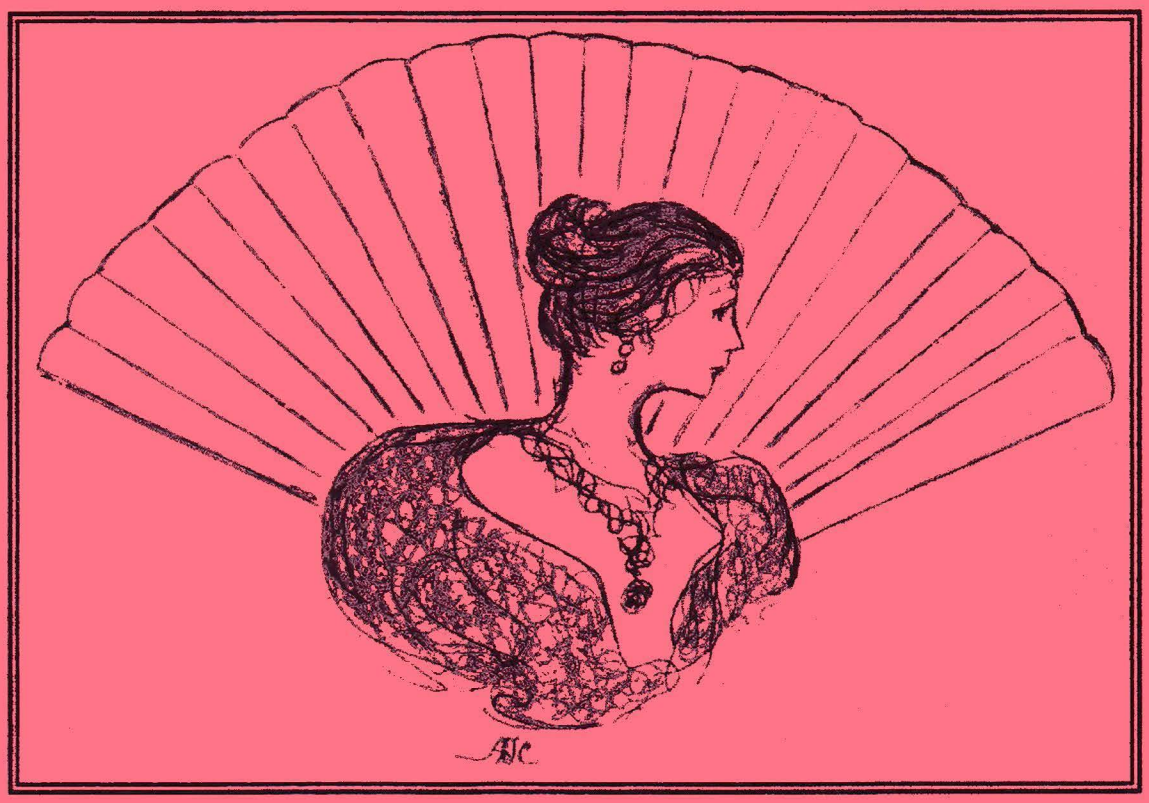
Watson's Tin Box

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



Editor: Beth Austin
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2010

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Once again I owe great thanks to S. Brent Morris
for saving me from the tall grass.
— Beth

"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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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Champion of Baseball in Britain

– Fred Glueckstein

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, arrived on his second visit to the United States from Southampton aboard *Olympic* of the White Star Line on May 20, 1914. He visited New York for six days before embarking for Canada to visit Jasper Park at the invitation of the Canadian Government. While in New York City, Conan Doyle, an avid sportsman who played cricket, skied, golfed, hiked, and rode horses found time in a busy schedule to see America's national sport, baseball, a game he came to greatly admire.

New York City was enjoying fair weather with 70 degree temperatures on May 30, 1914, when Conan Doyle went to the Polo Grounds, a steel and concrete baseball park, at 155th Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan, where he watched the New York Yankees play the Philadelphia Athletics. Noted for its distinctive horseshoe shape; the Polo Grounds playing field of grass and dirt included short distances to the right and left field walls and an unusually deep center field.

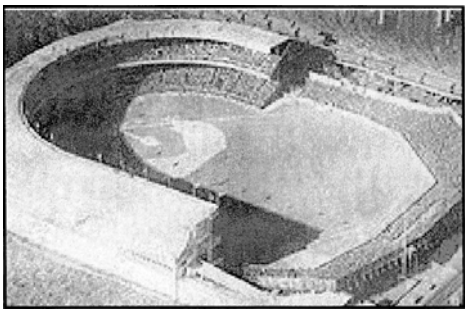
Two baseball games were played on that late spring day in New York with each team winning one. Some of the well-known Athletic and Yankee ballplayers of that era that Conan Doyle likely saw were Philadelphia's Frank "Home Run" Baker, Eddie Collins, "Chief Bender, Herb Pennock, and New York's Roger Peckinpaugh and Fritz Maisel.

While at Canada's Jasper Park from June 11 to 19, 1914, Conan Doyle had a restful break. There he wrote the poem The Athabasca Trail. On the last day of his visit at the park, he pitched the first ball in a baseball game between Jasper and Edson. Conan Doyle returned to England from Montreal on July 4.

Eight years later in April 1922 Conan Doyle again visited the United States and introduced his sons, Dennis (13) and Malcolm (11) to the game of baseball. Conan Doyle and his boys saw the New York Giants play at the Polo Grounds. Conan Doyle's enthusiasm for the game was readily apparent in an interview published in *The Washington Post* on April 25,1922. He observed that, "The way the Giants followed the ground balls was wonderful. The way they judged the flies was remarkable. The outfielders are more impressive than infielders." Conan Doyle informed the interviewer that he had been taught the game years ago by American friend and author, Hamlin Garland. He also thought that anyone who could star in his country's national sport of cricket could star in baseball.

Conan Doyle again came into contact with baseball in 1924 as the New York Giants and Chicago White Sox began a world tour with a stop in England. The Giants team was managed by feisty John McGraw, and the White Sox club was piloted by skipper Johnny Evers. The first of three games in England and Ireland took place in London on October 24. With an audience of several thousand British spectators, including the Duke and Duchess of York, the Giants defeated the White Sox, 3 to 2.

Back home in America there was a general feeling that the tour had not begun successfully. *The Hartford Courant* wrote: "They say the European trip of the New York Giants and the Chicago White Sox [was]... a failure, and they base their conclusions upon the small attendance at the ball games in England and the final frost in Ireland, where only twenty people turned out to the game."



The Polo Grounds, 1922

Conan Doyle had a different view.

Days after the exhibition game between the American teams in London, he wrote a letter to *The London Times* on the subject of baseball. "What is essential," wrote Conan Doyle, "is that here is a splendid game which calls for fine-eye, activity, bodily fitness and judgment in the highest degree." Finding baseball to have greater attributes than cricket, he added, "This game [baseball] needs no expensive leveling of the field, as the outfit is within the reach of any village club. It takes only two or three hours in playing, it is independent of wet wickets and the player is on his toes all the time and not sitting on a pavilion bench while another man makes his century."

Despite Conan Doyle's championship of baseball, the sport did not become popular in Great Britain. Ironically, however, Britain has taken claim to inventing America's treasured national pastime. An entry discovered in the diary of lawyer William Bray (1736-1832) of Surrey written when he was a teenager reads: "Went to Stroke church this morn. After dinner, went to Miss Jeale's to play at base ball with her, the 3 Miss Whiteheads, Miss Billinghurst, Miss Molly Flutter, Chandler, Mr. Ford and H. Parsons. Drank tea and stayed til 8."

Historians in Surrey claim that the diary is documentary proof that the game was played in Great Britain before America. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's discovery of baseball in the United States would seem to argue that the game was unknown in Great Britain.

Doyle playing baseball, Jasper Park, 1914

Dancing Men Gangsta Rap

– Deborah Belchis

He's tall and lean, quick witted and sly
He'll size you up in the wink of an eye
Describe your travels, your friends, and your foes
Your favorite foods, your habits, and clothes
By examining naught but the mud on your soles.

Lazily lounging with pipe in his hand
His exploits are regaled with awe in T*he Strand*.
The world's greatest detective! He's Sherlock Holmes
Dr. Watson's best friend, star of Baker Street prose.

But yo! Troubles afoot when forces arrive
From Chicago's mafia to England's countryside
Gangsta foes with malicious manner
Intrude on our English Squire's Riding Thorpe Manor
Hidden from sight at Elridge's farm
Dastardly desires. Impending harm!
Yo Ho Sherlock Holmes, Be More Attentive!
Impending disaster should be your incentive!

