



# EXPLORATIONS



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

On beautiful summer days like the ones we experienced so often in recent months it's difficult to consider those swirling pea-soup fogs that Holmes and Watson experienced in Victorian London. If only we could "bank" some of that great weather for the coming winter months. I hope everyone had a chance to enjoy themselves.

I also hope you were able to attend our meeting on August 19 at the Elmer L. Andersen Library, which was co-sponsored by the Norwegian Explorers and the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Along with great refreshments, the meeting featured Mike McKuras's report on the Strate-

gic Plan for the Friends of the Collections and John Bergquist's keynote talk about Bryce Crawford, one of the five original founders of the Explorers. It had been a while since we had been together, although we probably could have held a meeting with so many Explorers present at the Midwest Bookfair held in July at the State Fairgrounds. While we all looked for interesting finds, I had a chance to visit with Gary and Andie Thaden, John Bergquist, Dick Sveum, Steve Stilwell, Paul Martin, Phil and Karen Bergem, Allen Mackler, Karen Murdock, Pat Frovarp, Gary Schulze, Andrew Malec, Ruth Berman, Karen Titrud, Arlene Kase and Elvi

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Inside this issue:

2003 Christmas Annual	2
Happenings	3
Explorers at Large	4
Internet Explorations	7
Study Group	8
Gillette's <i>Sherlock Holmes</i>	11
Holmes on the Range	12

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We trust that readers have been able to find the time to spend a few moments with Holmes along with enjoying their summertime activities. As we reach the back-to-school season, what better time to reach once more for the Canon?.

Several Explorers have been traveling once again, and this issue of *Explorations* offers reports on those journeys. We also report on other happenings, including our Study Group sessions, and we review a recent production of William Gillette's venerable melodrama *Sherlock Holmes*.



The Explorers and the Twin Cities at large lost a good friend with the recent passing of James Shannon. Perhaps overlooked among Jim's many accomplishments was *A Fixed Point in a Changing World*, the delightful booklet he prepared for the Explorers' conference in 1984. Look for more about this remarkable man in the next issue.

Submissions for *Explorations* are always welcome. Email items in Word or plain text format to [bergq003@tc.umn.edu](mailto:bergq003@tc.umn.edu). ❖

John Bergquist, Editor

## EXPLORER NEWS



**Submissions to the Christmas Annual can also be considered as entries for the Sigerson Awards.**

### 2003 CHRISTMAS ANNUAL

It's not too late to send in your submission for the 2003 *Norwegian Explorers Christmas Annual!* Please send or email your article or essay (1,200 word maximum), review, poem, puzzle, illustration or other creative piece to the editor at the address on the back page by October 15. A holiday theme is suggested but not mandatory. Again, the *Christmas Annual* will be distributed to attendees of the Explorers annual dinner in December and at the BSI Dinner, Baskerville Bash, and *The Woman* dinners in New York in January. Unless specified otherwise, Submissions to the *Christmas Annual* will also be considered as entries for the Sigerson Awards. Submissions for the Sigerson Awards *only* will be accepted until November 15. ❖

John Bergquist, Editor

### AFGHANISTAN RECONSIDERED

Rolf Canton, recently married and now residing in Germany, has been researching the Battle of Maiwand using source material from his wife, Nahid's, grandfather, Sayed Qassem Reshtia, who wrote several history books on Afghanistan. In "The Battle of Maiwand – A Close Call for Watson – And Us," Rolf writes "Had not Watson been among the few dozen men who escaped to the City of Kandahar, a thousand miles east of the battlefield, we would not know or have available to us any of the exploits of that original, great, consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes." *Explorations* may print excerpts of Rolf's research in a future issue. ❖

### FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONTINUED)

*(Continued from page 1)*

Bankey. If I left anyone out, it is unintentional and attributable to creeping old age.

Since our last newsletter we've had two new members join our ranks. Mike Centrella and Chuck Dowd are our two newest Explorers. Mike has been at several study groups and has had the opportunity to meet some of our members. Chuck joined this summer, the result of being seated across the table from me at a business dinner. When I mentioned that I did volunteer work with the Sherlock Holmes Collections, his eyes lit up and before you knew it, we had a new member.

By the time you read this, the Study Group will have had its Sept. 20 meeting to discuss *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. A flyer announcing each meeting is sent out to those in the Study Group. If you're interested in joining, please notify me and I'll add your name to the list. We'll have a meeting in late

September, and the annual dinner will be held the first Thursday in December. In addition to this, our conference committee of Dick Sveum, John Bergquist, Mike Eckman, Phil Bergem, Gary Thaden, Tim Johnson and yours truly are working on "A River Runs By It", to be held June 11 - 13, 2004. When more information is available you'll all receive a mailing about this event.

