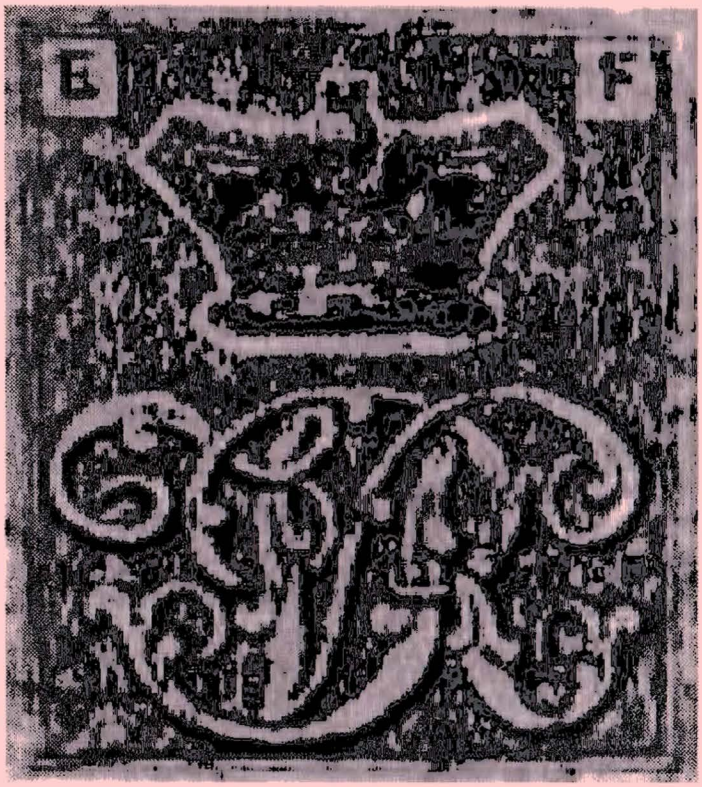
Presented by

Watson's Tin Box

Irene's Cabinet

Results of the Literary
and Artistic Aspirations
of the Membership
In the form of essays, poetry,
and art with particular regard
for the Victorian era
in honor of all things

Sherlockian



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"And Mademoiselle's address?" he asked.
"Is Briony Lodge, Serpentine Avenue, St. John's Wood."
Holmes took a note of it. "One other question," said he.
"Was the photograph a cabinet?"
"It was."
"Then, good night, your Majesty."

— A Scandal in Bohemia

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Sic 'Em!

– Evelyn Herzog

At the May 22, 2006 meeting of Watson's Tin Box, the theme for toasts from the floor was Canonical animals, in honor of the unsavory menagerie kept by Dr. Grimesby Roylott in the evening's story, "The Speckled Band." We went around the room twice, recollecting quite a variety of species – from the harmless, hapless spaniel owned by Dr. James Mortimer in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to *cyanea capillata,* the eponymous killer of "The Lion's Mane." Had the arrival of our dinners not intervened, we might have gone on for a good while more, because there are many memorable animals in the Canon.

These creatures might be categorized in various ways: as wild animals or zoo animals or farm animals or pets; as natural predators or prey; as villains or victims in terms of the Canonical plots; and so on. In this paper I would like to consider briefly a special group of Canonical fauna, namely, the henchcritters – animals used by Canonical villains as weapons or tools in their plots.

To start with our feathered friends, we happily have no evidence of capital crimes; however, as our first animal accomplice we must accuse Maggie Oakshott's barred-tail goose, which James Ryder used as an unwitting receiver of stolen goods. There are some other birds about whose criminal careers we can only speculate: we cannot help suspecting the worst of the feathered pupils of "Wilson, the notorious canary-trainer" of the East End mentioned in "Black Peter" and I, for one, wouldn't care to stand directly underneath the "trained cormorant" from "Veiled Lodger."

As to creatures of the waters and wetlands, of course our thoughts jump to the dreaded Lion's Mane, but no: that creature acted alone. The same might not be said of "the repulsive story of the red leech and the terrible death of Crosby, the banker." Was the leech an innocent bystander? I think not. And there can be no doubt of Dr. Grimesby Roylott's accomplice and weapon in the murder of his stepdaughter Julia and attempted murder of her twin Helen – "'It is a swamp adder!' cried Holmes. 'The deadliest snake in India.'" That snake was the reptilian equivalent of the smoking gun, but it backfired on its handler.

It is, of course, our friends the mammals whom Canonical villains have chosen as their most numerous accomplices. Canonical horses have invariably been a focus of crime. A plan to lame a champion racehorse, the titular Silver Blaze, was the means by which his trainer John Straker intended to throw an important race and gain a fortune; the horse was to be both his victim and his tool, but in fact it was his executioner. In "Shoscombe Oldplace" we find the other notable Canonical racehorse, Shoscombe Prince, was also part of a shady racetrack scheme – he was being raced somewhat illicitly by Sir Robert Norberton, a man who technically did not own him, to recoup Norberton's fortunes – but Holmes (our ultimate arbiter) permitted the deception and we can be sure the horse was glad to do his best. In

Shoscombe Prince we finally find an animal accomplice who was used but not abused. Lastly among the horsy set, we must mention the horses shod as cows used by Reuben Hayes to disguise his tracks in abducting Lord Saltire in "The Priory School."

Man's best friend could sometimes be a Canonical villain's best helper. Jephro Rucastle certainly found it convenient to use his ill-treated mastiff Carlo to threaten inquisitive Violet Hunter of "The Copper Beeches." But Carlo was a whelp compared to the Big Dog of the Canon. As a diabolical and deadly Canonical weapon, the Hound of the Baskervilles stood alone. Bred as a massive beast, he was brutalized by his master Jack Stapleton and turned into a weapon to destroy the Baskervilles standing between him and a fortune. And the Hound was indeed an effective weapon: Sir Charles Baskerville died of heart failure while fleeing him; unintended victim Selden broke his neck on the moor, also while running from the Hound; and Sir Henry Baskerville barely escaped alive from a mauling by the beast. To end the list of criminous canines, it was certainly bad luck for a stray dog (or perhaps it was some bunnies in the neighborhood) that Jonas Oldacre of "The Norwood Builder" needed bones that could pass for human; the stray was his victim as well as his tool in deception. We might also mention Carlo the spaniel and the King's Pyland sheep of "Sussex Vampire," all lamed as trial victims in Jacky Ferguson's plot against his baby half-brother and Jack Straker's against Silver Blaze.

Felines are in short supply in the Canon, but one of them certainly falls within our grouping. The circus lion Sahara King was the weapon which battered wife Eugenia Render and her lover Leonardo the strongman chose to cover (and take the blame for) their murder of her husband. Their murder plan was accomplished, but they had loosed a wild beast they could not control: it turned on its mistress and maimed her in "The Veiled Lodger."

Sahara King, the Hound of the Baskervilles, and Roylott's swamp adder were terrifying creatures and the deaths they caused were frightful ones. Yet I would propose that the final animal accomplice in our study is the most horrendous in the entire Canon. It is – or rather they are – the germs or bacteria or microbes which Culverton Smith, villain of "The Dying Detective," used to infect his nephew, Victor Savage, with an obscure disease and kill him horribly, and used again in an attempt to kill his nemesis, Sherlock Holmes, in the same way. Holmes's precautions enabled him to evade their attack; had he received even one needle-stick, he would not have been able to defeat them. These invisible, mindless living things were both the smallest of the Canonical henchcritters, and the deadliest.[1]

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[1] Technically, bacteria are not animals. There are three major divisions of living things – animals, plants and bacteria. See "Scientists Discover a Form of Life That Predates Higher Organisms", *New York Times*, November 3, 1977, pp A1, A20 - Les

A Suggested Sherlockian Library

(Arrayed by Interest Level)

– Andy Solberg

There are generally two common traits among lovers of the Sherlock Holmes stories. The first is that we are readers. The second is that we are often collectors. Consequently, it is not surprising that we often collect books related to Sherlock Holmes. I am frequently asked what Sherlockians should collect. Of course, that varies by what an individual likes. Some people specialize. I have one friend who only collects books relating to *The Hound of the Baskervilles.* On the other hand, I have another friend who is a "completist." He must have every variant of everything Sherlockian (and I mean everything.) That becomes very expensive. Many people collect books, but others, like Paul Churchill, collect artifacts mentioned in the stories. I know one collector who mostly collects foreign language editions of the stories, another who collects Sherlockian comic books, and another who collects Sherlockian pins. Really, you should choose whatever incites your passion.

However, I think that most Sherlockians collect books. My own collection includes all of the books listed below plus many others. I also like having the original published Strand Magazines, Collier's, Harper's, etc. I don't quite have them all, but I am still looking. My sets are not pristine. That may be important to you, but it is not important to me. Affordability is important to me. I still have my first very beat up copy of *Profiles by Gaslight* that I found for $1.00 in the discard bin at (the now closed) John Gatch's Bookshop in Baltimore back in 1976. *Profiles by Gaslight* for $1.00 – you can't beat that, and the feeling was exhilarating.

Previous suggestions of what books Sherlockian collections should include (such as the *Shaw 100* developed by the late great John Bennett Shaw, a completist extraordinaire, whose collection ultimately formed the basis of the massive Sherlock Holmes Special Collections at the University of Minnesota Library) did not distinguish between Sherlockians who want classical collections and those who just want to enjoy the stories and have some other neat Sherlockian books. I have tried to make such a distinction. I have identified a core group of books for the casual Sherlockian, the budding Sherlockian collector, and the researcher. I have also identified some books that are just plain fun and some books for those who are interested in the reading more about the Baker Street Irregulars.