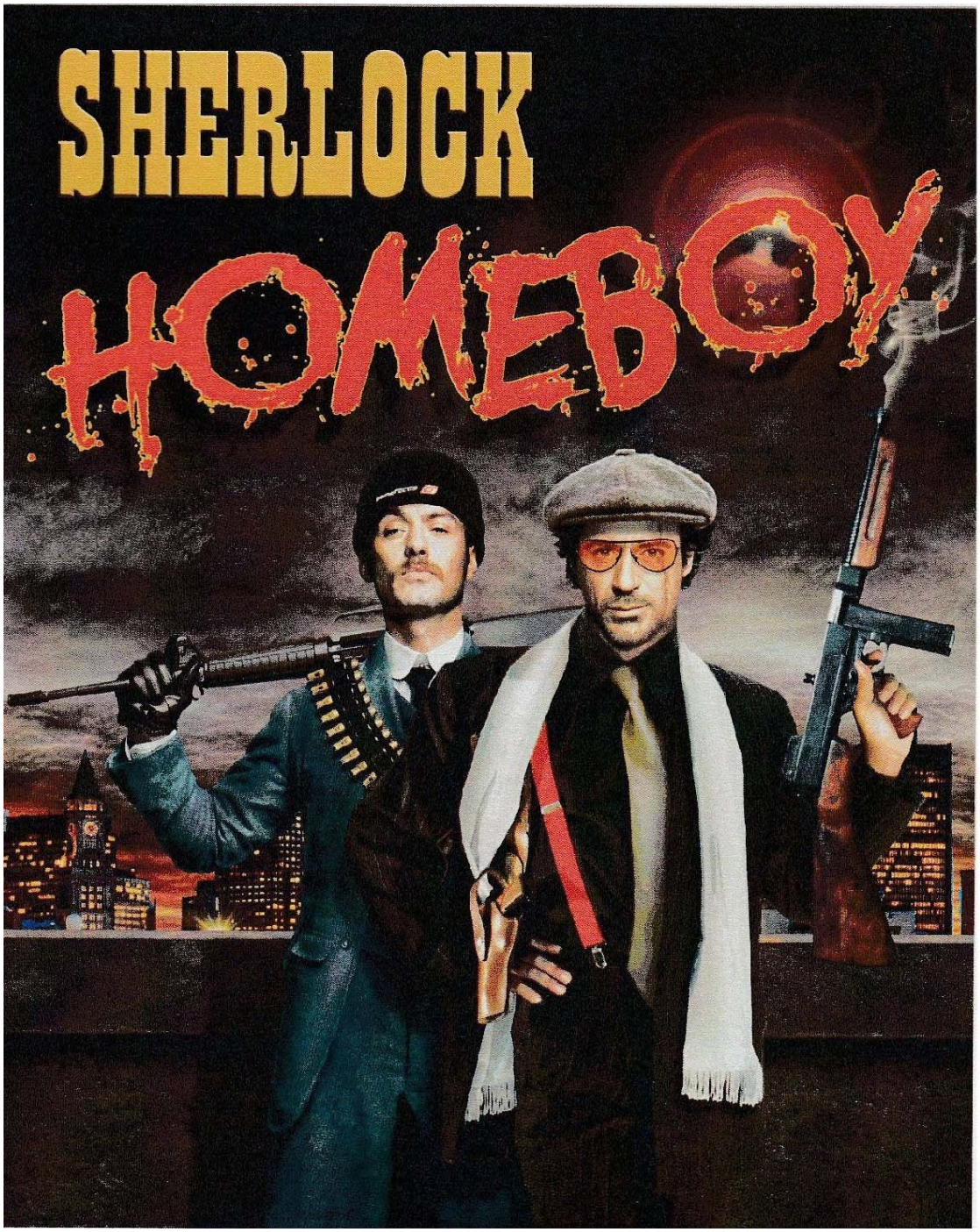
He skillfully decodes the mysterious hieroglyphics
A gleam in his eye, he telegrams his missive.
But two days pass with no reply
Off to East Anglia he must fly!

And there he encounters a mysterious bit
Locked and shuttered windows, candle still lit!
Inspector Martin's bewildered, must be the wife
No, no the staff cry! Not on your life!

But yo! Sherlock Holmes has deduced the whole matter
A third bullet! And assumptions are shattered!
An unrequited love, a villain from her past!
Coded dancing men and the truth is told at last
Holmes flushes out the villain, hoist with his own petard!
Arrogant to the end, that dastardly blackguard!

Shocked and pained, the man exclaimed,
how all this do you uncover?
And Holmes calmly replied, “What one
man can invent another can discover.”

Lazily lounging with pipe in his hand
His exploits are regaled with awe in T*he Strand*.
The world’s greatest detective! He’s Sherlock Holmes!
Dr. Watson’s Best Friend, Star of Baker Street Prose!



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A Medical Minute, circa 1895

– April Curnow, Gasogene

Whenever someone's found to be
Showing signs of lunacy,
The sufferer's most probably
Afflicted with brain-fever.

Delirium or sudden rage,
Bad nerves, an incoherent stage,
Disorder nothing can assuage –
These all point to brain-fever.

And if the patient's sore oppressed
He'll lie abed six weeks at best,
For nothing else but calm and rest
Will serve to treat brain-fever.

'Twas Alice Rucastle's sad plight.
Her father plagued her day and night
To sign away her legal rights,
Until she got brain-fever.

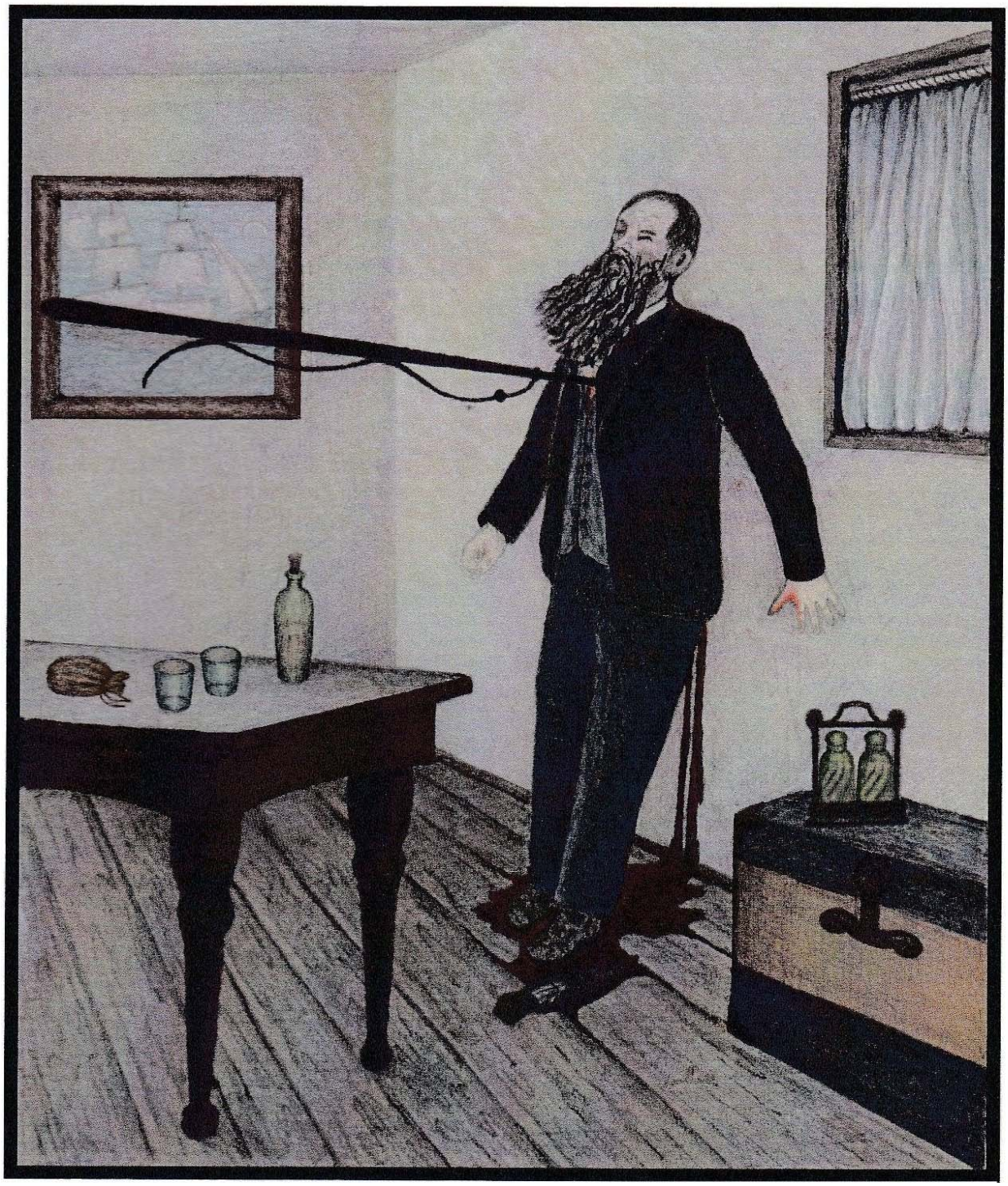
When Percy Phelps went half insane
With fits and raging, cries of pain,
To one and all his case was plain:
He suffered from brain-fever.

This ailment's so imprecise
Most any symptom will suffice.
On Harley Street they don't think twice –
"Poor devil's got brain-fever."

The doctors have the final word.
Disputing them would be absurd.
The diagnosis most preferred
Is certainly brain-fever.

The Death of Black Peter

– Joyce “Irene” Ludwig



Sherlock Holmes Essay Contest
2010 Clarkson Prize Winning Essay

This year Watson's Tin Box is celebrating its Sixth Annual Sherlock Holmes Essay Contest for seventh graders in Howard County, Maryland. Once again the Tin Box partnered with Howard County Library and Howard County Public Schools. Participating students read the *Adventure of the Speckled Band* and wrote essays. English teachers in the Public Schools voluntarily participated, and Howard County Library made participation possible for home-schooled and privately schooled students. Watson's Tin Box is grateful to its partners for making this contest such a success. We survey the teachers to find out how many of them used *The Speckled Band* as part of their curriculum as a result of the contest. This year we reached approximately 350 children. Over the last six years the contest has reached nearly 2,000 students.