I hope you enjoy reading about some of the Sherlockian travels that the Explorers have taken during the last several months. None have necessitated assuming the disguise of a Norwegian named Sigerson, or taken us through Tibet, but they've been interesting conferences and dinners we've attended.

If you have any questions about the Explorers, please feel free to contact me at 952-431-1934 or email at Mike9750@aol.com. ❖

## HAPPENINGS

### SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Norwegian Explorers will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 30 at 7:00 PM at the Elmer L. Andersen Library to hear a talk by Australian architect and Sherlockian Derham Groves, BSI ("Black Jack of Ballarat," 1985). In 1984 Derham published his plans for *The Sherlock Holmes Centre* (alas, still unrealized) at the University of Minnesota and has assigned his architectural students to design homes from the Holmes Canon. Professor Groves was a speaker at the 1995 Norwegian Explorers Conference (when the John Bennett Shaw Collection was dedicated at the University library). ❖

Julie McKuras



Twin Cities author and Norwegian Explorers favorite Larry Millett will appear at Once Upon a Crime mystery bookstore in Minneapolis on Wednesday, October 1 at 6:30 PM to introduce the paperback edition of his pastiche *The Disappearance of Sherlock Holmes*.

### TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Do You Know... which Victorian artist involved in the refurbishment of Holyrood House in Edinburgh gave his name to Mr. Holmes' last Canonical role?

Answer: Charles Altamont Doyle, Arthur Conan Doyle's father.

(Submitted by C. Paul Martin, MD, BSI)

### SHAMELESS COMMERCE DEPT.

Karen Murdock is offering Sherlockian stickers for sale. The 2-inch square stickers feature the Holmesian profile in white against a green background with the legend "The game is afoot!" If interested, send \$2 for 25 stickers postpaid to Karen at 1212 Yale Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414.

### EXPLORERS IN THE NEWS

We always like seeing a Sherlockian note in the newspapers, and here's one that Norwegian Explorer Steve Schier had in the Sunday June 1 St. Paul Pioneer Press, in which his analysis of Minnesota Governor Pawlenty's political prospects are put in the context of "Silver Blaze."

Julie McKuras

ANALYSIS: Pawlenty's pledge may become liability  
BY BILL SALISBURY  
Pioneer Press

[Pawlenty] may not get much credit for preventing tax increases. Governors who cut taxes get recognition, but most people don't notice when they just hold the line. "It's like the dog that doesn't bark in a Sherlock Holmes story," said Carleton's Schier,

### A TOAST TO DR. WATSON

Delivered at the Explorers' Annual Dinner on December 5, 2002 by Tim Payne

Although plans are well underway for the 2003 Annual Dinner, Tim Payne's charming toast in verse to Watson at the last dinner deserves to be immortalized in print. -Ed.

Reach for the well-worn book and find a favorite chair.  
We'll slip into a world that is always there.  
Hear the clippity-clop of the horses' hoofs.  
See the clay chimney pots stacked upon the roofs.  
We'll join in adventures with a loyal friend and the master  
As time stands still, and yet - passes faster.  
And so we peer through the dim lamplight of gas  
to catch a glimpse of the duo, as they surely will pass  
through the thick shrouds of fog and into our sight  
in the company of Explorers on this very night.  
Let us toast the whetstone for Holmes' sharp mind,  
the chronicler of a far more captivating time — Dr.  
John H. Watson.). ❖

"We always like seeing a Sherlockian note in the newspapers..."



Unique and rare items in the Kittle Collection include a copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, the manuscript of *The White Company*, and Dr. Joseph Bell's amputation kit.

## EXPLORERS AT LARGE

In recent months, members of the Norwegian Explorers have continued to visit their brethren around the country. In this issue we report on trips to Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Omaha – and an upcoming event in Upstate New York for those who still hope to make a Sherlockian jaunt this year. -Ed.

### AN EVENTFUL WEEKEND IN CHICAGO

On April 11-12, 2003, Chicago's Newberry Library and Dr. and Mrs. Fred Kittle combined with Chicago Sherlockians and Richard Lancelyn Green to provide an enjoyable weekend with a unique exhibit and two lectures about the life and works of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The Norwegian Explorers were represented by ten members from Minnesota and five others among the 400 people who attended the exhibit, Sherlockian dinner, tours and presentations. Fellow Minnesotans attending were Allen Mackler, Mike and Julie McKuras, Dr. Richard Sveum, John and Inez Bergquist, Gary Thaden, and Phil and Karen Bergem.

