



Special points of interest:

- Vincent Starrett on the illustrators of the Canon
- The Illustrated Holmes
- They're still copying Paget today

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Baker Street Essays



From the Roll Top Keyboard

For over a decade, I ran HolmesOnScreen.com, a website primarily dedicated to depictions of the great detective in film and on television. It also included other elements, including Sherlock Holmes on the printed page. And this issue of *Baker Street Essays* is dedicated to the original illustrating of the Canon.

I love Walter Klinefelter's marvelous book, *Sherlock Holmes in Portrait and Profile*, which traces the illustrations of Holmes that accompanied

the Canon as Doyle wrote it. *The Illustrated Holmes*, the essay that makes up the bulk of this issue, is my own version of Klinefelter's tome. It has been absent from the web since I took down my site. I am still quite fond of it.

You'll also find some thoughts on Vincent Starrett's *Evolution of a Profile*. This essay was included in his *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* and I consider it to have been the standard on the subject until Klinefelter's book came out.

■ In 2006, artist Nis Jessen drew over SIX HUNDRED illustrations for a new version of *A Study in Scarlet*. This is simply an amazing book. The picture above is just one excellent example. Google his name and the title and you'll find his website as well as the book's site. Quite a project!



Arguably, the most recognizable silhouette on the planet!

Thoughts on The Evolution of a Profile; *Vincent Starrett's Classic Essay*

The final essay in Vincent Starrett's foundational book of Sherlockiana, *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, is entitled *Evolution of a Profile*. For many years, this was the most informative writing on illustrators of the Canon. Starrett begins, rightly, with a word picture painted by Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*.

He mentions D.H. Friston, the first man to draw Sherlock Holmes. He doesn't exactly praise the man. "...but if one does not greatly mind the nose, surely there was no authority for the sideburns!"

Regarding Charles Doyle (the author's own father) who next illustrated Study, words including, "the scribbling of a talented child;" "Poor Sherlock;" "Pathetic to look upon" and "travesty" properly (and accurately) convey his thoughts.

He is more generous than I regarding Charles Kerr's depiction of Holmes and Watson discovering the body of Bartholomew Sholto in *The Sign of the Four*. I look at that giant shnozz (Starrett does call it "prodigious") and cannot agree with his assessment of "competent but uninspired."

Finally, he is a bit rough on George Hutchinson's drawings for another edition of Study. "For sheer, unromantic disillusionment, one recommends...Hutchinson. Ouch!"

Using the words of Sir Arthur himself, explains the 'Paget Impact.'

"He had, as I imagined him, a thin, razor like face, with a great hawk's-bill of a nose, and two small eyes set close together on either side of it. Such was my conception. It chanced, however, that poor Sidney Paget, who before his premature death, drew all of the original pictures, had a younger brother...Walter, who served him as a model. The handsome Walter took the place of the more powerful but uglier Sherlock; and perhaps from the point of view of my lady readers, it was as well."

Sidney Paget. Check out the back cover of this issue for a wonderful reproduction of this photo.



Starrett nails it: "...He (Paget) gave the world its first authentic portrait of authentic. Authentic, one should say, in that it crystalized for the adoring many their own romantic visualization...The later English artists simply followed Paget. Of Paget's drawings, Starrett said, "They are part and parcel of the legend." Yes!

He then turns to American illustrators and lavishes praise on Frederic Dorr Steele. Praise, you say? Yes, how about, "No happier association of author and artist can be imagined." Or, "Sixty tales in all comprise the saga of Sherlock Holmes; and Steele has illustrated twenty-nine. While yet he lives and loves, and lifts his pencil, will he not do the other thirty-one?"

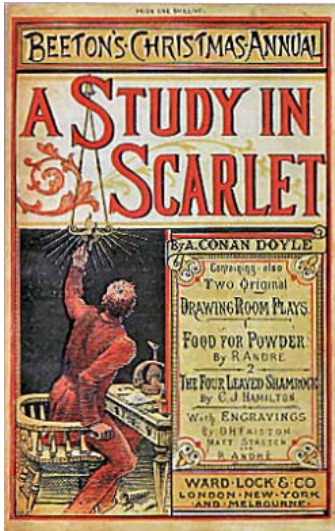


Starrett could wax poetic about Holmes. He certainly did so in this essay. Dorr Steele mentions Starrett's praise of him in his own essay, *Sherlock Holmes in Pictures*, which can be found in the former's 221B: *Studies in Sherlock. Evolution* is a valuable historical record from long before these "it's easy to find out on the internet" days!