Each year the Tin Box has awarded First, Second, and Third Place Prizes to the top three essays. However, this year we had so many wonderful entries we decided to award a Fourth Prize. First Prize in the contest is *The Clarkson Prize*, named for Tin Box co-founder Steve Clarkson, BSI, who was a mentor to so many young Sherlockians. Steve started a Sherlock Holmes literary society for young people in the late 1960s. This group included members from across the country and since this was before the advent of email, the young Sherlockians would distribute their analyses of the Sherlock Holmes stories to each other in real envelopes. Steve continued mentoring of young Sherlockians until he passed away in 2004.

This year, the Essay Contest winners are:

First Prize - The Clarkson Prize

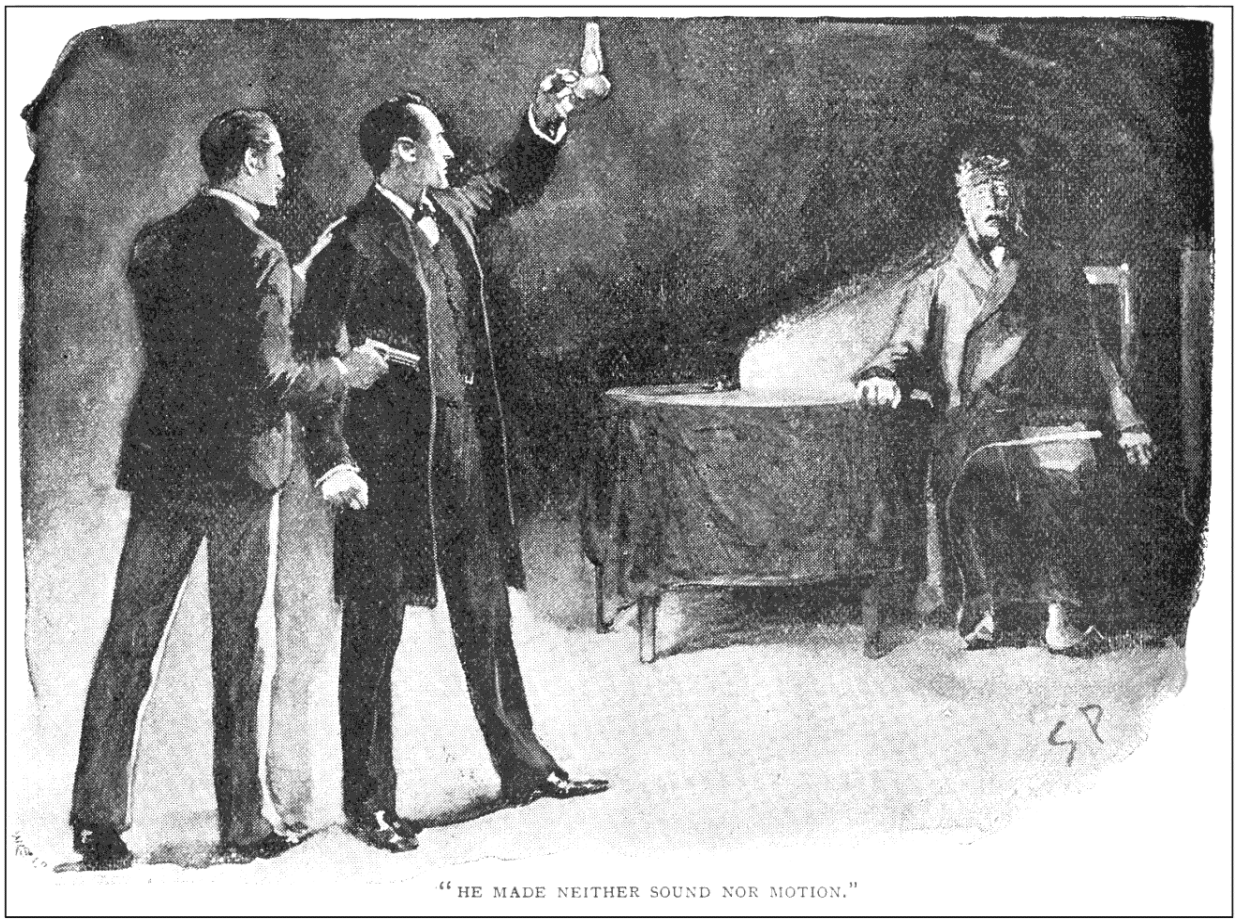
Kyra John
Grade 7
Age 12
Bonnie Branch Middle School
Teacher: Ms. Taylor

Second Prize
Sydney Hunter
Grade 7
Age 12
Our Lady of
Perpetual Hope School
Teacher: Ms. Gregorini

Third Prize
Johnson Moore
Grade 7
Age 12
Home Schooled

Fourth Prize
Kyle Doubleday
Grade 7
Age 13
Bonnie Branch
Middle School
Teacher: Ms. Taylor

A hearty congratulations for a job well done goes to all four winners. Each year, with the approval of the Clarkson Prize winner, the winning essay is published in *Irene's Cabinet.* It is with great pride that we publish this year's Clarkson Prize winning essay on *The Speckled Band.* Ms. John can be proud to be a young published author.



"He made neither sound nor motion."

The Irony of Dr. Roylott's Death

– Kyra John

In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's mystery story, *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, the antagonist of the story, Dr. Grimesby Roylott, is killed. This situation is morbidly ironic due to the words and actions of Roylott. This story shows situational, verbal, and dramatic irony, where the words, sheer stupidity, and actions backfire on the terrible doctor.

The first type of irony shown in *The Speckled Band* is situational irony. This is when a planned situation backfires on the instigator. This type of irony is blatantly obvious in the story. Dr. Roylott created a situation to kill his step-daughter using a venomous swamp adder from India, and the situation backfired in the most horrid way. As Holmes recalled, "He had died within ten seconds of being bitten." The irony of this situation is that the very way Dr. Roylott tried to kill his step-daughter is the same way he, himself, was murdered.

Another type of irony is verbal irony, which Dr. Roylott also demonstrated. This is when something someone says conflicts with what actually happened in the story. When Roylott visited with Holmes, to scare him out of the case, he took a steel poker, bent it in half, and said, "See to that to keep you out of my grip." There are two other points in the book where this statement would be linked to. First, the way Roylott told Holmes to stay out of his grip is completely ignored, and Holmes jumps head first into solving the case, and is able to pinpoint the criminal, Dr. Roylott. Also, Dr. Roylott's words conflict with the way he was killed. The doctor tells Holmes to stay out of his grip, and, in the end, the snake's grip finishes the doctor.

Irony can also be dramatic. This type of irony is when the audience of the story knows something the characters do not. The danger of keeping a venomous snake in a house around people should have occurred to Roylott. Holmes said that the swamp adder is "the deadliest snake in India," and this snake ultimately caused Dr. Roylott's demise. Any sane person would know not to keep a highly venomous snake in their house, but Roylott obviously wasn't thinking straight, and he suffered the consequences. The irony of the situation is that the readers know that nothing good could happen if one keeps a venomous snake in their home, but these facts are ignored by the doctor, and he was killed.

The Adventure of the Speckled Band uses all three types of literary irony, which only strengthens the ironic nature of Dr. Roylott's death. Roylott's self-created situation backfired, his own words were proven false, and his own actions led to his demise. The irony of the entire situation makes Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's masterpiece a pleasure to read.

Oh, Wouldn't Watson's Tin Box Be Luvverly?

– Evie Herzog, ASH, BSI

To the tune of *Wouldn't It be Loverly,*
Lerner & Lowe, *My Fair Lady*

All I want is to pick the lock
Of the box Watson left with Cox.
With tales it's chock-a-block.
Oh, wouldn't it be luvverly?

Tales of logic and derring-do,
Jewel-thefts, murders, and romance, too.
Maybe a code that's new.
Oh, wouldn't it be luvverly?

Oh, so luvverly reading every manuscript with care.
I would never stop to rest, 'til Watson's Tin Box was bare.

Of my treasures, I'd drop a hint –
Name my price to get them in print.
Oh gosh, I'd make a mint!
Oh, wouldn't it be luvverly, luvverly,
Luvverly, luvverly, luvverly!

Chair à Canon

– Andrew Solberg, ASH, BSI

In The Beginning...

> The annual sold out within two weeks, although this owed more to the Beeton reputation than to A *Study in Scarlet.* The story itself caused no great stir, but received enough favorable notice to justify a separate edition the following year.

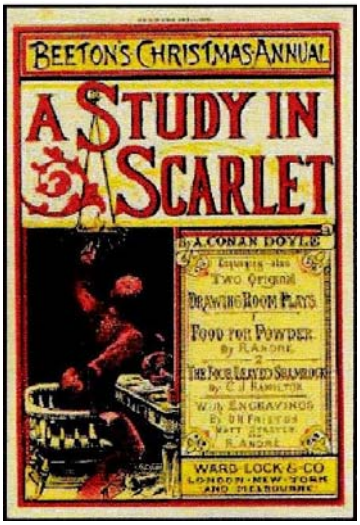
So wrote Daniel Stashower in his wonderful biography of Arthur Conan Doyle, *Teller of Tales,* about the initial response to A *Study in Scarlet.* Today, we know how the novel spawned the forty year chronicle of Sherlock Holmes, and we wonder that his beginnings could have been so unheralded. The question is, was there really so little notice?