None of these books is new, so, with some exceptions, you won't find them among new books in bookstores. You will have to peruse used bookstores, try **BookFinder.com**, **Amazon.com's used book sellers**, or catch them when they appear on **E-bay**. Don't buy a book the first time you see it on E-bay (unless you know that it is reasonably priced). Note the price for which is sells, and try to beat that the next time it shows up. Also, don't

necessarily compare the price on E-bay to prices at online booksellers. Online booksellers often offer these books at inflated prices, and you can probably do better (unless you know that the price is reasonable – or you ***really*** want that book to complete a portion of your collection).

But...on to the list. All such lists are subjective. Some people just love the first book they ever bought and will think that it should be on this list. The titles listed below are those that I have found most enjoyable and useful. Your mileage may vary.

For the Sherlockian Non-Collector

These are Sherlockian books that would make any coffee table proud. They are enjoyable reads in their own right, and will provide the average casual Sherlockian with hours of great reading. You don't need to be a collector to buy and enjoy these.

1	Baring-Gould, W	Annotated Sherlock Holmes
2	Baring-Gould, W	Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street
3	Clarkson	The Canonical Compendium
4	Conan Doyle	The Original Illustrated Strand Sherlock Holmes (The stories as they appeared in the Strand)
5	Green, RL	Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
6	Keating, HRF	Sherlock Holmes, His World and His Time
7	Klinefelter	Sherlock Holmes In Portrait and Profile
8	Klinger	The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes
9	Park, Orlando	The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia
10	Pointer, Michael	Pictorial History of Sherlock Holmes
11	Smith, E	Profiles by Gaslight
12	Starrett, V	Private Life of Sherlock Holmes
13	Stashower, Dan	Teller of Tales
14	Tracy, J	Encyclopedia Sherlockiana
15	The Baker Street Journal	Worth Subscribing to, even if you are a casual Sherlockian

What even casual Sherlockian can be without the fine *Annotated Sherlock Holmes* by William S. Baring-Gould? If you buy only one book, buy this one. Actually there are two different editions of this. The original was published in two large volumes, and a later edition was published as one VERY LARGE volume. Either one is worth having, though the two volume edition is a bit easier on the lap, and the paper is considerably better quality than in the one volume edition. However, either edition is fine. Baring-Gould's love of "the Great Game" is evident in this, and, until Les Klinger's fine *New Annotated* edition was published, it was the main source of joy for Sherlockians. It was published in 1967 and is available in used editions for reasonable prices. His *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* is also a fun read. You don't have to be deeply involved in the Sherlockian community to enjoy it.

Steve Clarkson's Compendium is also worth having. It has a beautiful cover and is very a useful book with the answer to almost any quiz question you can think of. If you want to be able to read the stories as they appeared in the *Strand Magazine* publications (always fun – two columns with the original illustrations), then I recommend The *Original Illustrated Strand Sherlock Holmes.* Greene's *Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* has other Holmes related writings by Conan Doyle. Two other beautiful books are *Sherlock Holmes, His World and His Time* and *Pictorial History of Sherlock Holmes* which do a wonderful job of introducing you to the real Victorian London. *Sherlock Holmes In Portrait and Profile* will educate you on the portrayals (pre-Brett) of Holmes in print, on screen, and on the stage. *The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia* and *Encyclopedia Sherlockiana* are chock full of Sherlockian facts.

The *New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (currently available in stores selling new books) is a beautiful set of three volumes. Les Klinger did a fine job, adding his own flair and interests.

Profiles by Gaslight and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* are two early classics and are two of the best books on Sherlock Holmes ever written. *Profiles* was one of the first collections of "writings on the writings" and reflects love for, and the newness of, the genre. *Private Life* reflects Vincent Starrett's (a fine writer in his own right) love of Holmes. *Teller of Tales* is a wonderful biography of Conan Doyle. It is the best of all the biographies published thus far. Dan Stashower, a sometimes Tin Boxer, is quite a tale teller himself. One of my nicest memories is sitting in a London hotel smoking room, smoking a Cuban cigar, and reading this wonderful book by my friend.

Even the casual Sherlockian will enjoy the *Baker Street Journal.* It is amazing what people find in the stories that is interesting and entertaining. The Journal has been published since 1946, and the well does not appear to be running dry. The best of Sherlockian writings have almost all appeared in the Journal. If you are not subscribing, you are missing a lot of Sherlockian entertainment.

For the Sherlockian Library Collector

In addition to those books mentioned above, the following are great Sherlockian books that reflect outstanding Sherlockian analysis. Many form the cornerstone of Sherlockian literature. If you are starting a serious collection, start here.

16	Bell, H W	Baker St. Studies
17	Blakeney	Sherlock Holmes, Fact or Fiction
18	Bend	My Dear Holmes (A Study in Sherlock)
19	Conan Doyle	The Complete Sherlock Holmes – Doubleday (or Barnes & Noble Edition that has the same pagination)
20	Dakin, DM	A Sherlock Holmes Commentary
21	Donegall, Lord	Baker Street And Beyond

22	Grazebrook	Studies in SH
23	Haining, P	The Sherlock Holmes Scrapbook
24	Hall, John	Sidelights on Holmes
25	Hall, Trevor	Sherlock Holmes
26	Hardwick, M	The Complete Guide to Sherlock Holmes
27	Harrison, M	Beyond Baker Street
28	Harrison, M	In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes
29	Herbert, PD	The Sincerest Form of Flattery
30	Holroyd, JE	Baker St. Byways
31	Holroyd, JE	Seventeen Steps to Baker Street
32	Hyder, W	From Baltimore to Baker Street
33	Klinger	A Study in Scarlet (The Entire Annotated Series)
34	Knox, R	Essays in Satire
35	Lellenberg, J	Nova 57 Minor
36	Liebow, E	Dr. Joe Bell
37	McQueen, I	Sherlock Holmes, Detected 38
	Queen, Ellery	Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes
39	Redmond, C	In Bed with Sherlock Holmes
40	Roberts, S.C.	Holmes & Watson
41	Sayers, D	Unpopular Opinions
42	Shreffler, P	Sherlock Holmes by Gas Lamp
43	Smith, Edgar W	Baker St. and Beyond
44	Smith, Edgar W	A Baker Street Four Wheeler: Sixteen Pieces of Sherlockiana
45	Smith, Edgar W.	The Incunabular Sherlock Holmes
46	Smith, Edgar W.	Introducing Mr. Sherlock Holmes
47	Starrett, V	221B
48	Stern	Sherlock Homes, Rare Book Collector
49	The Sherlock Holmes Journal	Worth the subscription
50	Utechin, N	Sherlock Holmes At Oxford
51	Van Liere	A Doctor Enjoys Sherlock Holmes

While I won't discuss each of these, I would like to make a few comments. Arguably, Hainings' *Sherlock Holmes Scrapbook* and Starrett's *221B* deserve to belong in the list for even casual Sherlockians. They are both wonderful reading, and I have looked at them many times. *221B* is also among the best Sherlockian books ever written and includes Starrett's immortal poem. I am always envious of someone who is reading *221B* for the first time. I did not include them in the "casual" list because neither is what I would consider a coffee table book (as are the others on that list). However, if you are a budding collector, the books on this list will form the foundation of your collection. They are also great fun! Remember that many of these are hard to find, as they were published many years ago.

However, looking for them is part of the fun, and when you find one at a reasonable price, the feeling is exhilarating.

For the Sherlockian Researcher

If you enjoy writing articles on Sherlock Holmes, you also should try to have access to the following sources (in addition to everything listed above). I return to them again and again.

52 Bradshaw	Bradshaw's Railway Guide
53 DeWaal	The Universal Bibliography - Get the Electronic version
54 Goodrich, WD	The New Good Old Index
55 Green & Gibson	A Bibliography of A. Conan Doyle
56 Oxford	The Oxford Sherlock Holmes
57 Redmond, C	The Sherlock Holmes Handbook
58 Redmond, D	Sherlock Holmes, A Study in Sources
59 The Baker Street Journal	1946-2000 CD Set [1]
60 The Sherlock Holmes Journal	1952-2002 CD Set

If you can only buy one book on this list, buy DeWaal's *Universal Sherlock Holmes* bibliography. Yes, it was published in 1994 and does not include anything since. Yes, it has errors. However, it is a wonderful accomplishment, and is remarkably thorough. You will want to know (or should) what others have published before on your topic, and I cannot emphasize strongly enough how useful this volume is. In the electronic version, you can search the bibliography on your computer by keyword, author, title, etc.

As I said before, most of the great Sherlockian works have appeared in the *Baker Street Journal.* Other great works have appeared in the *Sherlock Homes Journal* of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London. Once you find the list of articles you want in DeWaal, having the CD sets of the *BSJ* and *SHJ* will save you incredible time and heartburn. They are indispensable to me.

The Oxford Sherlock Holmes is a twelve volume annotated set of the stories, edited by some of the world's most knowledgeable Sherlockians and/or Doyleans. Many of the annotations are Doylean, having to do with what Conan Doyle was thinking or going through when he wrote the stories. Goodrich's Good *Old Index* has also been indispensable, being a virtual concordance of the Cannon. Like Steve Clarkson's *Compendium,* it tells you where to find various words in the Cannon, but each has different strengths, and both are well worth owning.

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[1] Now expanded to 1946-2011 - Les

For the Fun of It

I don't like pastiches for the most part. The following, however, include pastiches, parodies (which I do like), and other treatments of Holmes culture and are really fun (or interesting) reading.