The Newberry Library opened in 1887, sharing its beginning with the appearance of Sherlock Holmes in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. The library is a beautiful Romanesque edifice in downtown Chicago which has evolved into a large reference source with a ten-story "book stack" building which provides its patrons access to materials of an extensive and catholic nature including The American West, Genealogy and Local History, the History of Music, and British Literature and History, to name a few. This Doyle exhibit presented Dr. Kittle's collection with the background of the Newberry's Victorian holdings.

Unique and rare items presented included a copy of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, several manuscripts (*The White Company*, "The Leather Funnel," *The Romance of Medicine*, a Doyle medical bill), many non-Sherlockian first editions, some with dust jackets, and a gem first

edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. In addition, we saw artwork by Richard and Charles Altamont Doyle, unusual posters, a silver cornucopia given to Doyle by Rudyard Kipling and, of medical and historical interest, Dr. Joseph Bell's amputation kit.

Viewing of the exhibit began on Tuesday, and on Friday "A Doyle Family Dinner" chaired by "Sir Hugo" Donald Terras welcomed 180 guests who assembled in the library for cocktails, toasts, (an especially interesting and appropriate one to Dr. Fred Kittle was given by Jon Lellenberg), a meal, and a superb illustrated slide lecture "Sidelights on Sherlock Holmes" was given by Richard Lancelyn Green. The evening ended with Vincent Starrett reading (via electronic medium) his poem "221B."

Saturday morning included a walking tour of the exhibit given by the curator Riva Feshbach and the public lecture by Richard Lancelyn Green entitled "Doyle and Holmes," which was filled with facts, references, photographs, and relationships likely unknown to most of the audience of 223 ~ not 221! Richard's two presentations skillfully integrated and highlighted the items in the exhibit while providing Victorian and Edwardian background.

The exhibit "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: *Beyond Sherlock Holmes*" continued to July 12, 2003 and featured additional presentations to complement the subject and impact of the exhibit. These programs included: Chicago Forensic Scientists on Arthur Conan Doyle and Crime Detection, Daniel Stashower on Arthur Conan Doyle and Houdini, Chicago Mystery Writers on "The Heirs of Conan Doyle," and Nicholas Basbanes on collectors and libraries ~ with comments about Dr. Fred Kittle.

This exhibit and the Newberry Library were worth a trip to Chicago even without an afternoon at Wrigley Field! ❖

C. Paul Martin, MD, BSI

## EXPLORERS AT LARGE (CONTINUED)

### THE SPECKLED BAND OF BOSTON ANNUAL DINNER

On April 25<sup>th</sup> I was honored to attend the 63<sup>rd</sup> annual dinner of the Speckled Band of Boston. This group, which meets only once a year, holds a special place among scion societies of the Baker Street Irregulars, having been the first such offshoot of the New York group. (The Five Orange Pips of Westchester County preceded the Speckled Band, but the Pips originally were founded as a separate group apart from the BSI.) In 1947 the Speckled Band published *The Second Cab*, the first major collection of Sherlockian scholarship by a scion society.



The dinner was held at the traditional meeting place of the Band: The Tavern Club, just off Boston Common. The Tavern Club is such an exclusive establishment that its outside wall does not display a street number, much less an identifying sign. Upon arriving at the supposed location a bit early, I was beginning to feel like Jabez Wilson in "The Red-Headed League" when he sought the new office of Mr. Duncan Ross, only to find that the address was actually that of a manufactory of artificial kneecaps. I fared better than Mr. Wilson, however, and soon noticed a banner flying from the flagpole on an inconspicuous structure proclaiming it the meeting place of The Speckled Band.

Upon entering, I greeted old acquaintances and introduced myself to new ones while taking in the surroundings. The Tavern Club fairly shouts "men's' club," with its dark-paneled walls, leather-covered chairs and shelves of timeworn books. The club was founded in 1884, with Oliver Wendell Holmes as one of the founders. Members over the years have included such other prominent Bostonians as John Singer Sargent (some of his canvases inconspicuously grace the walls), Owen Wister, William James, John F. Kennedy and Elliot

Richardson. The club provides a permanent home for the Speckled Band, housing its archive of relics such as a gasogene, tantalus, Persian slipper, coal scuttle, dark lantern and bent poker, as well as its "small but select library."