The British Library has a wonderful web site (**http://newspapers.bl.uk**) where any historian can search millions of articles from 1800 to 1900 that were in any of 49 London national and regional newspapers. How can a Sherlockian not take advantage of that?[1]

A *Study in Scarlet* (STUD) was first published in the 1887 issue of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* by Ward, Lock & Company.

Like today, periodicals were published some time prior to their publication date, and it became available in late November. The earliest advertisement I could find was published in the Tuesday, November 22, 1887, edition of the *Daily News,* a London newspaper that was founded by Charles Dickens. The ad touted:

A STUDY IN SCARLET
By A. Condon Doyle



Yes, they misspelled his name. Not a very propitious beginning for the struggling young author. "This story will be found remarkable for the skillful presentation of a supremely ingenious detective, whose performances, while based on the most rational principles, outshine any hitherto depicted," hyped the advertisement. Despite the misspelling of Conan Doyle, there was plenty of truth in this advertising.

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[1] I was unsuccessful in trying to access this source. The site led me to another web page, (**http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/newspapers**) which states: "Searching is free, but to view the newspapers requires a personal subscription. The British Newspaper Archive can be viewed for free in our Reading Rooms." The cost of a one-month subscription is £12.95. - Les

Just Ready, in Picture Covers, One Shilling,

BEETON'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL, 28th SEASON, the leading feature of which is an original Story entitled

A STUDY IN SCARLET

By A. Condon Doyle

"This story will be found, remarkable for the skilful presentation of a supremely ingenious detective, whose performances, while based on the most rational principles, outshine any hitherto depicted. The surprises are most cleverly and yet most naturally managed, and at each stage the reader's attention is kept fascinated and eager for the next event. The publishers have great satisfaction in assuring the public that no annual for some years has equalled the one which they now offer for naturalness, truth, skill, and exciting interest. It is certain to be read, not once, but twice by every reader; and the person who can take it up and lay it down again unfinished must be one of those people who are neither impressionable nor curious."

This same ad, misspelling and all, also appeared in the November 26th edition of *The Graphic,* a London weekly newspaper published by Illustrated Newspapers, Ltd. However, the ad with the name spelled correctly appeared in The *Leeds Mercury* on Wednesday, November 23rd and in the November 25th edition of the *Birmingham Daily Post.*

I find it interesting that only four such advertisements were among the 49 publications digitized in the British Library collection. Ward, Lock and Company was clearly relying on the popularity of its *Annual* to sell the product, and not necessarily Conan Doyle's story.

Copies of the *Annual* were sent to newspapers in hope of a mention in their articles in which they mentioned recent publications. This was especially true around Christmas time, when many publications were hawking their Christmas issues. Some newspapers simply noted receipt, such as the December 2nd edition of *The Pall Mall Gazette,* which listed *Beeton's* among many other books it had received. Others gave more information. For example, the "Literature" column in the December 4th edition of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (another London weekly) stated, "*Beeton's Christmas Annual* (Ward, Lock & Company) has for leading subject A *Study in Scarlet* by A. Conan Doyle, a tale replete with stirring incidents, and described as a reprint of reminiscences of Army-surgeon Watson. The number also contains two original drawing room plays." I found four such notices.

The first real review, however, was published in *The Graphic* on December 10th. It states that STUD is an "anonymous story," which is interesting because it arguably had two authors cited, Conan Doyle and Dr. Watson.

THE LAST CHRISTMAS NUMBERS. — "A Study in Scarlet is the name of the anonymous story which is the chief attraction in *Beeton's Christmas Annual.* It is not at all a bad imitation; but it would never have been written but for Poe, Gaboriau, and Mr. R L. Stevenson. The hero of the tale is simply the hero of "The Murder in the Rue Morgue." Those who like detective stories, and have not read the great originals will find the tale full of interest. It hangs together well, and finishes ingeniously. —

While Conan Doyle may have been disappointed by the reviewer finding it an imitation, he certainly must have considered himself among good company. Edgar Alan Poe was, of course, the father of the thinking detective. Gaboriau's Monsieur Lecoq built upon Poe's Dupin and was incredibly popular in his time. The reference to Robert Louis Stevenson must have been especially pleasing to Doyle. If I could quote from an article that was published in another August Sherlockian journal:

> Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850, nine years before Conan Doyle. Like Conan Doyle, Stevenson entered University of Edinburgh. In 1883, Stevenson published his first successful novel, *Treasure Island.* At that point, Doyle was twenty four years old and an aspiring author. Stevenson's and Doyle's parallel paths made Stevenson a natural role model for Doyle. In fact, in 1948, Christopher Morley wrote in the *BSJ* (in his "Clinical Notes by a Resident Patient" article, writing as if in a letter from his alter-ego, Jane Nightwork):
>
> > One reason why Doyle was eager to accept so paltry an offer for *Study in Scarlet,* to be printed in Beeton's Xmas Annual for 1887, was that when he heard from Ward Lock & Co., he had just noticed, in Cassell's Xmas Annual for 1886, that now quite forgotten story by his idol Stevenson, 'The Misadventures of John Nicholson." So he was eager to be in a Xmas Annual too.[2]

Stevenson was what Conan Doyle hoped to be, so the reviewer's grouping them together could not have been too displeasing, even if it was in the form of calling Doyle's style imitative.

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[2] Solberg, Andrew, *A History of Norah, Arthur, and Robert*, Baker Street Journal. 59, No. 2, (Summer, 2009).

The next review was from the *Glasgow Herald* on December 17, 1887. This review was much kinder. It calls STUD the *piece de resistance* of the *Christmas Annual.* "It is the story of a murder and the preternatural sagacity of a scientific detective, to whom Edgar Allan (sic) Poe's Dupin was a trifler and Gaboriau's Lecoq a child. He is a wonderful man is Sherlock Holmes, but one gets so wonderfully interested in his cleverness and in the mysterious murder which he unravels that one cannot lay down the narrative until the end is reached."

> *Beeton's Christmas Annual* (London • Ward, Lock & Co.) is now an old institution, and as regularly looked for as the holly and mistletoe. This year its contents are full and varied. The *piece de resistance is* a story by A. Conair Doyle entitled "A Study in Scarlet,." It is the story of a murder, and of the preternatural sagacity o£ a scientific detective, to whom Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin was a trifler, and Gaboriau's Lecoq a child. He is a wonderful man is Mr Sherlock Holmes, but one gets so wonderfully interested in his cleverness and in the mysterious murder which he unravels that one cannot lay down the narrative until the end is reached. What that end is wild horses shall not make us divulge. After the "Study in Scarlet" come two original little drawing-room plays. One is »

Of course, the reviewer did refer to the author as "A. Conair Doyle." Conan Doyle clearly was not yet a household name. Of interest is that when STUD was published in book form the following year, it was noted in the *Glasgow Herald* on July 7,1888, and Conan Doyle is cited as "Conway Doyle." One wonders if it was malicious.

Those were the only two reviews that I could uncover of the version in *Beeton's Christmas Annual.* As I consider this, it is not so unusual. How often today are magazine articles reviewed? Not often. So, perhaps, the birth of Sherlock Holmes *is* correctly characterized as creating "no great stir," as Dan Stashower declared.

When the story was printed in book form the following year, its arrival was noted in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper,* on July 29, 1888.

> From Messrs. Ward and Lock we receive a cheap edition of "A Study in Scarlet by A Conan Doyle. It is a story which reveals some of the hidden depths of Mormonism, and keeps the reader on the alert by the eventful search for a murderer.

This mention was buried as the last of four books mentioned in the "Literature" column, so it was certainly not headlined as the masterpiece we have come to love.

The first review of the book was published on September 1, 1888, in *The Graphic,* one of the weeklies in which Ward, Lock & Company had placed an ad when STUD was first published as part of the *Christmas Annual.* This reviewer certainly got it, and Conan Doyle must have been very pleased.

Interestingly, in none of these reviews is there any mention of how revolutionary Holmes is in representing the first consulting detective and what a break from tradition it was. Previously, there had been no professional private consulting detectives. Dupin was not a professional and Gaboriau's Lecoq was employed by the French Sûreté.

> Nobody who cares for detective stories should pass over "*A Study in Scarlet*," by Conan Doyle (1 vol.: Ward, Lock, and Co.). The author has equalled the best of his predecessors in that popular line by bringing to light a seemingly impenetrable crime by means of severely logical deductions from apparently unconnected and well-nigh imperceptible traces; and he has actually succeeded in inventing a brand new detective, only reminding the reader of Poe's in being an amateur of genius in that particular direction. His two professional clients, with their clues which, while running in opposite directions, lead equally to nothing, supply him with an entertaining foil. The plot is rather daringly constructed, inasmuch as the crime is cleared in the middle of the volume, the remainder being given to its preliminary history. But this unconventional departure is justified by success, and by the complete renewal and maintenance of fresh interest to the close. Concerning the plot, we shall, of course, say nothing. We may say, however, that the latter portion of the story deals considerably with the earlier period of the Mormon settlement in an interesting manner; and that there is no trace of vulgarity or slovenliness, too often characteristic of detective stories. Besides being exceptionally ingenious, it may be read with pleasure by those do not care for such things in a general way.