61	Adey, Robert	As It Might Have Been
62	Bangs, John Kendrick	Houseboat on the Styx
63	Cagnat, JP	Around the World of Sherlock Holmes in 15 Years
64	Dorn, Bill	Sherlock Holmes, A Study Guide (2 volumes)
65	Doyle, A C	Memories and Adventures
66	Fish, Robert L	Schlock Holmes – Complete Bagel St. Saga
67	Friedman, Kinky	Elvis, Jesus, and Coca Cola
68	Jann, Rosemary	The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Detecting Social Order
69	Kotzwinkle	Trouble in Bugland
70	Meyer, Nicholos	Seven Percent Solution
71	Payne	Myth & Modern Man in SH
72	Redmond, C	In Bed with Sherlock Holmes
73	Rosenblatt	Dining with Sherlock Holmes
74	Queen, Ellery	The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes
75	Titus, Eve	Basil of Baker Street

Subjective? You bet! Add Laurie King's *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* if you want to. *As It Might Have Been* is a collection of early (and I mean early) Sherlockian parodies. John Kendrick Bangs almost had his own industry of writing Sherlockian parody when Conan Doyle was still writing the Holmes stories (and even Bangs's non-Sherlockian writings are entertaining). *Schlock Holmes* is a great example of later parody and was a very good seller back in the 1970s. Nicholas Meyer almost single handedly resurrected the popularity of Holmes in the early 1970s with his fine pastiche *The Seven Percent Solution. Basil of Baker Street* was the original series of children's books on which Disney's *Great Mouse Detective* was based. Many of Kinky Friedman's mystery novels have very Sherlockian themes and are fun.

About the Baker Street Irregulars

Long before I was invited to my first BSI dinner, I enjoyed Jon Lellenberg's histories of it. I found them fascinating for his style of putting the early days of the BSI into historical perspective. Here, you find the story of how grown men and women developed their love for Holmes into one of the most prestigious and long lasting literary societies in the context of what else is happening in the world. It's not all hearts and flowers (part of the fun for the

reader), but it is always entertaining. They are hard to find and costly, but great reading, even if you have no interest in joining the BSI.

76	Lellenberg, J	Irregular Proceedings of the 30s
77	Lellenberg, J	Irregular Proceedings of the Early 40s
78	Lellenberg, J	Irregular Proceedings of the Mid 40s
79	Lellenberg, J	Irregular Proceedings of the Late 40s
80	Lellenberg, J	Disjecta Membra

Epilogue

Will this list change over time? Of course. The *Shaw 100* was fine for its day but cannot reflect all of the great works that came after it. In addition, I have found some of the works listed on the *Shaw 100* to be disappointing (as, no doubt, you may find with some on my list, as tastes differ), and so not all of them are included above. However, one of the benefits of being a Sherlockian is that there is so much great reading.
Have fun.

Here's to those young lads,
Baker Street Irregulars,
Extra eyes and ears.
– April Curnow

There once was a simple swamp adder,
Whose treatment caused him to go madder.
Fed milk from a bowl, And forced through a hole;
Dr. Roylott was really much badder.

– Debbie Clark

Sherlock Holmes: Fenian?

– Fred Campbell

Using a keen eye, one can sometimes deduce what Holmes did between adventures. It is rare to be able to infer what Holmes said during these lapses of time in the canon. A single line in "His Last Bow," however, reveals more than merely where Holmes traveled before breaking up the Von Bork spy ring. Holmes told Watson, "I started my pilgrimage at Chicago, graduated in an Irish secret society at Buffalo, gave serious trouble to the constabulary at Skibbareen, and so eventually caught the eye of a subordinate of Von Bork." Between 1912 and 1914 Holmes, disguised as Altamont, was operating under deep cover with the objective of penetrating the Irish national movement. This begs the question, why was Irish nationalism the best means of cracking a German spy?

For years, Germany had sought crucial intelligence from England, its greatest military rival. Attempts to recruit English subjects to spy for Germany had from time to time succeeded, but the Kaiser's greatest recruitment success was among the disenchanted and disenfranchised Irish who for years had been agitating for home rule.

Many Irish had long desired independence from the United Kingdom. On 17 March 1858, Saint Patrick's Day, two organizations were born that would affect Holmes's actions some fifty-four years later. The first organization was the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) formed by James Stephen, an Irish schoolteacher. This group became "in its time, a secret society writ large" and became "the institutional Irish revolution."[1] It was not a republican group attempting to reform politics; rather, it operated as a coordinating element directing members to infiltrate other nationalist organizations. Over the next 60 years it was most productive in recruiting Irishmen into the cause of nationalist revolution.

In America, John O'Mahoney formed a companion organization. O'Mahoney named his organization the Fenian Brotherhood in honor of a group of mythological Gaelic warriors, the Fianna. Although subordinate to the IRB, the Fenians initially became the IRB's primary supplier of money and eventually sent men and weapons. Irish-Americans could now be players in deciding Ireland's future. The term Fenian caught on and was used over the next 100 years to describe any Irish nationalist or republican group.

O'Mahoney's Fenian Brotherhood quickly spread and cells formed wherever Irish-Americans lived. Places like Chicago and Buffalo were bursting with cells. As Altamont, Holmes stepped off the train in Chicago's Grand Passenger Station in 1912, and into this swirl of Irish-American activity.

Why, with the fervor of Irish nationalism raging in Ireland, would Holmes travel across the Atlantic to America to infiltrate the IRB? Altamont needed to gain respectability within an organization where kinship was important. With so much activity in Ireland, one could easily participate in Irish nationalism in one's own neighborhood. Any appearance by a

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[1] Golway, Terry. *For the Cause of Liberty*. Simon and Schuster: New York, 2000. 128-29.

stranger, so willing to help out the cause, would have sent up alarms within any community. Altamont could much more easily join up in the growing and ever shifting community of Irish-Americans in the United States. The records show that the Fenian Brotherhood, although semi-secret, was much more open to accept members than the IRB in Ireland.

Another Irish nationalist organization also played a role. The Ancient Order of the Hibernians (AOH) was one of the largest and most productive societies in America. Founded in Ireland in the 16th century, the AOH formed its first American chapter in New York City in 1836. By the 1880s the AOH had hundreds of thousands of members throughout America. Although founded as a charitable organization, the AOH was drawn into early labor disputes in the United States and was alleged to have played a role in the Molly Maguire incident in Pennsylvania in the 1870s. The AOH publicly supported Germany against the British even before war broke out, and it is entirely reasonable to deduce contact with German elements including the Von Bork spy ring. In Chicago and Buffalo, Altamont cut his teeth in these organizations and returned to Ireland with recommendations and credibility.[2]

After Buffalo, Altamont traveled back to Ireland to a town called Skibereen which holds a special place in the hearts of many Irish Nationalists to this day. It was hit hard by the potato famine of 1848 and became a major port of departure for the Irish emigrants to America throughout the second half of the century. For many exiles, it would be the last piece of Irish soil they would see. It's also the birthplace of another secret society; this one formed in 1857: the Phoenix National and Literary Society of Skibereen. Under the guise of a literary society, Irish Nationalists plotted against the English throne. It also created an oath later adopted by the Fenian Brotherhood and the IRB. Sometime between 1912 and 1914 in the great hall of the AOH of Buffalo, Sherlock Holmes would rise, place his hand on the Bible and repeat these words:

> *I do solemnly swear, in the presence of Almighty God, that I will do my utmost, at every risk, while life lasts, to make Ireland an independent Democratic Republic; that I will yield implicit obedience; in all things not contrary to the law of God to the commands of my superior officers; and that I shall preserve inviolable secrecy regarding all the transactions of this society that may be confided in me.* So *help me God! Amen.*[3]

As with most Irish-American nationalists returning to Ireland, Altamont would have been folded into the IRB. Stephens constructed the IRB as a series of cell groups known as circles. Each circle had a commander referred to as A, several captains, known as Bs, sergeants known as Cs and privates known as Ds. Altamont would be assigned the rank of D.

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[2] Padden, Michael. *May the Road Rise to Meet You*. Putnam: New York, 1999.

[3] This oath and much more information can be found in Robert Kee's *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism.*

It was during this time that many in Ireland held out hope of increased freedom. British Prime Minister Asquith (the same man who personally requested Holmes's aid) had presented a Home Rule Bill and had gotten it passed. The Government of Ireland Act 1914, more generally known as the (Irish) Home Rule Act 1914, was an act of Parliament passed by the British House of Commons in May 1914. Though it received the Royal Assent in September 1914 its implementation was postponed until after the first World War (at that stage expected to last only a matter of months).[4]

Hope soon disappeared and armed nationalism rose. An army was created known as the Irish National Volunteers. For Altamont to have given "serious trouble to the Constabulary of Skibereen" he would have had to join this group. The Volunteers was structured along county lines with subdivisions in each county. Altamont's Volunteer title would have been D, County Cork Division, 3rd Brigade. This same division happened to include the famous Irish nationalist Michael Collins. Skibbereen functioned as a port for the importation of arms to be redistributed throughout Ireland. It would have been in this activity that Altamont would have drawn the attention of the Germans.[5]

It was in this intimate cooperation between Irish Nationalists and the German government that Altamont would have been drawn into the Von Bork spy ring. This gives insight into the comings and goings of the world's greatest detective during his last known adventure. And "Altamont" was true to his word in the oath because an independent Ireland did come into existence.

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[4] **http:/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Rule_Act_1914**. Accessed 7/16/2006

[5] The text indicates footnote 4 in two places, but no source is provided for the second one - Les

"Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another."
– Sherlock Holmes, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"

The Schemer and the Pit

– John C. Sherwood

The following phrases will strike the Sherlockian's ear as oddly familiar: "We went on foot... from Interlaken, mainly by mountain paths, to Lauterbrunnen. ... We must then have gone eastward ... and eventually reached Meiringen.... We later crossed the Grimsell Pass down on to the dusty highway, beside the Rhone." Hmm. These words aren't precisely those of Dr. John H. Watson in "The Final Problem." Watson's own description reflects an actual trip taken by his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his first wife, Louise, while in Switzerland in 1893. There, they came upon what the writer recognized as a superb place for Sherlock Holmes's fatal rendezvous with his nemesis, Prof. James Moriarty.