The dinner began with a long-established ritual, including the touching Speckled Band Prayer, Canonical toasts, and the Musgrave Ritual. A challenging quiz on Canonical geography followed. After dinner, the sixty or so members and guests migrated upstairs to a small theatre, where Tavern Club members can produce amateur theatricals of their own works. On this night, however, the theatre was the setting for the annual learned papers competition of the Speckled Band. This year's winner, chosen by the volume of applause, was new member Andrew McAleer, who was rewarded with a handsome inscribed silver bowl.

As the evening officially came to a close, songs of good cheer could be heard as diners drifted out into the warm spring night. Another year, another gathering of the Speckled Band of Boston.! ❖

John Bergquist



Seeking the unmarked meeting place, I felt as baffled as Jabez Wilson in "The Red-Headed League."

## EXPLORERS AT LARGE (CONTINUED)

### THE PHILADELPHIA STORY

It might not be an original title and the actors that starred in this movie – Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart and Katherine Hepburn – aren't with us anymore, but there is an active Sherlockian group meeting in this city that keeps the memory of the Master alive. I had the pleasure of attending the May 10 meeting of Mycroft's League in Philadelphia and had a wonderful time.

My daughter and I arrived in the city of Brotherly Love on May 9, and got to the Inn at the Union League just in time to participate in The Diogenes Luncheon. This is a good chance to get together with local and out of town Sherlockians who gather in preparation for the dinners that evening. (My husband always asks me if all Sherlockian events center around eating; the answer is yes.) That evening was the traditional Sons of the Copper Beeches dinner for male Sherlockians and for the distaff side, the "Bitches" of the Beeches dinner. Gideon Hill, who ran this affair along with Sue and Ben Vizoskie, is careful to note that he didn't name the women's group but despite that appellation, a good time was had by all.

Saturday morning began with a lovely walk around Christopher Morley's Philadelphia. We had a chance to see the various sites where Morley lived and worked. Everyone then jumped into cars for the trip to Haverford College, the alma mater of the three Morley brothers. What a gorgeous campus, particularly when spring in Philadelphia was so much more in evidence than here in Minnesota. We enjoyed a luncheon with a Sherlockian program featuring comments from Mike Whelan, Sue and Ben Vizoskie, Gideon Hill, Steve Rothman and Paul Singleton. We adjourned to the McGill Library at Haverford for a fabulous display of Sherlockian and Morley items. Drawing from the library's own holdings as well as items from private collectors, we had the chance to see the original manuscript of "The Adventure of the Second Stain," correspondence, galleys, books and photographs.

After viewing the display and the library, which includes the Christopher Morley Alcove, the formally planned events drew to a close. A number of attendees began the trip home, but several of us spent another evening in the city dining and enjoying ourselves. I think that might be a separate story for which the world is not yet prepared. ❖

Julie McKuras

### DISPATCH FROM OMAHA

On Saturday June 7, 2003, two brave Norwegian Explorers who are also members of the Maiwand Jezails answered the call of Commandant Richard Lesh to meet in a Conclave Extraordinaire in Omaha, Nebraska. The Maiwand Jezails, a scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars, celebrated 40 years since their first conclave. The conclaves are held about every three years and feature a festive atmosphere. *Explorations* editor John Bergquist and I made the road trip in six hours and, checking into the hotel, started to meet the other Sherlockians who answered the call. We dressed in black tie and headed for Warren Buffet's club overlooking downtown Omaha. The old fashioned all-male meeting is meant to be like the very early Baker Street Irregular Dinners. The meeting also celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of "The Adventure of the Creeping Man." After ritual toasts, a fine meal was served. The dinner menu was story associated, and the food was served with special labeled wine, port and cognac. After dinner there was a selection of cigars for those who chose to partake. The program was a "Reprise of Memorable Learned Papers and Foreign Dispatches," along with music from the Regimental Tenor, violin, guitar and, of course, bagpipes. The hope of the group is to one day erect a monument in Afghanistan to commemorate the Fatal Battle of Maiwand. This year every attendee went home with a medal composed of a red ribbon and a medallion featuring Sherlock with pipe on the front and the Creeping Man on the back. A photographer took a group picture. The lasting memory will be of Commandant Lesh in front of a Jezail rifle and Union Jack flag and seeing all the Sherlockians who made the trip from as far away as New York and California. ❖