The Illustrated Holmes

By Bob Byrne

A Famous Profile



We all know what Sherlock Holmes looks like, and we have our favorite images of him. But when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sold *A Study in Scarlet* for 'Beeton's Christmas Annual' (sold in 1886 but not published until 1887!), the detective existed just in words (and only a few had read those yet!).

The first artist chosen to draw Holmes would create an image that would last forever. There were no plays, movies or television shows to compete with. The sketches created for this first story would shape the public perception of Sherlock Holmes for as long as he was remembered. Balderdash! The early drawings of the master sleuth weren't particularly good and are forgotten by most today.

However, many of the illustrations that followed were quite good, and some of them did play a lasting role in how we view Sherlock Holmes, even today. Let's take a look at some of the men who drew him.

False Start – Five Yards

D.H. Friston was a somewhat popular artist in late eighteenth-hundreds England and was chosen by Ward, Lock & Company as the first man to draw the illustrations for the first edition of *A Study in Scarlet*. His four pictures, two of which feature Holmes, are less than inspiring. One picture shows a good look at Holmes wearing a long overcoat and sporting sideburns. Unfortunately, if he weren't holding a magnifying glass up to the wall, it's unlikely you would know that it was Sherlock Holmes. We weren't off to a running start, but the next drawings would actually send us backwards.

D.H. Friston's first profile of Sherlock Holmes in Beeton's Christmas Annual, 1887.



The following year in 1888, Ward, Lock & Co. re-issued the story, this time as a stand-alone paperback. Conan Doyle's own father, Charles Altamont Doyle, provided six drawings.



*Charles Altamont Doyle, father of Holmes' creator, shows the discovery of Enoch Drebber's corpse in the 1888 Ward, Lock & Company re-issue of *A Study in Scarlet*.*

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By Bob Byrne



The picture of Holmes, Watson and Lestrade standing over the body of Enoch Drebber is perhaps the worst Holmes drawing ever (which one is Holmes?). Another picture shows Holmes sitting behind his desk and issuing instructions to the Baker Street Irregulars. Watson sits to the side, looking a bit strange. The senior Doyle would never again illustrate any of his son's stories.

Another Doyle photo from the 1888 Ward, Lock & Company reissue, showing Holmes addressing his Baker Street Irregulars.

In 1891, the book was re-issued again, this time with forty pictures by George Hutchinson. Eleven of them featured Holmes, including his first meeting with Watson in the laboratory of St. Bart's.

*George Hutchinson's depiction of Holmes' and Watson's famous meeting (1891 *A Study in Scarlet*, Ward, Lock & Beeton)*



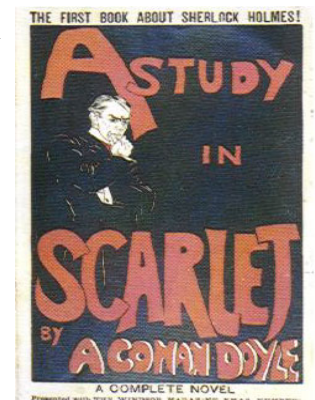
It is believed that this is the only depiction of the first meeting between the two famous men from the original drawings of the Canon. Hutchinson is not remembered as one of the better Holmes illustrators. However, I think it is fair to say that he was the best of the artists who provided drawings for *A Study in Scarlet*. His Holmes, certainly not a classic, is actually recognizable as the master sleuth, which is more than can be said about Friston and Doyle's works. I don't think they're too bad!

A Study in Scarlet was serialized in Windsor Magazine in 1895, with seven pictures by James Greig. His cartoon-like cover drawing is one of my favorite Holmes pictures. The other drawing shown

here, from the interior of the issue, features the lean profile that characterizes Sherlock Holmes. Greig's drawings continued the improvement over the first two editions.