In detailing that meeting, Conan Doyle wrote that Watson and Holmes "wandered up the valley of the Rhone, and then, branching off at Leuk ... made our way over the Gemmi Pass, still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen."

That strangely similar description that begins this analysis was written almost a generation later by a diarist – another Briton who, as a 19-year-old in 1911 just before entering his first year at Oxford, had joined his younger brother, at the time a temporary employee of a Sussex family. Together, the brothers joined the family and a party of teachers for their own excursion into the Alps.

In Switzerland, the elder brother picked up a locally made postcard reproducing a painting, Der Berggeist, by German artist Josef Madlener. In the painting, an old man sits on a rock amid great mountains. The teenager kept the postcard, and years later wrote on its paper cover the words "Origin of Gandalf."

The 19-year-old was J.R.R. Tolkien, and Gandalf became a central character in Tolkien's fantasy novels The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings.

Just as Conan Doyle had thrown Holmes into the mountainous ravine of the Reichenbach Falls, Tolkien a half-century later threw the wizard Gandalf into a similar chasm. In the first part of The Lord of the Rings, called The Fellowship of the Ring (published in 1954), Gandalf's friends watch as the wizard confronts a demonic entity called a Balrog, and both plunge into an abyss and an ocean below. A similar sequence comes at the third part's climax; Frodo Baggins, aided by Samwise Gamgee, carries the One Ring to the edge of the Crack of Doom, where the greedy Gollum confronts him. The combat ends with Gollum's fall, the melting of the Ring in a river of lava, and the evil Sauron's defeat through his life-link to the Ring.

These aren't the only parallels between the worlds of Conan Doyle and Tolkien. Poul Anderson long ago noted that Holmes and Gandalf both fit the characteristics of the archetypal wizard. For years, I have noted further similarities even among the fine details. Consider this sequence from "The Red-Headed League":

"What are you going to do, then?' [Watson] asked. "To smoke," [Holmes] answered. "It is quite a three pipe problem, and I beg that you won't speak to me for fifty minutes." He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawk-like nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird. Watson also nods off in "The Man with the Twisted Lip" as Holmes holds "an all-night sitting."

Now consider this sequence in The Lord of the Rings: "I know what is the matter with me," [Gandalf] muttered, as he sat down by the door. "I need smoke!" ... The last thing that Pippin saw, as sleep took him, was a dark glimpse of the old wizard huddled on the floor, shielding a glowing chip in his gnarled hands between his knees. The flicker for a moment showed his sharp nose, and the puff of smoke.

Thus the wise tobacco-abuser with the remarkable proboscis ponders problems as others sleep. Gandalf and Holmes both assume "the classic pose," puffing away in silence – as did Tolkien and the refined, literary men of his circle. As, for that matter, did Conan Doyle.

As if to underscore this image, Tolkien placed another mysterious, pipe-smoking stranger in his fictional world – Aragorn, future king of Gondor in Middle-earth. When Frodo first spots Aragorn at the Prancing Pony inn, he's described as "a weatherbeaten man, sitting in the shadows near the wall... listening intently... smoking a long-stemmed pipe curiously carved. A travel-stained cloak of heavy dark-green cloth was drawn close about him. [He] threw back his hood, showing a shaggy head of dark hair flecked with grey, and in a pale stern face a pair of keen grey eyes."

Aragorn is tall, lean, strong, brusque. He uses aliases, lives a spartan life, suffers fools grumpily. He sits "a little apart, drawing thoughtfully at his pipe." He tracks others' footprints and gripes when intruders "have trampled the soft ground, and the marks are spoilt or confused." He asserts, "I can usually avoid being seen, if I wish."

Tolkien might as well be describing Holmes. Strangely, it's well documented that Tolkien wrote about this mysterious stranger in a singularly unconscious manner. Tolkien, by now an Oxford professor of philology and early English literature, was a relative novice as a novelist. Upon first writing the description of the stranger in the inn, he realized he'd no idea who this character was, and he'd have to keep writing to find out. This odd act of creation – of a character drawn unconsciously from uncertain sources – spurs us to examine The Lord of the Rings for evidence of Tolkien's possible inspiration – dare we suggest usurpation? – by a youthful exposure to the works of Conan Doyle.

What's astonishing is that, as we look for clues, the discovery of additional literary parallels becomes encouraging. Both the Tolkien epic and the Sherlockian Canon relate adventures and mysteries. Both drip with passions and prejudices of a conflicted Europe.

The war Tolkien relates is a version of the real war he knew well – the one Conan Doyle sensed on the east wind in "His Last Bow." And that "Swiss connection" only opens the lid to a trunk full of similarities.

By hurling the scheming Moriarty into the Alpine abyss, the character of Holmes is victorious at the cost of three years of freedom. By hurling the Balrog into the chasm at Moria (one is tempted to add "rty" to that name), Gandalf must be separated from his companions, who believe him dead for a considerable time. When the scheming Gollum falls into yet another pit, Frodo wins at the cost of his own future in Middle-earth. Watson and Samwise both return home and become writers to tell the world of their friends' deeds. A subplot reveals another parallel: The reborn Gandalf appears to his friends as an old beggar until he allows them to recognize him, just as Holmes remained in disguise as an old bookseller until he permitted Watson to see his true, living self.

It's possible to summarize the saga of the Great Hiatus – Conan Doyle's "The Final Problem" and "The Empty House" – simultaneously with a summary of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. A few sentences describe both tales:

The primary hero [Holmes/Frodo] must destroy an expanding organization of destructive evil [Moriarty/Sauron]. He leaves the relative safety of his homeland [England/The Shire], with a deadly foe [Moriarty/Gollum] in pursuit. He travels – specifically southeast – many hundreds of miles across water and dangerous mountains, eluding capture. But the foe diverts his friend [Watson/Sam] and the hero, alone, engages the foe in hand-to-hand combat at the edge of a rocky abyss. The fight ends in the foe's death; the hero survives, but must pay a great price: He must be absent from the world at large, causing overwhelming grief for those who admired and served him. The hero's story conveys great themes of hope, duty and supreme sacrifice.

These aren't just passing similarities. If we sought such parallels between the Holmes saga and other great literary works, we shouldn't expect to find so many. But, lacking evidence of a tangible literary connection, it's far too hazardous to say – or even suggest – that Tolkien derived his plot, setting and themes from the stories of Conan Doyle.

In fact, ultimately, we're compelled to state that Tolkien conjured both Gandalf and Aragorn from his imagination without direct knowledge of the Sherlockian Canon. This is difficult, especially when it can be shown that Gandalf's beginnings can be traced to an event that occurred to his creator near the spot where Conan Doyle chose to put an end to his own creation – the Reichenbach Falls.

It's also difficult to imagine how two teen-age brothers in 1911 could have been unaware of Conan Doyle's intensely popular tales of Sherlock Holmes. In Britain and the United States, particularly during Tolkien's lifetime, the Holmes stories were read almost universally by young men. We can invent scenarios that place copies of the Holmes tales on the young Tolkiens' home bookshelf. Perhaps his younger brother owned them; perhaps others in the Swiss party mentioned them. Young men with whom Tolkien associated at school and even later in the military certainly must have made passing references to their fictional hero and his exploits.

So it's tempting to insist that the Tolkiens had to know about Holmes and the detective's connection to the Reichenbach Falls – especially when they were traveling so near the site itself. The natural conclusion is that Tolkien unconsciously borrowed from the Sherlockian Canon while building his story of Middle-earth. However, to insist on such a point would be to plunge into a Reichenbach of illogic – one into which Holmes himself would refuse to fall. Without concrete evidence, there can be no such conclusion. Even our imaginative exercises never can prove that Tolkien even was aware of any story by Conan Doyle.

Even if we were to find, at this late date, that the Tolkien family had kept a volume of Conan Doyle's Holmes stories in the house, it wouldn't prove J.R.R. had read it – or even looked at it.

Tolkien's letters and texts citing influences and memories he put into The Lord of the Rings never mention Conan Doyle or the character Holmes. No memoir shows that the characters of Holmes and Watson were mentioned on Tolkien's 1911 tour. Thus, reasonable doubt lingers – enough to say that the entire party might have had no notion that Holmes met his brief literary demise in the region where it walked. What's more, although the Reichenbach Falls lay a short way off Tolkien's 1911 route, no one can be certain that he actually laid eyes on it, as he left no record that he did.

Stymied, we're forced to look elsewhere, perhaps for a common inspiration. Suddenly, we're on firmer ground.

In "The Serpent and the Sorcerer-Knight," published in the 2005 edition of *Irene's Cabinet*, we explored the Roman Catholic imagery that had sparked images and themes in the Sherlock Holmes stories, particularly "The Speckled Band."

Conan Doyle shared this religious heritage with Tolkien, who embraced the Catholic faith of his mother, applied it to his own philosophy and mythology, and made literary history by converting fellow professor C.S. Lewis to Christianity (although Lewis ultimately became a High Anglican).

Both Tolkien and Conan Doyle thus were heirs to a rich tradition of symbolism and literature. Tolkien had read little contemporary fiction, but there are themes prevalent in the roots of all fiction, whether told by Homer or by writers in the modern era – especially in regard to heroes and their deeds. Tolkien and Conan Doyle both were well-read in the area of chivalric fiction and Arthurian legend, and – because they were both schooled in the British manner – had been exposed to the classics as well as the themes of Greek and Roman mythology.

