newsletter.

All content is written by Bob Byrne, creator of www.SolarPons.com. Bob was a columnist for *Sherlock Magazine* and has contributed to *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* and the short story collection, *Curious Incidents*. He maintained HolmesOnScreen.com for over a decade.

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Frederic Dorr Steele's terrific drawing for *The Lion's Mane*.



Illustrators of the Canon:

Phil Cornell



Aussie Phil Cornell is a talented illustrator who has contributed fine pictures to several Sherlockian projects, including *Curious Incidents I* and *II* and the books, *Gaslight Grimoire* (upper left) and *Gaslight Grotesque*. He wonderfully captured the mystique of Holmes and Watson sharing a compartment in the picture to the left, which is included in Goode Press' *The Final Problem* chapbook.

Phil has also written about Holmes as well as the great detective's finest imitator, Solar Pons.