Holmes and Watson apprehend a villain in this James Greig drawing (Windsor Magazine, 1895)



Grieg's cover drawing can be seen on page one of Issue 3 of *Baker Street Essays*.

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By Bob Byrne

Doyle had published his second Holmes novel, *The Sign of Four*, early in 1890. The English version was not illustrated, but there was a drawing done by Charles Kerr. The scene is set: Thaddeus Sholto lies slumped over in his chair, dead. Holmes and Watson are in the cramped attic of Pondicherry Lodge, looking at a piece of paper. Watson has an expression of surprise, or perhaps excitement, on his face. But there is one feature of the picture that we are drawn to: Sherlock Holmes' huge schnozz! This is the largest Holmes nose drawn for any of the sixty stories. You can't tell if he has the barest wisp of a moustache, or whether that's the shadow from his prodigious nose. This cover does not rate very high on the listing of Holmes illustrations.



Charles Kerr's large-nosed drawing from The Sign of Four (Spencer Blackett, 1890)

It's Elementary, Watson

Of Holmes' appearance, Doyle himself said "He had, as I imagined him, a thin, razor like face, with a great hawk's-bill of a nose, and two small eyes set close together on either side of it. Such was my conception."

A Fruitful Mistake

So far, Arthur Conan Doyle had written two Sherlock Holmes novels and met with limited success. The future looked bleak for the not-yet great detective. It was quite possible that Sherlock Holmes was about to die a quick and inglorious death. Not so fast my friend! Editor Greenhough Smith of *The Strand* and Doyle agreed that the author would write a series of short stories for the illustrated monthly. Though chosen by mistake, English portrait artist Sidney Paget would play a very important role in determining our image of Sherlock Holmes.



As the illustrator for all twelve stories in *The Adventures*, Paget brought a consistency to the portrayal of Holmes. Like any artist making a series of drawings over time, the Holmes of Sidney Paget changed from story to story. But they were similar, and this was an important step forward in the evolution of the image. William Gillette's famous stage play was still almost a decade away. Fans of Holmes had only the drawings in the stories to base their pictures of him on.

Sidney Paget, Sherlock Holmes' most prolific illustrator.

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By Bob Byrne

Because the stories were so hugely popular in *The Strand* (as opposed to the two earlier novels), it was Paget's image of Holmes that people were seeing. A strange set of circumstances and happenings resulted in Sidney Paget's name enduring for over a century. One wonders if the result would have been the same had his younger brother Walter actually landed the job that he was commissioned for?

How important is an artist, you may ask? I can point out one very clear example that shows the dramatic impact a drawing can have on us. It was Sidney Paget who gave Holmes the deerstalker. The earlier drawings had Holmes bare-headed or with a derby. In *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, he gives Holmes a deerstalker.

A few stories later, in *The Silver Blaze*, a famous railway picture shows Holmes in deerstalker and cape, with Watson wearing his bowler. Doyle did not have Holmes in a deerstalker. Paget sometimes wore one and decided to use it for some of his drawings. We are thankful that he did. Think of Sherlock Holmes: you put a deerstalker on his head, didn't you? That's due entirely to Sidney Paget.



*Sidney Paget's famous railway scene with Holmes and Watson, from *The Silver Blaze* (*The Strand*, 1892)*

It's Elementary, Watson

Sidney Paget also provided the drawings for other mystery authors who were published in 'The Strand', as well as non-Holmes stories by Doyle.



*Sidney Paget drew this picture for Grant Allen's *The Great Ruby Robbery* (*The Strand*, 1892)*

Sidney Paget did 356 drawings for 37 short stories and one novel (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*). He also added a portrait of Holmes that never appeared with a story, but may be the best-known drawing of him. Unfortunately, he died in 1908 and no other British artist would approach his mastery as "the" Holmes illustrator. Paget captured gas-lit London like no other Holmes artist. The popular Jeremy Brett television series studied his drawings and

The Illustrated Holmes

By Bob Byrne

copied some of them almost exactly. Fifties television Holmes Alan Wheatley said "I tried to take the make-up and so on from the early drawings by Sidney Paget." Sidney Paget's influence on the enduring image of Sherlock Holmes can not be underestimated.