Conan Doyle's tastes in modern adventure fiction were a little more in the popular vein. When Watson mentions his appreciation for the sea stories of Conan Doyle's contemporary, Clark Russell, it's Conan Doyle who actually is making the recommendation. Conan Doyle relates in his autobiography that his favorite author in boyhood was Mayne Reid and that Reid's "Scalp Hunters" was his favorite novel. Tolkien probably would shudder.

Daniel Stashower reports that Conan Doyle also enjoyed the novels of other Americans – including those of James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), whose Leatherstocking novels are of particular interest. "Leatherstocking" is one of the names given to the character of

Natty Bumpo, a no-nonsense backwoods tracker of exceptional native skill, a white man raised by American Indians, whose aliases include Deerslayer, Long Rifle and – most familiar – Hawkeye. At root, this character is almost indistinguishable from that of Aragorn or, in many respects, Sherlock Holmes. There seems to be a latent public understanding of this resemblance; for the 1992 film of *The Last of the Mohicans* , director Michael Mann cast as Hawkeye an actor with an exceptionally Holmesian profile, Daniel Day-Lewis.

Such heroes – especially heroes who must move through a strange landscape while solving great problems and achieving great deeds against great odds – are all derived from the earliest quest heroes. Springing to mind are Odysseus (whose quest is to return home), Hercules (whose quest, among others, is to slay the Hydra), Theseus (whose quest is to find and slay the Minotaur), Beowulf (whose quest is to slay Grendel, Grendel's mother and a dragon) and Jason (whose quest is to locate the Golden Fleece), and there are elements in the writings of both Tolkien and Conan Doyle that seem influenced by the same human passions and needs as those heroes of antiquity faced.

Just as Conan Doyle reshaped the archetypal heroes for what he regarded as his modern audience, so too did Tolkien, whose early fame as a scholar was based largely on his 1936 translation and analysis of the structure of the 8th-century Anglo-Saxon poem *Beowulf.*

In his saga of the Great Hiatus, Conan Doyle retold the stories of Hercules, Theseus and Odysseus. Like them, Holmes locates, flushes out and ultimately engages the field that must be destroyed – this time named Moriarty, described both as reptilian and spider-like – and then he must find his way home, a process that takes long years. The hand-to-hand combat that climaxes both the Conan Doyle and Tolkien tales is derived from the hand-to-hand combat found in all great epics, including those mentioned. That the hero is thought to be dead also is typical of such tales.

Tolkien's *The Hobbit* is, like so many great sagas of antiquity, a dragon-slaying tale; for his sequel, *The Lord of the Rings,* he conjured a veritable Reptile House of villains, including the snake-eyed Sauron, the fire-breathing Balrog that confronts Gandalf, and the frog-like, hissing Gollum. Moriarty, of course, had his reptilian fashion; his face as drawn by Paget even resembles the face of the greedy, murderous Gollum from the recent Tolkien films – another creative parallel for which there's no explanation other than common conceptions of what mythologist Joseph Campbell calls the "tyrant ogre."

In literature and myth, the predecessors of Holmes and Gandalf are a host of resolute, chaste warriors who've drawn swords to slay their respective devils. In Tolkien, Aragorn holds the throne, Gandalf is his wizard, the hobbits are his knights – a traditional setup. In Conan Doyle, Holmes is a knight-errant serving the throne, Watson is his squire, the Irregulars and Yarders the knights. What makes Holmes new is this – in addition to being a knight-errant, as Mary Morstan pointed out, he also is a wizard.

Both Conan Doyle and Tolkien fulfilled the modern need to create female heroes as well. Conan Doyle told us of Irene Adler, a onetime adversary who becomes a heroine to Holmes himself. In turn, Tolkien created Eowyn of Rohan, a woman who also goes forth -justifiably – in male costume to upset male intentions, and assert her own skill and authority.

As for that "Swiss connection," well, many British travelers went there over the years. Some were bound to be writers. The locale would set many imaginations ablaze.

Even if Tolkien never saw the Reichenbach, he knew John Milton well enough; the great schemer Lucifer must be thrown into the pit. It was a coincidental inspiration, poised to occur, and the fact that both Conan Doyle and Tolkien had to travel southeast across mountainous terrain surely inspired their creations' similar parallel travels. Tolkien certainly didn't have to borrow the device from anyone else.

So, over 40 years, Conan Doyle penned a thousand pages about the world of Holmes, beginning with an image of Holmes as a soldier of God, the chivalrous knight described in "The Serpent and the Sorcerer-Knight." Over 40 years, Tolkien penned a thousand pages about the world of Gandalf.

He denied allegorical intent, but – after friends pointed out the apparent symbolism – he admitted it was a "religious and Catholic work."

Tolkien and Conan Doyle both wrote during times much like ours – a period of uncertainty, fear and war. As a result, Tolkien and Conan Doyle dealt with the same themes – individual skill, leadership and conduct, upholding common values of beauty, truth, justice, goodness and love. These men had much in common, including all that was stalwartly British. They might have found much to admire – and much to envy – in each other.

At the very least, they could reminisce about the Alps, and agree that the pits and chasms amid those mountains provided sufficient literary resting-places for the schemers of their imaginations.

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NOTES

Debts are owed to Andrew Solberg (BSI), Debbie Clark, Paul Churchill (BSI), David McCallister, Phillip Hagerty, Seth Miller and Katari Brown, for their suggestions, assistance and encouragement.

In probing this subject on my behalf some years ago, Andrew Solberg consulted *The Universal Sherlock Holmes* and found a sole reference to a work comparing Conan Doyle's characters with those of Tolkien, written in 1968 by one Debbie Clark. Stunned, we turned to Dr. Debbie Clark, who – like us – is a member of Watson's Tin Box; her article was in hand soon after. As a result of her suggestion and Solberg's aid, I obtained Poul Andersen's Morley-Montgomery Memorial Award-winning article, published six months after Clark's, with this spare, bibliographer-eluding assertion: "Are not Strider

Holmes personalities? For that matter, is Sauron not another Moriarty, and are the hobbits not a multiple John H. Watson?... (Anderson, p. 142)

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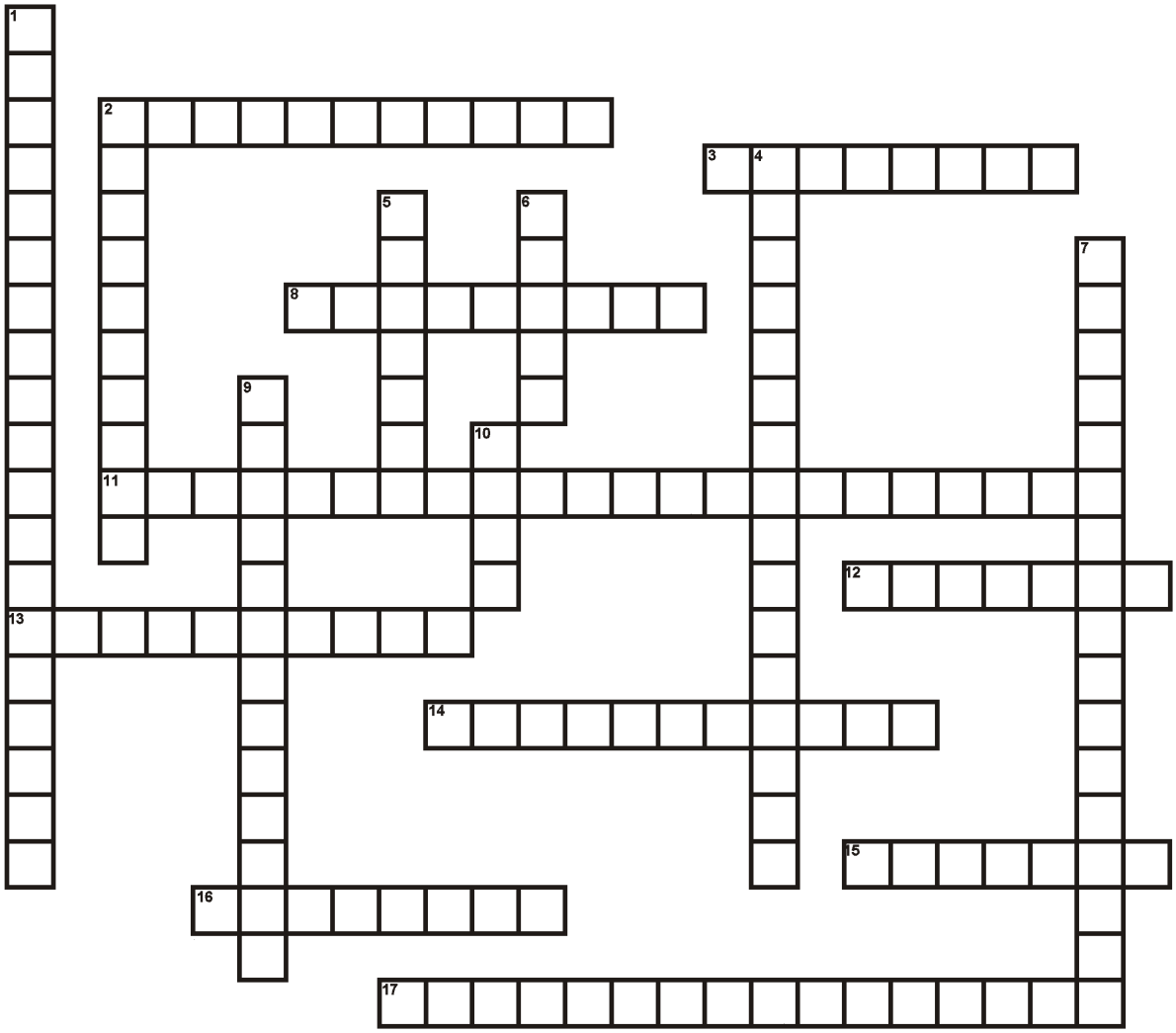
[6] Note - these web addresses are no longer valid. - Les

An Irene's Cabinet Puzzle

All the answers to this puzzle are contained in this issue of *Irene's Cabinet.* The solution is on page37.