T

The final review that I will cite was published in the Saturday, January 5, 1889, edition of the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle.* It was not intended to be a review of STUD, but rather of Conan Doyle's subsequent book *The Mystery of Cloomber*. However, in the positive review, the author compares the two, to the advantage of the more recent book:

climax weirdly tragical. To attempt a synopsis of the story in these columns would be unfair to both author and reader, as its real charm consists in the terrible mystery surrounding the unhappy General Hatherstone, a mystery that impels one to read on almost without stopping until its solution is reached. In our opinion the construction of this story is an improvement upon that of "*The Study in Scarlet*," which, although deservedly popular, lacks dramatic sequence, and it will add materially to the growing reputation of Dr. Doyle. It is published in a cheap form by Messrs. Ward and Downey.

Growing reputation, indeed. By August Lipincott placed an ad in the *Glasgow Herald* and other newspapers touting that it was going to publish British authors. The ads states, "Among forthcoming novels by English writers may be mentioned one by A. Conan Doyle, whose '*Study in Scarlet*' and '*Micah Clarke*' have placed him high among English novelists. Mr. Doyle's powerful story is entitled, *THE SIGN OF FOUR*; or The Problem of the Sholtos."

Can You See It?

– Joyce “Irene” Ludwig

Sherlock Holmes: Gentleman

– Debbie Clark

I can make a lord, but only God can make a gentleman.
– King James I

Most of us have long thought of Sherlock Holmes as the epitome of the Victorian Gentleman, and that is surely what Conan Doyle intended us to think. But was he really? What did it mean to be a Victorian Gentleman?

Oddly enough the Victorians were somewhat uncertain about this. During the mid-nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing and as a result of increasing wealth and influence the growing middle class was elevating itself to gentility. Naturally, the aristocracy which believed itself to be the only truly genteel class by right of birth, resisted this. For them, reference to a man as a gentleman had a specific meaning; it indicated a good family background and good breeding, which the members of the middle class simply did not have.

In the Victorian era, the line of demarcation which had been solid was beginning to blur; cross over was beginning to be possible. In the Middle Ages, this was unthinkable. Being a gentleman of the Middle Ages meant that one was granted a coat of arms and the right to bear arms. The coat of arms indicated that one was a gentleman; it did not confer genteel status in and of itself. A gentleman was superior because he was a fighting man. Being of the "gentry" also implied that one had an income derived from property or inheritance and that one did not have to labor for an income. This was especially important if one was not a member of the peerage.

Eventually, a distinction was made between "professionals" and "tradesmen." Some Victorians recognized the gentlemanly professions: Anglican clergy, army officers, members of Parliament, barristers. However, numerous other perfectly respectable professions (like engineers) were not. Hence Holmes's insistence that he was a professional consulting detective. It is likely that the gentlemanly professions were so recognized because so many second sons who could not inherit belonged to those professions.

Wealth or class alone would not a gentleman make. There was a moral component to the ideal gentleman which the Victorians themselves found difficult to define. Nonetheless the Victorians expected a gentleman to act as a moral compass for the rest of society. Many relied on the concept of the medieval chivalric code as laid out in the novels of Sir Walter Scott, which were seeing a revival in the 19th century. (Conan Doyle freely admits that Scott's novels such as *Ivanhoe* had a great influence on him. His *White Company* in part at least pays homage to Scott.) As described in the 11th century *Song of Roland* the Knight's Code of Chivalry and the Vows of Knighthood required these traits:

- To fear God and maintain His Church
- To serve the liege lord in valor and faith
- To protect the weak and defenseless
- To give succor to widows and orphans
- To refrain from the wanton giving of offence
- To live by honor and for glory
- To despise pecuniary reward
- To fight for the welfare of all
- To obey those placed in authority
- To guard the honor of fellow knights
- To eschew unfairness, meanness, and deceit
- To keep faith
- At all time to speak the truth
- To persevere to the end in any enterprise begun
- To respect the honor of women
- Never to refuse a challenge from an equal
- Never to turn the back upon a foe [1]

Noted Victorian artist, moralist, and social reformer John Ruskin wrote that, "the essence of a gentleman is what the word says, that he is come from pure *gens,* or is perfectly bred. After that, gentleness and sympathy, or kind disposition and fine imagination."[2]

The progressive entries in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* clearly illustrate the changes in interpretation of the word. In 1815, "a gentleman is one who, without any title, bears a coat of arms or whose ancestors have been freemen." In 1845 it added, "All above the rank of yeoman," which was a classification near the bottom of the social ladder. At the time of the Reform Act of 1832, the middle classes had come into their own, and the term "gentleman" had ceased to solely indicate good blood and was used primarily to indicate that one had manners, education, and position. By 1856 the *Encyclopedia* told us, "By courtesy, this title is generally accorded to all persons above the rank of common tradesmen when their manners are indicative of a certain amount of refinement and intelligence." No longer was good birth or the right to bear arms the *Bright Line* test of a gentleman. A gentleman needed nothing more than the ability to associate on equal terms in good society and to behave in a courteous manner.

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[1] Knight's Code of Chivalry, **http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/knights-code-of-chivalry.htm**

[2] Cody, David. "The Gentleman." *Victorian Web.* **http://victorianweb.org/history/gentleman.html**

Eminent Victorian poet, essayist, and cleric (first in the Anglican and then in the Catholic Church) John Henry Cardinal Newman wrote in 1852 a detailed description of a *true gentleman*.[3] How does Sherlock Holmes compare to this standard?

The Qualities of a Gentleman	Qualities of Sherlock Holmes
He acts kindly from the impulse of his kind heart	Yes
He is brave, because, with a conscience void of offence, he has nothing to fear	Yes, although he does give offense in the course of his work
He is never embarrassed, for he respects himself and is profoundly conscious of right intentions	Yes
He keeps his honor unstained, and to retain the good opinion of others he neglects no civility	Well, he IS occasionally uncivil to Watson, Mrs. Hudson, and Lestrade but it is usually forgivable
He respects even the prejudices of men whom he believes are honest	Yes, but woe betide those who are not
He opposes without bitterness and yields without admitting defeat	Sometimes
He is never arrogant, never weak	He IS arrogant and vain quite often, but not weak
He bears himself with dignity, but is never haughty	He is occasionally haughty
Too wise to despise trifles, he is too noble to be mastered by them	There is nothing so important as trifles
To superiors he is respectful without servility; to equals he is courteous; to inferiors he is kind	Yes, these are some of his more engaging traits

[3] Landow, George P. "Newman on the Gentleman." Victorian Web. **http://victorianweb.org/vn/victor10.html**

Holmes would be considered a gentleman by many simply because of his parentage and background. In *The Greek Interpreter* he tells Watson that his people were country squires indicating they were landed gentry and held a position of importance in the County. The stories in the Canon clearly show that Holmes is comfortable with grooms, tradesmen, and peers. His first two recorded cases come from University acquaintances, one of whom, Reginald Musgrave, is the scion of an ancient noble family and the other, Victor Trevor, the son of a self-made man who became a wealthy landowner and Justice of the Peace (albeit by illicit gains.)

Being a country squire also implies the Holmes family had some wealth. Sherlock's older brother, Mycroft, works for the government as a Senior Public Servant and draws a modest salary, but he was *the founder* of the Diogenes Club, indicating that he had some private family income.

Toward the end of the century a tacit comprise was reached. It was widely accepted that one could be called a gentleman, despite his origins if he had received a classical education at one of the upper level public schools. Eton, Harrow, or Rugby topped a very short list of eligible schools. This meant the gentleman probably read Greek and Latin and spoke French. Upon graduation from university he would most likely hold an influential position in government or business. He might be an officer in the armed forces. The "Old Boys" from these schools were groomed to lead in their chosen professions.

No record of Sherlock Holmes has been found at any of the public schools, but he was clearly well educated. He attended one of the major universities for at least two years and continued studies on his own afterwards at the British Museum and elsewhere. When he first met Watson he was doing chemical experiments at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London. (It is worth mentioning that Watson, as a retired Army doctor, was actually closer to being the typical model of an English Gentleman than Holmes.) In taking stock of Holmes at the beginning of their association, Watson concludes that Holmes has no knowledge of literature, astronomy, philosophy, or politics yet as the Canon progresses Holmes is seen to have a working knowledge of several different languages. He quotes Latin and reads and possibly speaks German in A *Study in Scarlet* while he is most certainly fluent in French (his grandmother, after all, was the sister of Vernet, the French artist.) He makes not infrequent references to Shakespeare, to the Bible, and to other classical literature.

At university, Holmes participated in boxing and fencing, and at various times throughout the Canon he takes up arms to defend himself or others in the best tradition of his forbears. He is brave and fearless – consider his facing the hound, the speckled band, and Tonga. He shows no emotion when viewing horrible crime scenes, violent murders, or when confronting murderers and scoundrels. For a gentleman, there was no problem that could not be resolved by a combination of bravery, reason, and civilized behavior.

Certainly Holmes fits the standard of gentleman in having a certain superior standard of conduct, especially as pertains to women. He treats them all in a kind and respectful manner (even if they are not to be trusted, even the best of them.) The notable exception

of Charles Augustus Milverton, in which he 'walks out' with the housemaid Agatha in order to obtain entrance to Milverton's house so he can burgle it and thereby reclaim some incriminating letters for a lady. However, this too fits the somewhat slippery definition of the Victorian gentleman. Apparently, at the time, a gentleman was allowed to bend the law to his own purposes if the deed was done for noble purposes (such as saving a family's reputation or preserving a woman's honor.) Even concealing evidence, housebreaking, burglary and misleading the police were not necessarily considered disqualifiers. It all depended on the intent, and when Holmes broke the law it was not for personal gain, but rather to see justice done.