O Brother, Which Art Thou?

Walter Paget was a successful artist, with editions of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Robin Crusoe* and *Treasure Island* among his credits. But *Strand* publisher George Newnes mistakenly commissioned Walter's older brother, Sidney, to draw for Doyle's stories. It turned out to be one of the best mistakes in the history of literature.

One wonders how the brothers discussed this mistake, and if there was ever any thought of Walter taking over the assignment. Sidney drew for the first six stories of *The Adventures*. They were so successful that Newnes ordered six more from Doyle, and he retained Paget. Interestingly enough, Walter would play two roles in the history of Holmes in pictures.

In 1913, after his brother had died, Walter himself would get the assignment originally intended for him and would provide the drawings for *The Dying Detective*. I think Walter drew some pretty good pictures.

And, Sidney often used his sibling as a model for his own drawings. His younger brother was generally reckoned to have handsome features, and it is his visage that Sidney copied for Mister Holmes. Sir Arthur actually thought that the Paget brothers combined to make Sherlock Holmes too handsome. Walter both modeled for and drew Sherlock Holmes, but it is his younger brother Sidney whom we remember.

Sidney Paget's younger brother Walter drew this picture for The Dying Detective (The Strand, 1913)



Too Good Looking

Let's take a look at Doyle's description of his creation. The following is the first real description of Holmes, given to us by the inestimable Dr. Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*:

'His very person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer. In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing...and his thin hawk-line nose gave his whole expression an air of smartness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of decision.'

Could a more fortuitous mistake have occurred to Sidney Paget's benefit???

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“Dashing” is not exactly a word that jumps to mind, eh? To Doyle, Sherlock Holmes was not a handsome man. He was tall, very skinny, with sharp eyes, a beaky nose and a square chin. That doesn’t sound like a matinee idol to me. Holmes was a rather unhandsome, extremely intelligent man.

In 1981, Frank Langella filmed a live version of Gillette’s play, which was broadcast on HBO. Never made available on DVD, his *Sherlock Holmes* remains one of my favorites.

It’s Elementary, Watson

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said “The handsome Walter (Paget) took the place of the more powerful, but uglier Sherlock; and perhaps from the point of view of my lady readers, it is as well.”

Sidney Paget changed this image, making Holmes a more attractive figure. By using his younger brother Walter, he was improving Holmes’ picture while paying a compliment to Walter, perhaps in atonement for getting the job meant for him.

In 1889, the indisputably handsome William Gillette opened his play, *Sherlock Holmes*. Gillette would play the great detective on stage over 1,300 times, make a silent film and do the first Holmes radio broadcast. As we shall see when discussing Frederic Dorr Steele, Gillette played a huge role in the image of Sherlock Holmes. But not everybody could see Gillette live on stage. In England (and to a much lesser extent and in America, where



some of his pictures were reproduced), it was the drawings of Sidney Paget that defined Sherlock Holmes.



William Gillette, perhaps the most famous Holmes on two continents.

Doyle complained throughout his life that Paget had made Holmes “too good looking.” I think that fits the meaning of ‘damning with faint praise.’ Sidney Paget did make Holmes more handsome than Doyle had intended, but it is fair to say that resulted in only good.

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Man of Steel(e)

In 1893, Doyle, feeling that writing Holmes stories was holding him back from more important works, did the unthinkable: he killed the world's most popular detective. In 1902, he revived Holmes for one adventure in his most famous story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. It was illustrated by Sidney Paget. Doyle made it clear this was an earlier case of Holmes' and that the great detective was in fact, still dead.

In 1903, the American magazine *Collier's* threw a big bushel of money at Doyle and enticed him to fully bring him back to life. Holmes. Funny how 'artistic integrity' often bows down before cold, hard cash, eh?

It's Elementary, Watson

Dorr Steele holds the honor of having been the first living illustrator to be exhibited at the Library of Congress.