ACROSS

2 Author of the original annotated
3 The repulsive story of the . . . . . .
8 If you are only going to buy one, buy this one
11 The much maligned star of Doyle's best known novel.
12 Holmes's German spy
13 Holmes as this guy?
14 Asquith failed to put this into effect
15 Did he travel the same route as Doyle?
16 Andy made great buy of this by Gaslight
17 Doubles as the crack of doom

DOWN

1 Debbie's limerick begins ....
2 Paul's inspiration
4 search of a haiku and your clue
5 The archetypical wizard
6 Sherwood's prose throws us down this
7 Watson is not this
9 Evie made this word up
10 He listed 100

2006 Clarkson Prize Winning Essay

This past year, Watson's Tin Box held its Second Annual Sherlock Holmes Essay Contest for seventh graders in Howard County, Maryland. Participating students read the "Adventure of the Speckled Band" and wrote analytical essays. English teachers in the Public Schools voluntarily participated, and Howard County Library made the participation possible for home schooled and private schooled students. Once again, Barnes & Noble of Ellicott City graciously contributed to meeting the costs of the contest. Watson's Tin Box is very grateful to its partners, Howard County Library, Howard County Public Schools, and Barnes & Noble of Ellicott City, for making this contest both possible and such a success. As a result of the contest, approximately 400 students read the Speckled Band and wrote essays this year.

The First Prize in the contest is *The Clarkson Prize,* an award named after Tin Box founder Steve Clarkson, BSI, who was a mentor to so many young Sherlockians. One of the prizes awarded to the Clarkson Prize winner is that his/her essay will be published in Irene's Cabinet. While all of the essays that we received were excellent, this one stood out. It is with great pride that we publish Emily Pazar's creative essay on "The Speckled Band."

Emily Pazar
Grade: 7
Age: 13
School: Lime Kiln Middle School, Howard County
Class: Miss Eckstein – 4A

Dear Inspector Lestrade,
Our adventures here are certainly incredible, without the exception of our last! Sherlock really has a preference for cases that tend toward the unusual, even the fantastic! Our last adventure, with the "Speckled Band" certainly meets his preference. The interesting characters, the situation, and the scene of the crime were so uncommon in this amazing adventure!

The characters involved in this case were bizarre indeed! The whole ordeal started with the death of Julia Stoner. Helen Stoner, her twin sister, hired Sherlock to Investigate her sister's death. The twins were very close and Helen was terrified after Julia's death. Mrs. Stoner, their mother, remarried when the twins were two. She married Dr. Grimsby Roylott when he was in India. Mrs. Stoner died eight years later and left a large sum of money. Helen thought that they would all be happy because they were not limited by money, but this was

not the case. She said. “But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbors, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path.” Dr. Roylott was not a kindly man. He was very angry and threatened Sherlock and me during the case. Dr. Roylott gave up on a medical practice he started and kept foreign animals around the house. By this, I mean a cheetah and a baboon, and as it turns out, a very deadly snake. The only reason that Dr. Roylott and his stepdaughters even lived in the same house was money. Dr. Roylott would lose a great deal of money should his stepdaughters marry. It was no coincidence that Julia died shortly after being engaged! Dr. Roylott’s selfishness was part of his character. The gypsies also played a part in this adventure. They were often in the yard of the home in which Helen and Dr. Roylott lived. They seemed to play a large part in the crime, but in fact, had no relation. The characters in this case added to the queer nature of this already uncommon case.

Of Sherlock’s many cases, this is one of the most Irregular. The situation itself is a big part of the reason. First, Julia Stoner’s death was odd in itself. Julia Stoner was killed by a snake, a swamp adder, the most deadly snake in India. Being killed by a deadly snake is one thing, but being killed by a trained deadly snake, coming through a small ventilator, down a string to a dummy bell, then biting the victim is another. This was also a “locked-room” mystery it seemed as though there was no possible way for a murder to occur. The doors were locked, and no one could have broken in. The floor and walls were sound. The chimney, windows, and ventilator were far too small for a criminal to get through, except if that criminal was a snake. The snake itself was also peculiar. It was a swamp adder, and swamp adders have speckles. Julia’s last words were “Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!” The speckled band was the snake, as a band around one’s head. There was also a red herring. The gypsies, as I mentioned, were almost always on the plantation. Since Helen did not know what Julia was talking about when she said “speckled band, “ Helen thought she meant the gypsies because they were a band of people and they wore speckled bandanas. This was a reasonable assumption and created a red herring. The situation of this case made it unusual, and you might even call it fantastic!

The scene of the crime was very strange, just making this already out of the ordinary case even more abnormal. Helen’s room was very odd. The room was renovated without needing any change. There were also many items in the room that were very strange. There was a bell that did not work; if you pulled the string, the bell would not make a sound. There was also a ventilator that did not ventilate. Helen’s bed was clamped to the floor. Pretty odd if you ask me. The room did not only look out of the ordinary; it made sounds that could not be accounted for.

There was a metallic clang and a low whistle. The house was abnormal in itself. There were spots where the home was in ruins and others where the house was modern and renovated This would not be odd if Dr. Roylott did not have so much money. Why leave some of the house in ruin while renovating a room that did not have any problem? The scene of the crime was an odd spot, but made sense with such an odd case.

The case of the Speckled Band is most atypical, meeting Sherlock's preference. The characters, Helen and Julia Stoner, Dr. Grimsby Roylott, and a band of gypsies make the case very strange. The situation, the snake, the unexpected death of Julia Stoner, and the red herring make this case quite odd and confusing. Last, the scene of the crime, the house, made this case amazingly bizarre. The house contained odd objects, made strange noises, and was in ruins some places but renovated unnecessarily in others. I'm sure Sherlock had a great time solving this case, as it was certainly unusual!

John

There was an old doctor from Surrey
Whose daughter was all in a flurry.
Her sister had died,
Should she run and hide?
No, she went to Holmes in a hurry!

– Debbie Clark

A Toast to John H. Watson

– Paul G. Churchill, BSI, "Corot"

He'd come right out of Netley in those early years
And joined the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers...
Big John. . . .

Then he went overseas, this man of whom we're so fond,
But he fell at the battle that was called Maiwand...
Big John. . . .

He was a medical man with a traveling wound,
And when *he* came by, all the women swooned...
Big John. . . .

He got a roommate named Holmes who himself was cute,
A consulting detective of some repute....
Big John. . . .

Neither Holmes nor Watson ever used first names,
So what was Mary thinking when she called him “James”?
Big John. . . .

Now this doctor had a way with the written word,
So he wrote down all the cases of which he’d heard
Big John. . . .

And he sold all his tales to the *Strand Magazine*,
A new publication that had made the scene....
Big John. . . .

No *Boobus britannicus* was this man of steel;
He was a man of grit, he was a man of zeal....
Big John. . . .

Now he seldom gets the credit for all his toil;
It goes to his agent, a guy named Doyle....
Big John. . . .

But to us Tin Boxers who follow crime
He was the greatest gospel writer of any time....
Big John. . . . Big John. . . . Big bad John.

Lodged in the Canon

– S. Brent Morris

The adventures of Mr. Sherlock Holmes as related by Dr. John H. Watson provide the reader not only with exciting tales of mystery and detection but also with a delightful glimpse into late-Victorian and early-Edwardian life in England. An important aspect of middle and upper-middle class male sociability of that era was the fraternity of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons. The Freemasons are mentioned briefly in four of the adventures, and their mention gives us some insight to the character of Holmes and Watson (and peripherally into the character of Dr. Watson's literary agent, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle).

The Masonic Fraternity

No one is quite sure of where or even when the Freemasons originated. Some have speculated they descended from the mystery religions of the Mediterranean or perhaps from the Roman College of Artificers or perhaps from the crusading Knights Templar. Most historians, however, agree that the modern social fraternity evolved during the seventeenth century from a trade organization of freemasons who met in local organizations called "lodges." The oldest Masonic document is the *Regius Poem* or *Halliwell Manuscript* of ca. 1399 in the British Museum. It is the operating rules for a trade union, with regulations for apprentices and masters, guidance for behavior, and exhortations to the members for charity and mutual support.

The oldest extant minutes of a Masonic lodge are from 1599 and belong to the Lodge of St. Mary's Chapel in Edinburgh. In those minutes a member of the lodge is reprimanded for hiring a non-Mason, that is, someone who had not gone through an apprenticeship and had been elected a member. This is exactly the behavior you would expect from a trade union. A century later in London the Freemasons are now a social fraternity, composed almost entirely of "speculative" or gentlemen Masons. In that year four of the old lodges came together to form a central authority, a "Grand Lodge," to govern the fraternity and particularly to restore the custom of the annual "Assembly and Feast."

In 1717 and before, the Masons had two levels or degrees of membership: Apprentice and Fellow-Master. Apprentices were boys or young men who served a time (usually seven years) with a Master in return for learning the trade. Upon completing an apprenticeship and satisfying a lodge of his skill, a man could be elected as a Fellow-Master in the Freemasons. Within a lodge, all Fellows were equal. A "Master" was a Fellow who was in charge of a job, supervised the work, and hired Fellows and Apprentices. About 1725 the fraternity in London introduced three-levels of membership: Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master. This system was eventually adopted by all lodges and is still in effect around the world today.