Sherlock Holmes embodies the values of his era and reassures readers of traditional English values. Each time a case is resolved social order is restored and proper class values are reaffirmed. Peace and safety are restored. In short, had Sherlock Holmes appeared in a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta they would surely have said, "he is the very model of an modern English Gentleman."

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Nemesis

April Curnow, Gasogene

Before the fire she stood
Late by half an hour
According to the man
Comfortably enthroned
King of secrets
Merciless
A heel ground into his face
Into the night she fled
Lady cloaked and armed
Exacting
Revenge

Sherlock Holmes's Ten Essential Lessons

– John C. Sherwood

The author thought he'd said it all in "The Seven Vital Lessons of Sherlock Holmes," published in The Hounds of the Internet's *The Hounds' Collection, Vol. 5* (2000). It drew on his experience supervising more than 100 Sherlock Holmes Mystery Weekends in Michigan, beginning in 1987.

However, after publication the piece would not sit still. It gained its own Web page and scores of sales via Amazon. A distilled version appeared in *The Pocket Sherlock* (2005). It became the basis of public presentations in six U.S. states. The author also was haunted by connections, corollaries and refinements.

So, after 10 years, here is most of the *latest* final word on the subject. The even more detailed version surely will be published in its entirety someday.

It's tough to locate Sherlock Holmes's techniques for successful problem solving. The reader must sift through hundreds of thousands of words, rampant with John H. Watson's detail and excesses. Holmes is to blame, too; he rarely described something more basic than tactics.

Our goal is to reach deeper, to identify Holmes's worldview – the mindset of the socalled perfect reasoner. By selecting the lessons that detail Holmes's *attitude,* we discover what informed him throughout his career, no matter what talent or skill he might apply. The countdown begins...

TEN: "Crime is common. Logic is rare. Therefore it is upon the logic rather than upon the crime that you should dwell." [*The* Copper *Beeches,* a case from 1889]

Sherlock Holmes said this while criticizing John Watson as a writer. Chagrined, Watson treated it as a gripe uttered in a heated moment. However, it actually reflects Holmes's inner life – his attitude toward the craft of detective work and social needs.

Holmes treated logic as the lens by which he could examine the world. Thus we start with the essential lesson that, to solve problems presented by crime, deductive and inductive reasoning must be foremost in one's mental toolkit.

However, the remark reveals more about Holmes himself. He insisted that logic must be studied for its own sake, described in detail and *shared, so* others might profit. Holmes expressed a desire to reveal truth and impart justice – and not merely for his own gain; through Watson's writings, he hoped others might learn to do the same.

Perhaps more than any lesson that follows, this point reveals Holmes's conscious desire to be a responsible member of a decent and just society.

Holmes was not merely motivated by a love of reason. He also was driven by *a love of humanity.* That's why this lesson is the best door to open as we enter Holmes's mind.

NINE: "There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds, and if you have all the details of a thousand at your finger ends, it is odd if you can't unravel the thousand and first." [A *Study in Scarlet,* a case from 1881]

Here, Holmes praised the methodical accumulation of useful knowledge. He noted early in his career that patterns in human behavior are profoundly instructive. Applied to crime, those patterns often are invisible to those who aren't proficient in the details of criminal activity. Holmes knew professional ignorance does not lead to bliss – or to justice.

In fact, Holmes insisted it's necessary to pore over these patterns to the point of painful repetition, absorbing sufficient information so one might develop a quick recognition of their general shapes. Today the "profiler" is a familiar contributor to the solution of modern crime. The spin-off is *efficiency.* In a quick and methodical way, efficient action produces insights applicable to numerous situations and people.

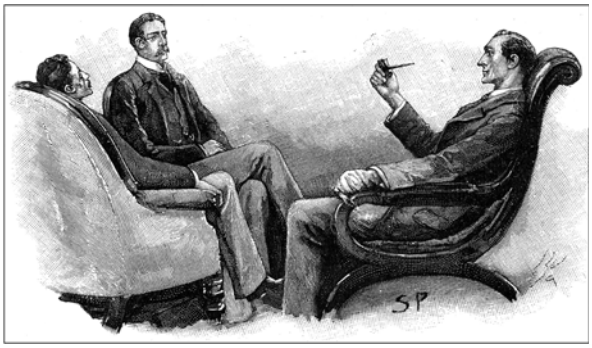
The risk is that the naive investigator may be tempted to rely on preconceived notions with insufficient data, and declare that a pattern exists when no pattern is justified. This is the act of prejudice, and Holmes will counsel against such thinking again and again

EIGHT: "The most commonplace crime is often the most mysterious, because it presents no new or special features from which deductions may be drawn." [*A Study in Scarlet,* 1881]

Any truth-seeker is puzzled when presented with events that have no apparent connection. However, much of the puzzlement really is self-generated, the result of improper technique, inattention to detail and the type of faulty pattern-recognition we'll label *prejudice.* Still, there truly are incidents seemingly, so bland in nature that they seem to defy analysis.

Even the most "typical" crime is still a crime, an unwanted change. Some aspect must reflect that change, even if there's no obvious handle one might grasp easily. So, how does one begin? The answer lies not in a tactic, but in the view *that perseverance* offers salvation. Without it, one risks sinking into hopelessness. So, Holmes persisted in asking vital questions familiar to every journalist: *Who? What? When? Where? How?* Most importantly, Holmes perpetually asked *Why?*

Holmes hoped you might become such a knowledge-gatherer as well. By applying your own array of knowledge to even the most mundane and seemingly featureless problem, and persistently asking the vital questions, you may discern a pattern or point that guides you to its solution.



SEVEN: "The more bizarre a thing is the less mysterious it proves to be." [*The Red-Headed League,* 1887]... "An exception disproves the rule." [*The Sign of Four,* 1888]... "Singularity is almost invariably a clue." [*The Boscombe Valley Mystery,* 1889]

Sometimes you don't know what the overall picture on a jigsaw puzzle will look like when completed. However, a single, exceptionally shaped or detailed piece may reveal a great deal about it. That vivid nugget of information reduces the overall mystery, while dismissing any notion that the image might be uniform or consistent.

Similarly, exceptional incidents often point the puzzled detective in the right direction. A famous form of singularity is the silent dog in *Silver Blaze.* It's notoriously difficult to notice the absence of a thing or event, so the "incident" went generally unnoticed. However, it led Holmes to the conclusion that the dog had recognized the intruder as familiar.

This lesson also has its pitfalls. One might confuse "singularity" with "oddity." All odd events are not important or helpful. Nothing illustrates this point better than the so-called "red herring," which calls attention to itself and deliberately points in a false direction. These typically are contrived and self-evident, and a cautious investigator is aware how and why they're there.

However, most red herrings aren't placed deliberately but are produced in the observer's own imagination, magnified out of proportion because of their seeming strangeness. This act of self-deception often arises from the investigator's own prejudices.

SIX: "There is nothing so unnatural as the commonplace." [*A Case of Identity,* 1887]... "There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact." [*The Boscombe Valley Mystery,* 1889]

Just as the absence of an event may be misleading, so might its presence, especially if it's expected and seems entirely normal. We don't notice our own breathing. Likewise, we're all inclined to accept normalcy; that which seems normal – but is not – may escape our notice.

In the Boscombe Valley case, Holmes refused to succumb. He deduced that a spontaneously obtained weapon probably was discarded spontaneously, and sought a rock that had been moved; the correct one was revealed by fresh grass beneath. Yet, earlier, it had been just one of many rocks.

Holmes challenged us to redefine our view of what is commonplace, even when encouraged to accept the normal as somehow abnormal, as in the Baskerville case. Every normalcy may harbor something unnatural, too, and any strangeness may be mere normalcy under the proper circumstances. The task is to determine when those circumstances exist. Thus, every fact must be double-checked, and every stone be turned.

FIVE: "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." [*The Sign of Four,* 1888; paraphrased in other cases]

Generally, investigations do not deal much with the impossible – beyond those impossibilities that emerge through the deliberate practice of testing hypotheses. The mind seizes on probabilities quickly, without even regarding the improbabilities and hardly ever considering impossibilities. So, in practice, one rarely applies this rule – and when one does, the process is subjective.

Confusion and disagreement persist regarding what is impossible and what is improbable. What was impossible before Holmes was born had become quite possible by the time he was in active practice in the latter part of the 19th century – transatlantic communications, X-rays, and fingerprint identification. Much that was impossible in your own youth is commonplace today.

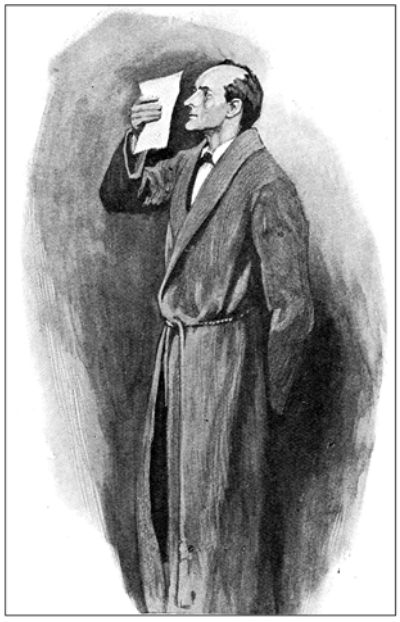
Holmes made mistakes of improbability, but tried to learn from them. He asked Watson to whisper "Norbury" to remind him of a great embarrassment. To remember another, he kept a photograph of the woman who had shamed him.