The stories from *The Adventures* and *The Memoirs* had been illustrated by various artists in America, where they appeared in different magazines and newspapers. There was no sole source of the stories, like *The Strand*. Most of the drawings were rather uninspired. Sometimes, some of Paget's were used, although rarely the entire set for each story, so a common image of Holmes had not really occurred from the drawings. There was no Sidney Paget in the United States. But there was about to be.



Collier's selected Frederic Dorr Steele to illustrate *The Return*. Sherlockians generally fall in two camps on who the greatest illustrator was: Sidney Paget or Frederic Dorr Steele. Dorr Steele's drawings are very different from Paget's. The Englishman's drawings are characterized by dark, charcoal-like shading. This was common for black and white pictures of the time. But Dorr Steele drew ten colored front pieces for *The Return* that are possibly the most famous drawings of Sherlock Holmes. They are grand illustrations,

crackling with color and life. One need only see Holmes' face to realize that Dorr Steele was strongly influenced by William Gillette. In fact, it's difficult to believe that Gillette did not model in person for them!

Dorr Steele's covers for The Norwood Builder (right) and The Empty House (above). (Collier's, 1903)



The Illustrated Holmes

By Bob Byrne

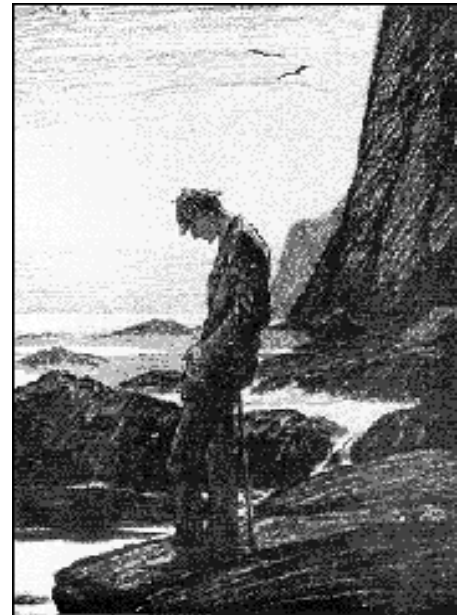
It's Elementary, Watson

Of the drawing of Doyle's stories by Dorr Steele, noted Sherlockian Vincent Starrett said "No happier association of author and artist can be imagined."

Dorr Steele would provide drawings for six of the eight stories in *His Last Bow*. It had been three and-a-half years since *The Return*, but the pictures were impressive as ever.

The Casebook stories debuted in America between 1921 and 1927. Several illustrators were used, though Dorr Steele contributed thirty-four pictures in all to *The Casebook*. There can be no doubt that he was the definitive American illustrator of Sherlock Holmes, and he contributed greatly to William Gillette's enduring success in becoming identified as the master sleuth. For me, I believe that his drawing of Holmes, standing alone on the beach in *The Lion's Mane*, is the definitive illustration.

Frederic Dorr Steele's haunting drawing from The Lion's Mane (Liberty, 1926)



It's Elementary, Watson

Shortly after completing his 1922 film, 'Sherlock Holmes,' star John Barrymore met Frederic Dorr Steele, who told him that he used to draw pictures of Holmes. Barrymore replied "Why hell, we had all

Other Illustrators



We've discussed the two most famous illustrators of Sherlock Holmes. But many others provided drawings for Doyle's stories during their release and early reissues in both England and America.

W.H. Hyde was a very popular artist in America at the time and provided 21 pictures for ten of the American stories in *The Memoirs*. They aren't particularly remarkable, and he is largely remembered as having been replaced by Frederic Dorr Steele as the primary American Holmes artist.

Holmes deducing as Watson looks on, by W.H. Hyde, from The Yellow Face.

The Illustrated Holmes

By Bob Byrne



Harry Edwards drew for the American release of *The Final Problem*. His picture of Holmes leaning against an outcrop at Reichenbach Falls, waiting on Moriarty, almost became famous. Had Doyle not revived Holmes, but left him dead, this would have been the final illustration of Sherlock Holmes!