The Masons are famous (or possibly notorious) for their "secrets." There were, of course, the trade secrets learned by apprentices. For example, a union carpenter drives a nail with a grace and fluidity that I cannot approach, and there must have been similar trade secrets with the stonemasons. There is reason to think that some of the inner secrets of the operative masons were the geometric "secrets" of making a right angle. There were also "modes of recognition" – passwords and handshakes (called "grips") by which they can identify each other. The premier Grand Lodge was formed in 1717, and these secrets were first published in 1723 and have been in continuous print since then. They are secret only from those who do not know how to do a Google search!

These modes of recognition are thought to have originated at a time when working freemasons needed a means to identify themselves as a lodge member when they traveled from one job site to another. Unlike members of other trades – bakers, carpenters, or tailors, for example – freemasons might not always have work in one location. When a town's bridge or church was completed, there might not be more work for decades within that community. Thus the necessity for masons to travel arose, and soon thereafter came the requirement of some way for a traveling mason to identify himself at a new job site, if the integrity of the trade organization and its training were to be maintained.

This system of symbolic "secret knowledge" has been maintained for centuries, and even today a visiting Mason before gaining admission to a lodge must prove himself knowledgeable in the "secrets of Masonry." Since the Masons' secrets have been long-published, one may well ask the question, "What's the point?" Today the secrets are purely symbolic, a token of a Mason's integrity and his fidelity to his trust.

After Freemasonry emerged in early eighteenth-century Britain, it migrated around the globe and found fertile soil in most European countries and their colonies. Other countries grafted additional levels of membership or degrees onto the original and universal three from England. A Masonic degree is a brief morality play or ceremony that teaches a lesson such as fidelity, truth, benevolence, and so on. The Scottish Rite, which originated in France, has thirty-three degrees; the York Rite, which originated in America, has twelve degrees; the Rite of Memphis, which originated in Italy, has over ninety degrees; and the Swedish Rite, which originated in Sweden, has eleven degrees.

Freemasonry in Victorian England

When Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837, Freemasonry had become part of the accepted social activities for a gentleman. A place to gather with friends where rank and station meant much less than on the outside. The Duke of Sussex was Grand Master of England in 1837, and his participation represented the general approbation given the fraternity. Victoria's son, Albert Edward, later served as Grand Master when he was Prince of Wales, and when he ascended the throne as Edward VII, he was succeeded as

Master by his brother, the Duke of Connaught. As an indication of the wide spread nature of English Freemasonry, the 2,076th English lodge, Quatuor Coronati, was chartered in 1884.

Sir Charles Warren, an explorer and archaeologist, was the first Master of Quatuor Coronati, a lodge devoted to the history of Freemasonry and limited to no more than forty members at any time. Their annual transactions, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum,* have been published since 1885 and could be called the *Baker Street Journal* of Freemasonry. Sir Charles served as Metropolitan Police Commissioner from March 1886 to November 1887 during the Jack the Ripper murders. Stephen Knight latched upon the Masonic membership of Warren and built it into a complex Masonic conspiracy to explain the Ripper murders that was published in *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution.* Knight's fantasy in turn served as the basis of the 1980 pastiche movie, *Murder by Decree,* in which Sir Charles Warren "is confronted by Sherlock Holmes who claims special knowledge of The Royal Order of Freemasons giving him some strange and curious signs and identifying Sir Charles as a 33rd Degree Mason by the insignia on his ring. (Sir Charles, in fact, only reached the 30th Degree)"[1]

Other prominent Victorian-era Masons include Sir Arthur S. Sullivan, the composer; Sir William S. Gilbert, the librettist; Anthony Trollope, the author; Rudyard Kipling, the author; Frederic August Bartholdi, the designer of the Statue of Liberty; Sir Richard Francis Burton, the explorer and translator of The Arabian Nights, Mark Twain, the author, Alphonse Mucha, the Czech artist; Harry Houdini, the magician and anti-spiritualist crusader; and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author and spiritualist.

Freemasonry in the Canon

Freemasonry is mentioned briefly in only four adventures, but it is possible to make a few tentative deductions from them. Let us consider each in turn.

A Study In Scarlet – As Sherlock Holmes investigates the murder of Enoch Drebber, he asks Inspector Tobias Gregson, "What did you find in the pockets?" Among the items Gregson listed from Drebber was a "gold ring, with Masonic device." The device was probably the well known square and compasses, and as Drebber was American, there was most likely a letter "G" in the center of the tools, standing for both *geometry* and *God.* British and European Masons usually don't use the "G."

Drebber was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a Mormon. The Prophet Joseph Smith was a Mason and helped initiate over 1,000 Mormons in Nauvoo,

[1] Yasha Beresiner, "Arthur Conan Doyle: Spiritualist and Freemason," Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry, **www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/beresiner10.html** accessed March 8, 2006.

Illinois, where he was eventually murdered while being held in the Nauvoo jail. His brother Hyrum and Brigham Young were also Masons, so it would not be surprising to find an early Mormon who was a Mason, even though later events soured relations between the LDS Church and Freemasonry for decades.

A Scandal in Bohemia – Sherlock Holmes watched the habits and the house of Miss Irene Adler while disguised as a horse groom. He says to Watson, "There is a wonderful sympathy and freemasonry among horsy men. Be one of them, and you will know all there is to know." We can deduce little special about Holmes's use of the term, which emphasizes the well known closeness and friendliness of the fraternity.

The Adventure of the Retired Colourman – Holmes sends Watson to gather information on Josiah Amberly, a retired manufacturer of artists' supplies. When Watson reports back, he says that he thinks he was followed by a "tall, dark" man. Holmes adds, before Watson can say so, that the man was mustached, wore dark glasses, and a Masonic tie-pin. This turns out to be Mr. Barker, and nothing else is said about his Masonic jewelry.

The Red-Headed League – When Sherlock Holmes first meets Jabez Wilson, he says, "Beyond the obvious facts that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing more." When Wilson presses him on how he knew he was a Freemason, Holmes says, "I won't insult your intelligence by telling you how I read that, especially as, rather against the strict rules of your order, you use an arc and compass breast pin." Because Jabez Wilson was a client and needed a demonstration of Holmes's techniques, he was identified as a Mason and then politely reprimanded. Mr. Barker, Holmes's "hated rival upon the Surrey shore," on the other hand, needed no such demonstration and did not receive a reprimand. In fact, it was Watson who observed the Masonic pin, and Holmes deduced its presence from previous experience with Barker.

Holmes's statement indicates remarkable knowledge about the customs of the fraternity. Since the late 1700s British and American applicants for Masonic membership must declare in writing that "Unbiased by friends and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, I freely and voluntarily offer myself a candidate for the mysteries of masonry."[2] There is no formal rule against English Masons wearing Masonic jewelry, but it has been discouraged within their lodges since the late 1800s. "English Masons are exhorted not to misuse their membership [for personal gain] and the wearing of such jewelry may be misconstrued as

[2] William Preston, *Illustrations of Free-Masonry* (London: The Author, 1772), pp. 210-11.

a discreet advertisement thereof for improper purposes."[3] This is not secret or even private information, but it is certainly something that wouldn't be known from a casual study of the fraternity. Wilson wore an "arc and compass breast pin," not the much more common square and compass. Since 1814 in England, the arc or protractor and compass has been the emblem of a Past Grand Master. The pin is rarely seen since English Grand Masters usually serve for 20-30 years, and they have been selected from the nobility for nearly 300 years. However, in the United States the arc and compass pin is the most common emblem of a Past Master of a lodge. With thousands of lodges generating a new Past Master each year, such a pin is not uncommon.

The mystery then is not how Sherlock Holmes identified the pin, for surely a man who studied cigar ashes would be familiar with the identifying jewelry of all sorts of organizations. Rather, the mystery is how Jabez Wilson came to have such a pin. A quick check of a list of English Past Grand Masters reveals that Jabez Wilson's name is conspicuous for its absence. Perhaps in his travels he resided long enough in America to affiliate with a lodge and become its Past Master. It is more likely that he came across the pin in a pawn shop for a good price. If Wilson were a casual Mason, one who joined to rub shoulders with those he considered to be above his station, then he might not have appreciated the subtle distinction between the arc and square in the pin, and snatched it up for his personal and incorrect use.

The Adventure of the Norwood Builder – The "unhappy John Hector McFarlane" presents himself to Holmes as a client and is told, "Beyond the obvious facts that you are a bachelor, a solicitor, a Freemason, and an asthmatic, I know nothing whatever about you." Watson was able to follow these deductions and in particular observed McFarlane's watch-charm. We are not told which of several Masonic emblems was on the charm, but it gave away his Masonic membership.

Our attention is drawn to the curious incident of the watch-charm on the client. Holmes said nothing to his client about wearing such jewelry as he did to Jabez Wilson. That is the curious incident.

Here again we see Holmes's remarkable knowledge of the fraternity. McFarlane's name indicates Scots descent. Cecil A. Ryder observed in "A Study in Masonry," that McFarlane "would probably have received his Masonic degrees in Scotland. It is not unusual for Scots Masons, who are not forbidden to do so, to wear the insignia."[4]

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[3] Robert T. Runciman, "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, and Freemasonry," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum,* vol. 104 (1991), pp. 178-87.

[4] Cecil A. Ryder quoted in Runciman, p. 185.