The wise mind remains vigilantly aware that it isn't infallible, and that the universe often is more inventive than mere imagination. Allowing for human error, then, it is Holmes's ability to accept improbability that led to numerous triumphs over his bureaucratic counterparts.

FOUR: "Never trust to general impressions... but concentrate yourself upon details." [*A Case of Identity,* 1887]... "You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles." [*The Boscombe Valley Mystery,* 1889]

Holmes's first utterance about details occurred when their importance still was not generally recognized. Holmes tried to change that by stressing the connections between tiny points of fact.

When Holmes was asked how he had spotted the third bullet in *The Dancing Men,* he replied, "Because I looked for it." He'd noted a singular detail that generated a hypothesis questioning the official view of suicide. Scotland Yard learned its lesson and adopted the



minute examination of crime scenes. It was the beginning of modern forensic investigative technique.

By focusing on details rather than the general – and often prejudiced – view, the professionals could throw aside reprehensible old habits – such as assuming guilt by association – and focus on tangible details. Those who follow suit will gain an astonishing advantage – in solving problems, and in dealing with life from day to day.

We come to the Grand Triad – three lessons at the core of so much of Holmes's thinking. Each point is essential, and in some way supports the others.

THREE: "I never guess. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts." [Derived from statements in *The Sign of Four* and A *Scandal in Bohemia,* both 1888.]

If there weren't two other vital lessons, Holmes's "whole art of detection" might be summarized as "Never guess." The phrase serves as a dynamic mission statement for the detective, attorney, police officer, judge, journalist, physician and paramedic – professions that promise the protection and salvation of life.

Yet, in everyday affairs all human beings are reckless about this point. They preface statements of so-called "fact" with phrases such as "I think..." or "I suppose..." or "I believe ..." Each phrase declares they are assuming, leaping ahead of factual information, drawing conclusions without evidence. They are merely *hoping,* but claiming that they *know.*

By re-defining a "guess" as a *possibility* and by recognizing guesswork as the formation of unproven concepts, the reasoner can avoid many traps that ensnare a successful investigation. What's more, guesswork as an act of imagination shouldn't be entirely discarded; it permits the reasoner to explore potential sources of information and alternative solutions. For the information, we rely on the second lesson. For the solutions, we champion the first.

TWO: "It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognize out of a number of facts which are incidental and which vital."... "I make a point of never having any prejudices, and of following docilely wherever fact may lead me." [*The Reigate Squires,* a case from 1887]

In two remarks during a single case, Holmes described a significant part of the scientific method, refined for the practical, efficient detective. He also warned us against a dangerous trap:

Because of a mental or social inclination, one may embrace a theory before all facts are known. This is the risk of trusting too deeply in a personal view of patterns.

A detective that belongs to a particular racial or ethnic group, or to a particular religion, may learn that his suspect adheres to the same faith or belong to the same group and conclude the suspect could not have committed the crime. Naturally, you recognize such thinking as utter foolishness. However, such thinking is just as common as crime.

Holmes's aim often was to accomplish small goals that might build larger ones. In some situations, it wasn't possible to resolve a problem in a bold stroke; Holmes then would parse the challenge into pieces and tackle them singly. So, use your time sparingly. Determine what you have that will help solve the problem. Then determine what you need to finish the solution. Then seek what you need in the place where it must be. If it isn't there – then consider Holmes's ultimate rule.

ONE; "One should always look for a possible alternative and provide against it." [*Black Peter,* 1895]... "One forms provisional theories and waits for time or fuller knowledge to explode them." [*The Sussex Vampire,* 1896]

In *Black Peter,* Holmes declared this his "first rule," for it's the apex of his Grand Triad.

One doesn't grab a suit from the rack and take it home; one tests several to find the proper fit. Confronted by a problem, the wise mind knows the first answer that rears up may not be correct. The potential existence of multiple hypotheses demands that the problem-solver select one that fits most or all known facts.

Those who embrace an unsubstantiated theory with passion often refuse to abandon their notions, choosing instead to dismiss or ignore facts that don't conform to what's become an ego-driven *belief.* By ignoring other possibilities – especially better-substantiated ones – they doom themselves to failure.

Learning to admit error permits us to accept change, to adapt to new situations and to move forward – regardless of the circumstances. The truly persistent truth-seeker finds the correct path by being willing to explore the wrong ones. The perfect reasoner, therefore, knows that *the perfect reasoner doesn't exist.*

Each of Holmes's lessons is a link of the chain of problem-solving, but the lesson of adaptation and persistence is the strongest. The person who follows this lesson is likely to find his answer – and perhaps even achieve mighty deeds.

THE WHOLE ART OF DETECTION IN TWENTY WORDS

1. Admit error.
2. Shun prejudice.
3. Never guess.
4. Pursue details.
5. Discard untruth.
6. Verify facts.
7. Study vividness.
8. Never quit.
9. Absorb patterns
10. Share logic.

They look so simple. It's no great feat to memorize them. Learning to *apply* them? That's another matter.

But why not try? Those who attempt it stand better prepared to face any puzzle or problem. They might create greater hope for themselves as individuals. By encouraging others to follow their lead, they may even help shape a society where justice and truth prevail.

ILLUSTRATIONS

All the illustrations used in this article appeared in *The Strand*:

1. "'Cut out the poetry, Watson' said Holmes, severely" - January 1927. *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman*. Frank Wiles, illustrator.
2. "Is there any other point which I can make clear?" - November 1893. *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*. Sidney Paget, illustrator.
3. "What a lovely thing a rose is" - October 1893. *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty*. Sidney Paget, illustrator.
4. "Holding it only an inch or two from his eyes" - September 1901. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Sidney Paget, illustrator.
5. "Holmes pulled out his watch" - September 1893. *The Adventure of The Greek Interpreter*. Sidney Paget, illustrator.

The Perplexing Problem of the Puzzling Proposition

– S. Brent Morris

Imagine you overhear the following conversation:

> Dude! The weekend was amazing! I went to the beach with my girl and some of our buds. We caught a few rays, fired up the grill for burgers and dogs, popped a six pack, and played the Frisbee.

Do you think you've overheard a native English speaker? To someone familiar with English, it just doesn't sound right. The final use of the definite article is awkward, non-idiomatic, and a give-away of likely earlier enrollment in an English-as-a-second-language course.

Now imagine you overheard the following comment by Sherlock Holmes to John Watson in *The Sign of Four*.

> Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science, and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.

Do you think you've overheard a student of Euclid? To someone familiar with geometry, it just doesn't sound right. The use of the "Fifth Proposition of Euclid" is awkward, inappropriate, and a give-away of possible earlier enrollment in a remedial mathematics course.

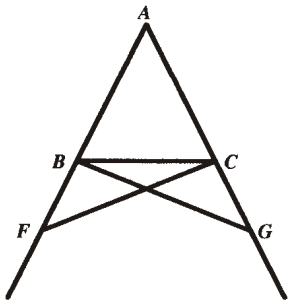
While I'm sure the difficulty is obvious to any reader intelligent enough to seek out an article like this, it's probably worth preserving the problem with the proposition for posterity. We'll begin with first things first: What is the Fifth Proposition of Euclid?

Euclid was a Greek mathematician who flourished in Alexandria about 300 BC. Little is known about him personally, but his fame comes from his geometry book. *Elements,* arguably the most important and influential textbook ever written. It served as the fundamental textbook for geometry for nearly 2000 years – a pretty good record for any book!

Euclid's *Elements* is divided into parts that are called "books" and contain the propositions or theorems of geometry. Book One starts with five "common notions" and five postulates, which are the fundamental rules of geometry. Based upon these basic rules, the propositions can be demonstrated or, as we would say today, proved.

There are in fact thirteen "fifth propositions" in the *Elements* – one in each of the thirteen books. So to which of the thirteen could Watson have thought Holmes was referring? Most likely it was the Fifth Proposition of Book One, the famous "*pons asinorum*" or "bridge of

asses." This is considered to be the first difficult problem in the *Elements,* and its nickname is thought to allude to the difficulty that poor students have in getting over it or perhaps because it serves as a bridge from the easy to the hard problems. It's also possible that it's so named because the classical diagram used for the proof looks something like a bridge.



Proposition 5. In isosceles triangles the angles at the base
equal one another, and, if the equal straight lines are produced
further, then the angles under the base equal one another.

So here is a simple explanation of Holmes's comment. He referred to a geometric theorem well-known to students for millennia, and to drive home the infelicity of Watson's embellishments, Holmes suggests the additions are like working a "love story or an elopement" into the theorem – a jarring juxtaposition indeed, perhaps akin to putting catsup on ice cream.

And yet the metaphor is weakened by the reference to the Fifth *Proposition,* as there is a much more famous fifth object in Euclid's *Elements.* An object that approaches the blinding splendor alluded to by Edna St. Vincent Millay in her sonnet, "Euclid alone has looked on beauty bare." It is a concept with which mathematicians spent some 2000 years wrestling: Euclid's Fifth Postulate.

Most of Euclid's foundational material is so self-evident that it's easy to dismiss it as trivial. Consider his five Common Notions.