Harry Edward's drawing of Holmes awaiting Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls in The Final Problem (McClure's, 1893)

Sidney Paget died before the stories in *His Last Bow* were published. Seven different artists provided forty-two pictures. They were a mixed bag, though some were quite good. Arthur Twiddle's dark drawings evoked memories of Paget. This illustration from *The Bruce Partington Plans*, however, certainly does not flatter brother Mycroft.

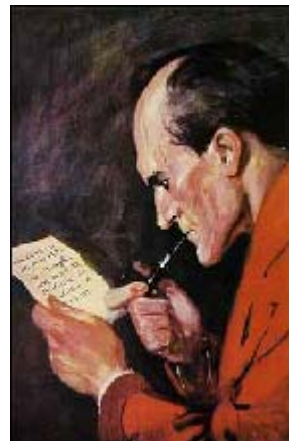


Joseph Simpson produced a drawing for *The Red Circle* that was an amazing likeness of future Holmes actor, Arthur Wontner. One of H.M. Brock's drawings for the same story was used for a popular cigarette card in 1933.



H.M. Brock's drawing for the Red Circle became a cigarette card two decades later. (The Strand, 1911)

In 1914, *The Strand* serialized *The Valley of Fear*, with 31 illustrations by J. Frank Wiles. The color front piece is one of the best known pictures of Holmes. Unfortunately, the English book edition had only one illustration. Wiles also illustrated the final three stories in *The Casebook*. For *Shoscombe Old Place*, he drew three pictures with Holmes wearing his deerstalker. This had not been seen in the pages of *The Strand* since Paget in 1903.



J. Frank Wiles' well-known drawing from The Valley of Fear. (The Strand, 1914)

The Illustrated Holmes

By Bob Byrne

It's Elementary, Watson

Shortly after completing his 1922 film, 'Sherlock Holmes,' star John Barrymore met Frederic Dorr Steele, who told him that he used to draw pictures of Holmes. Barrymore replied "Why hell, we had all your old pictures out on the lot. You're more to blame than (William) Gillette."

For the final drawings in America (primarily done by Dorr Steele), G. Patrick Nelson contributed seven pictures (including the one at right) for *The Problem of Thor Bridge*.

New editions of the old stories continue to be published today. Many include brand new artwork. This is one of my favorites: a watercolor by Barry Moser.



Barry Moser's drawing of Holmes, heavily influenced by William Gillette's portrayal. (Morrow Books, 1992)



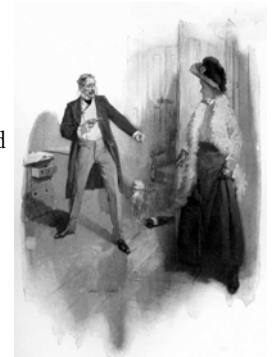
Doyle's Favorite

It's Elementary, Watson

Arthur Conan Doyle once told Frederic Dorr Steele who his favorite illustrator was: Cyrus Cuneo. Cuneo drew for Doyle's story 'How It Happened', but never illustrated a Sherlock Holmes adventure.

American born Cyrus Cuneo studied under James Whistler in Paris (paying for his education by boxing professionally) and spent most of his career in England. He illustrated Doyle's four page story, *How It Happened*. While at a party in London, Cuneo received a scratch (reportedly from a woman's fingernail or a hatpin) and died of blood poisoning. He was thirty-six years old.

A Cuneo illustration from E.W. Hornung's Raffles tale, A Thief in the Night. Hornung was Arthur Conan Doyle's brother in law.



Sidney Paget's Enduring Influence

It is virtually impossible to over-emphasize the impact Sidney Paget's drawings had on how we still view Sherlock Holmes today. Below are three depictions of the same scene.



Paget's famous drawing for *The Silver Blaze* from December, 1892.



Jeremy Brett and David Burke recreating the scene for Grenada's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, circa 1984.



Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman updating it circa 2010: over 110 years after Paget's drawing.