The Source of Holmes's Masonic Knowledge

The superficial conclusion is that Sherlock Holmes was a Freemason, given his detailed knowledge of the fraternity. This deduction flies in the face of what we know about Holmes as a social creature. While not lacking in social graces, the great detective did not seek out human companionship or maintain close friendships, except perhaps with Dr. Watson. In contrast a Masonic lodge is a celebration of sociability and friendship, a place where men gather for the purpose of enjoying each other's company. It would be fair to describe a Masonic lodge as an "Anti-Diogenes Club," and this does not seem the sort of organization that would be attractive to Sherlock Holmes. Further, recall that Holmes tells Jabez Wilson, that wearing an arc and compass breast pin is "rather against the strict rules of *your* order." Had Holmes been a Mason, he would have referred to *"our* order."

I believe that the source of Holmes's familiarity with Masonic customs came from his chronicler, John H. Watson, M.D. As a veteran, Watson would have enjoyed the male-bonding experiences of the army. His outgoing and sociable nature would have fit naturally into a Masonic lodge. In his many discussions with Holmes, it would have been natural and not at all improper to explain the subtleties of Masonic jewelry and the different customs between English and Scots and other Masons.

Now, we must ask, was Watson an active Mason. The absence of any other mention of the fraternity in the Canon would indicate that Watson was very discrete about his membership, perhaps not wanting to use it for personal gain by attracting readers who might not have otherwise been interested in his writing. Watson would have preferred his literary efforts to stand or fall on their own merits. Of course the evidence could also support the contention that Watson was inactive, perhaps because of the pressures of his medical practice or because the fraternity did not meet his needs.

It is illustrative if we compare Watson's career to a contemporary medical and literary colleague, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Dr. Doyle joined Phoenix Lodge No. 257 in 1887 and withdrew his membership only two years later in 1889. He remained unaffiliated and inactive until 1901 when the Lodge of St. Mary's Chapel in Edinburgh invited him to a meeting to give a toast to the "Immortal Memory of Queen Victoria," and they afterwards made him an honorary member. Doyle rejoined Phoenix lodge in 1902, but withdrew again in 1911. There is no evidence that he ever participated after that.

Some insight to Doyle's disaffection with Freemasonry can be found in one of his Professor Challenger stories, *The Land of Mist.* A character is described as "a pompous ass named Weatherby. He is one of those who wander about on the obscure edges of Masonry, talking with whispers and reverence on mysteries where no mystery is. Spiritualism, with

real and awful mysteries, is, to him, a vulgar thing because it brought consolation to common folk."[5]

We can understand the Masonic references lodged in the Canon with the simple insight that John H. Watson was a Freemason. Like his fellow author of that period, Arthur Conan Doyle, Watson apparently found that the fraternity did not satisfy his needs as he had hoped, and so he became inactive. But even if he withdrew his membership from his lodge, I am confident that he never forgot the principal teachings of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

There once was a woman sublime
for whom our dear Holmes did pine.
She bid him good night and then took flight
leaving naught but a photo behind.

– Cliffie, Sheri and Joe Hichar

[5] Beresiner, "Arthur Conan Doyle."

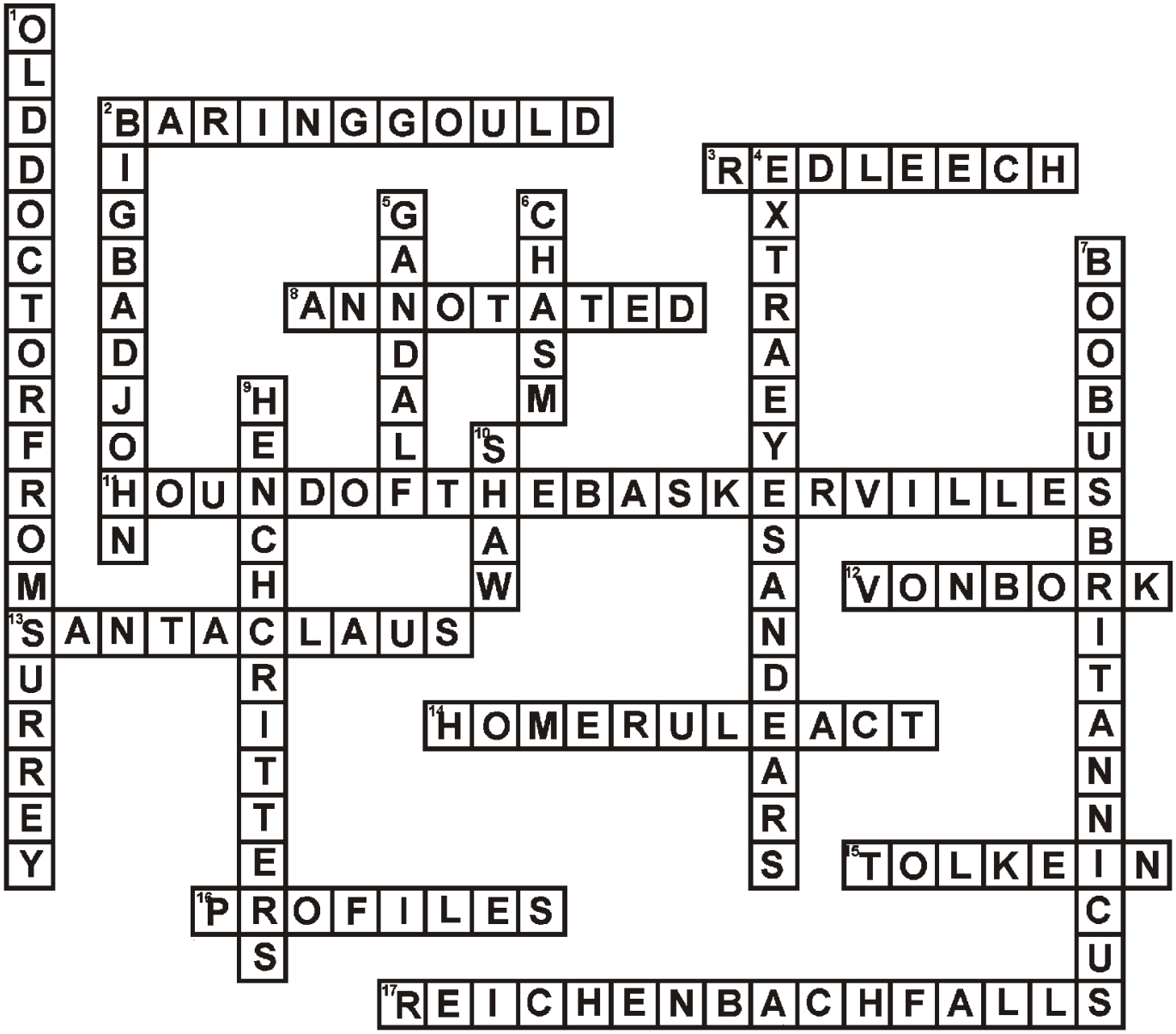
Sonnets Sherlockian

– John C. Sherwood

1.
I met a critic from an arid land
Who scorned our happy realm of Sherlock Holmes.
He claimed much better books were close at hand
And greater insights found in diff'rent tomes.
For him, my simple love defined great flaw.
Then he pressed on, and dared to blast away
At we who treasure Baker Street and draw
Pure pleasure from our sleuth's pursuit of prey.
The Canon isn't rich in others' lights.
Just as crime is common, so too is pride:
Smug thieves would skulk away with our delights
And claim that only theirs are bona fide.
The one who smugly sneers at others' joy
Forgets it's best to build, and not destroy.

2.
I suggested to my foe that Sherlock Holmes
Is Santa Claus reshaped for grownups' need.
My metaphor was simple:
This man roams the globe, dispensing justice, spurning greed.
Letters addressed to him (to our delight)
At the post office go unrejected.
He's aided by small helpers, puffs a pipe,
Enters any building, undetected.
The magic glowing from that myth of youth
Shines through the cynicism of long years –
And shows us that dread crime, despair, untruths
Disperse if we, in thought, abandon fear.
Alone, the critic clings to his dismay.
On Baker Street, I cannot go astray.

Crossword Solution



Contributors

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John C. Sherwood of Pennsylvania is an editor for The News Journal Co. of Wilmington, Delaware, and runs **MysteryVisits.com**. He is a professional Sherlock Holmes impersonator, has written for the Baker Street Journal and is a member of the Hounds of the Internet and Watson's Tin Box. He can be reached at **jcs@mysteryvisits.com**.

Paul Churchill, BSI, is a semi-retired Latin teacher in Howard County. He is one of the three original co-founders of Watson's Tin Box. He has illustrated many Sherlockian books and prides himself on his forgery skills in collecting relics from the Holmes saga. He likes long walks on the beach, quiet drives through the slums, and gentle breezes through his diminishing hair.

Andy Solberg BSI, Gasogene VIII, enjoys writing Sherlockian analysis and verse. He is a frequent contributor to the *Baker Street Journal* and was the co-winner of the BSJ's Morley-Montgomery Award for 2004. After attending many Sherlockian societies' dinners, he considers the monthly Tin Box dinners his home.

Fred Campbell is fairly new to the world of Sherlockian matters. While occasionally reading some adventures as child, he rediscovered the Sherlock Holmes adventures four years ago while on his honeymoon in London. Currently he splits his time between Howard Community College where he teaches and home with wife Deeanna and two-year old son Miles (who Fred hopes to one day dress up as Holmes for Halloween). Finding Watson's Tin Box has been a great discovery for Fred and he joyfully looks forward to each monthly meeting.

Evelyn Herzog, ASH, BSI, has been a Sherlockian for too many years to count. Marriage (to fellow Tin Boxer, John Baesch) brought her to Baltimore to stay.