COMMON NOTIONS

1. Things which equal the same thing also equal one another.
2. If equals are added to equals, then the wholes are equal.
3. If equals are subtracted from equals, then the remainders are equal.
4. Things which coincide with one another equal one another.
5. The whole is greater than the part.

In contemporary mathematical language, these would be known as axioms – basic statements that are not proven but accepted as true. The goal of defining a mathematical system is to use the fewest and simplest axioms possible. Consider Euclid's first four postulates (which also would be called axioms today).

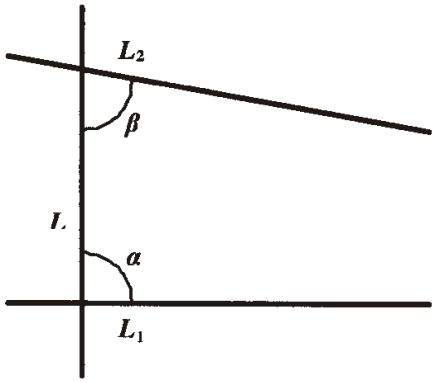
POSTULATES

1. To draw a straight line from any point to any point.
2. To produce a finite straight line continuously in a straight line.
3. To describe a circle with any center and radius.
4. That all right angles equal one another.

With rules this simple and self-evident, it makes you wonder why geometry has such a "widow-maker" reputation. The Fifth Postulate, however, can cause involuntary shudders in the faint of heart.

5. That, if a straight line falling on two straight lines makes the interior angles on the same side less than two right angles, the two straight lines, if produced indefinitely, meet on that side on which are the angles less than the two right angles.

The Fifth Postulate is jarring in its complexity when compared to the first four Postulates or to the Common Notions. It is awkward and graceless and begs for a diagram to achieve full understanding, in contrast to the naive simplicity of the others.



EUCLID'S FIFTH POSTULATE

Soon after the dissemination of the *Elements,* mathematicians began a quest to prove the Fifth Postulate was unnecessary by trying to derive it from the others. They sought to eliminate the ungainly beast and to reduce it to the status of a mere proposition by banishing it from the foundations of geometry. Proclus, another Greek mathematician who flourished about AD 450, some 800 years after Euclid, wrote a commentary on attempted proofs of the Fifth Postulate. Omar Khayam flourished around AD 1100 and was a Persian mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, and physician, even though he is better known for his quatrains or rubaiyat. He also wrote a book on the subject, *Explanations of the Difficulties in the Postulates of Euclid.*

It was not until the nineteenth century, more than 2000 years after Euclid, that mathematicians realized that Euclid's Fifth Postulate tells you that you're dealing with plane

or Euclidean geometry. Slight variations of the Fifth Postulate have you doing geometry on a ellipsoid or on a hyperbolic paraboloid. Nikolai Lobachevsky developed hyperbolic geometry in 1830, and finally in 1868 Eugenio Beltrami proved that the Fifth Postulate was independent from Euclid's other Postulates and Common Notions and was essential to plane geometry.

What is important about all these dates is that about 1874, when Sherlock Holmes was in college, Euclid's Fifth Postulate would have been the hot topic in any mathematics department as mathematicians came to appreciate that it is the crowning glory of the *Elements.* It took a mathematician of transcendent genius in 350 BC to realize that plane geometry was impossible without it.

A pre-med student in the 1870s would have taken the basic math required for chemistry and perhaps a touch of physics. Such a student would not have dallied with the math professors nor indulged in math seminars to see if such abstruse knowledge had practical value. And such a pre-med student, with only a superficial exposure to algebra and analytic geometry, could have easily confused a postulate for a proposition.

Thus we reach the only reasonable explanation of the perplexing problem of the puzzling proposition. Holmes knew enough about Victorian mathematics to be aware that Prof. Moriarty's treatise on the binomial theorem had had a European vogue, and he must have known about the then contemporary advances in geometry of Beltrami and others. He evidently mentioned Euclid's Fifth *Postulate* when reprimanding Watson for tingeing his reports of detection with romanticism. And good old Watson, ever the faithful reporter, must have misunderstood the reference as the Fifth *Proposition.* And he also, like so many pre-med students before him, doubtlessly had had difficulty crossing the *pons asinorum.*

To the Woman

– John Baesch, ASH, BSI

Toasting "The Woman" has been part of the commemorative ceremony of organized Sherlock Holmes activity from the earliest days of the Baker Street Irregulars. The practice was enshrined in the BSI constitution by Elmer Davis in the mid-thirties. The traditions of toasting The Woman and reading the constitution are still observed to this very day at the annual dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars in New York, and by many scion societies of the BSI throughout the country. We love our ritual. It is part of what makes us – us! The toast is an expression of unity with people like us. The toast is a positive link with all who have gone before us in our admiration of Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Watson, Mrs. Hudson, and – of course – The Woman.

Toasting to women is a matter of great chivalry and irony. Even though he refused the honor at the Queen's hand, Holmes was in every case an exemplar of knightly chivalry. Holmes was courteous to women. He respected, protected, and on several occasions, exculpated women in the stories set down by Dr. Watson. He behaved like a knight, even without the Queen's knighthood.

There lies the irony of toasting "The Woman." There are not all that many of them. The Baker Street Irregulars who solemnly toasted The Woman had no women of their own. The dinners were for men only. A ritual developed that the BSI's *woman* (usually a long-suffering Sherlockian wife, who put up with the clutter of books, pipes, and deerstalkers around an otherwise normal house) would come to the pre-dinner cocktail hour, be toasted with solemnity, and then hustled off to a dinner elsewhere. That same ritual is observed to this very day.

There is another ironic twist to The Woman we toast so loyally. This was the woman who bested Holmes. It can be argued that though there are many good women in the Canon worthy of a knight's protection; there are not a lot of smart women and no one who could be considered his equal by any stretch of the imagination. Enter Irene Adler from New Jersey and the paradigm of the Sherlock Holmes stories changes irrevocably. The floodgates are open to the suggestion of partnerships, romantic love, and a son of a son who grew to one-seventh of a ton.

And so it is, we lift our glasses to the All-American Girl, that vessel of the BSI's devotion, and that inspiration to pastiche writers throughout the world. I give you "The Woman."

Contributing Factors

Deborah Belchis, having been surrounded by Sherlock Holmes devotees her whole life, discovered Watson's Tin Box on the internet and quickly joined, resolving to increase her knowledge of this master sleuth. She is thrilled to be a member of the group and looks forward to being transported back to 1895 every month!

John Baesch, ASH, BSI, Gasogene XIV, met Sherlock Holmes in the ninth grade at Loyola Blakefield which bears an uncanny resemblance to Baskerville Hall, particularly because the school crest features wolves supporting a kettle. As a soldier stationed in Europe in the height of the Cold War, he led an expedition that discovered the Sherlock Holmes Pub in Northumberland Street, London, in 1968. His involvement with organized admiration of Sherlock Holmes began in 1988. He joined Watson's Tin Box in 2002 and served as Gasogene XIV. He married the Principle Unprincipaled Adventuress of ASH in 2003.

Debbie Clark, Gasogene IX, native of Maryland's beautiful Eastern Shore, is retired from the Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick, MD after serving 34 years in a variety of capacities and is now teaching and mentoring graduate education students at Goucher College in Towson, MD. She is a long time member of WTB and a Very Irregular attendee of several Mid-Atlantic scion societies. She has appeared previously in *Irene's Cabinet,* has been published in *Violets and Vitriol,* compiled and edited by S. E. Dahlinger, and periodically presents at the annual "Saturday with Sherlock Holmes" in Baltimore.

April Curnow, Gasogene XXI, regards the Tin Box monthly meeting night as an especially bright spot on her calendar. Between Sherlockian gatherings she sings madrigals, paints watercolors, and works in children's services for Howard County Library.

Fred Glueckstein, a columnist and nonfiction author of *The '27 Yankees, Mickey Mantle: Rookie in Pinstripes,* and *Of Men, Women, and Horses,* was a finalist for the Army Historical Foundation's Distinguished Writing Award in 2006. Raised in New York City, he lives with his wife Eileen in Maryland. They have two children, Brian and Debra.

Evelyn Herzog, ASH, BSI, has a particular devotion to the women of the Sherlockian Canon. Admiring Irene Adler from afar, she feels a closer affinity to Violet Hunter. She is a member of Sherlockian societies throughout the Northeast Corridor (and well beyond), but her home scion is now Watson's Tin Box.

Joyce "Irene" Ludwig is an independent consultant in information technology and a member of several Sherlockian societies in the Washington area. She signs her Sherlockian art with her middle name, Irene.

S. Brent Morris, Gasogene XV, is the managing editor of *The Scottish Rite Journal*, the largest circulation Masonic publication in the world, and is the author of *Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry*. He is Past Master of Patmos Lodge no. 70 of Ellicott City, MD, and Quatur Cononati Lodge No. 2076 of London. In things Sherlockian, he is a member of Watson's Tin Box, The Master's Mason, and Moriarty's Mathematicians.

John C. Sherwood, Gasogene XIV, Michigan native, recently moved to Port Huron, MI, after 11 years' residence near Philadelphia. He has been a journalist since 1967. He has written for every issue of *Irene's Cabinet* as well as for magicians' and skeptics' periodicals. His company, MysteryVisits, has staged plays and interactive mystery events in eight U. S. states and the United Kingdom.

Andrew Solberg, ASH, BSI, Gasogene VIII & XVIII, 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 dinner as his home.