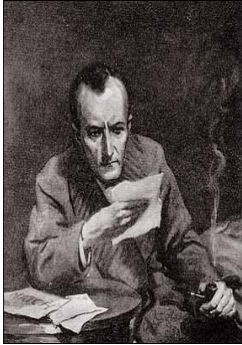
A Classic Scene



Holmes and Moriarty wrestling on a ledge at the Reichenbach Falls, from *The Final Problem*. I believe that this is the only Holmes drawing that Paget signed with his full name.

As he had every reason to believe that this would be the last Holmes story, I think that Paget understood the weight of the moment and spelled out his name, instead of using the usual “SP”. If Doyle had, in fact, permanently killed off Holmes in this story, this likely would have been the enduring illustration of the great detective. Even so, a colorized version hangs framed on my wall as I type this: it is a wonderful picture.

Disjuncta Membra

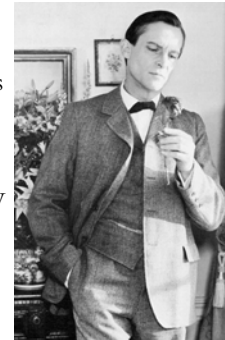


In 1911, Joseph Simpson drew the picture to the left for *The Red Circle*. It's not Paget's Holmes, but it conveys a serious detective. It is notable to me for it's amazing likeness to actor Arthur Wontner. Wontner would make five Holmes films in the nineteen thirties. His chin is not quite so squared, but looking at the two pictures here, it's no surprise that Wontner said: "People had remarked so frequently, 'You really ought to play Sherlock Holmes. I've never seen anyone so like Sidney Paget's drawings.'"

I would point to Simpson, not Paget. But it's understandable why many thought Wontner looked like Holmes.



On the prior page, I only highlighted one example of Sidney Paget's enduring influence on the portrayals of Sherlock Holmes. Here's one more example of the Grenada series enacting one of Paget's (least flattering) drawings: Holmes' soliloquy on the role of rose., from *The Bruce Partington Plans*. If you watch Holmes movies and TV shows with an eye to Paget, you will find many recreations.



Jeremy Brett was very vocal about being true to Doyle's original tales and affinity to Paget's drawings was a natural result of that.

In 1954, Sir Arthur's son, Adrian Conan Doyle, in conjunction with John Dickson Carr, wrote a dozen new Holmes stories, collected as *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*. The story of the collaboration is worthy of an essay in itself! This was a big deal in those days when Holmes was still copyrighted and you couldn't buy a pastiche left and right.

Robert Fawcett illustrated the stories for their publication in *Collier's Magazine*. They are quite impressive: especially considering he was partly color blind. To the right is one for *The Adventure of the Highgate Miracle*.



And a nice profile view of the great detective from *The Adventure of The Black Baronet*.

Baker Street Essays

The Canon Examined

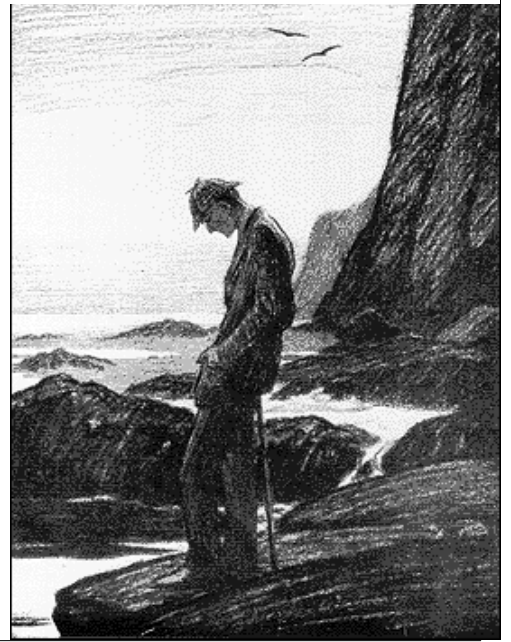
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Frederic Dorr Steele's terrific drawing for *The Lion's Mane*.



Sidney Paget by Phil Cornell



Phil Cornell was the featured illustrator in Issue Four. I thought that this was a great homage to Sidney Paget, utilizing the format of a collage of Holmes pictures that Paget himself had created.