Toast to The Woman

by Evelyn Herzog, ASH, BSI

It's fine to see such a good turn-out here tonight, not only in view of the changeable wintry weather but also because we're in the middle of the hectic holiday season when there are so many calls on our time – Christmas Eve is just a week away, the New Year's and Holmes's Birthday Weekend festivities need to be planned for, and, of course, the season of shopping is verging on madness.

With this time of year in mind, I got to wondering: What might have been on Irene Adler's gift list in December 1888 – after she and her newlywed husband had slipped away to the Continent at the end of the Scandal in Bohemia case?

First, for her new beloved spouse, barrister Godfrey Norton, I believe Irene would buy an up-to-date set of photographic equipment. If there were ever going to be any future photographs taken of her, they would be strictly a domestic affair.

Then, for the somewhat sardonic lady's-maid who had stayed behind at the bijou villa in St. John's Wood long enough to taunt Holmes and Wilhelm with Irene's message and who now no doubt had rejoined her mistress – I think the "daintiest thing under a bonnet" would get her loyal employee and friend a Paris hat. Why? Because every woman wants a Paris hat!

And finally on Ms. Adler's – I mean, Mrs. Norton's list, there would be a surprise gift sent across the Channel to England, in fact to Sherlock Holmes. To the famous author of so many monographs, I believe the lady would send a little brochure of her own composition, entitled "A History of Theatrical Cross-dressing, or Travesti," published anonymously but inscribed by the author, "Happy Christmas, Mr. Sherlock Holmes!"

So here's a toast to the spirit of giving, coupled with the name of Irene Adler!