Richard J. Sveum, MD, BSI, MJ



**"My husband  
always asks me if  
all Sherlockian  
events center  
around eating;  
the answer is  
yes."**

## INTERNET EXPLORATIONS

*"He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its Web..."*

A stethoscope is mentioned twice in the Canon. The first instance is in Chapter 4 of *The Sign of the Four* when Thaddeus Sholto asks Dr. Watson to check his heart. In the second instance, in 'A Scandal in Bohemia', Holmes notices Watson's stethoscope stored in his top hat. This second example has led to Sherlockian discussion about the practicality of keeping a stethoscope in one's hat and what type of stethoscope it might have been. At the time of the stories, there were two designs in use: the monaural and binaural types. The stethoscope was first developed in 1816 by the French doctor René Théophile Hyacinthe Laënnec. The initial design was a hollow wooden tube, typically 6" - 9" long, used with one ear and therefore known as a monaural stethoscope. By the mid 1800s an alternate design was developed using two ear pieces and logically known as a binaural (or biaural) stethoscope. Both designs were in widespread use in the late 1800s, so Dr. Watson could have had either type. A brief mention of the history of the stethoscope along with many good photos can be found at <http://www.antiquemed.com/tableofcon.htm>

As for the question of Victorian doctors keeping their stethoscopes in their hats, we can turn to Arthur Conan Doyle himself for examples. This practice is mentioned in several of his non-Sherlockian works: once in *Beyond the City* (Chapter 13) and in the stories 'Behind the Times' and 'A Medical Document' collected in *Round the Red Lamp*. These works are all online and can easily be found using [google.com](http://www.google.com).

Readers might be interested in a non-Sherlockian sidelight I found while researching this article. It involves that *other* Holmes, Oliver Wendell, Sr., who wrote a humorous poem titled 'The Stethoscope Song'. It can be found at <http://www.ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext05/ohp0310.txt>

Our esteemed editor, John Bergquist, has a Web page titled *Sherlockian Resources on the*

*Internet: A Survey*. Although it has been mentioned in this column in the past, the site has been recently updated and is well laid out. It is well worth another visit to review and as a jumping-off point for your own Internet Explorations. It can be found at <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~bergq003/holmes/>.



Phillip Bergem

### PUBLICATIONS OF NOTE

Available from Phillip Bergem is THE FAMILY AND RESIDENCES OF ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE (56-pages). The privately printed pamphlet fully lists birth, marriage and death dates of Arthur Conan Doyle and his parents, uncles, aunts, siblings, children and others. Additional information includes residence locations and dates, military service, gravestone inscriptions and other items of Doylean and even Sherlockian interest. It is the most complete listing of this information published and is a work of a fellow Norwegian explorer. For USA (\$22.50, postage included - \$20.00 without postage) or Canada (US\$23.00/Cdn\$34.00) order from Phil Bergem, 3829 172nd Avenue NW, Andover, MN, 55304-1820. Other locations may order through Rupert Books (£13.00 plus postage) at <http://www.rupert-books.co.uk>.

Another Doyle related booklet is available from Brian Pugh of the Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment. It is A CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE (New and Revised Edition), which contains 74 pages of text and photos and an 18 page index. Sections consist of the chronology (compiled from numerous sources), photos, a listing of family members, residences, a bibliography of Doyle's works and a summary of statues and plaques throughout the world dedicated to Doyle and Holmes. The price, with postage and packaging is \$29.50 (US cash) or £15.00 (cheque from UK bank) available from Brian W. Pugh, 20 Clare Road, Lewes, Sussex, BN7 1PN.



**"As for the question of Victorian doctors keeping their stethoscopes in their hats, we can turn to Arthur Conan Doyle himself for examples.."**

# SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

## THE NAVAL TREATY

“The Adventure of the Naval Treaty” was the topic of discussion for the March 22nd Study Group meeting at the Merriam Park Library in St. Paul. Phil Bergem organized and led the meeting. A first order of business was to acknowledge an article entitled “The Game’s Afoot,” by Judy Woodward, which appeared in the 50th Anniversary edition of the weekly *Villager* newspaper. The article featured quotations from members of the Norwegian Explorers who reside in St. Paul.

“The Naval Treaty” first appeared in the October and November 1893 *Strand* and in *Harper’s* in the U.S. The tale involves an old acquaintance of Dr. Watson’s named Percy Phelps. Watson’s classmates had enjoyed picking on young Phelps back in school, but Phelps didn’t seem to hold it against Dr. Watson. Phelps had need of Sherlock Holmes’s help and prevailed upon Watson to engage the services of Holmes. Phelps was in very poor health, having suffered “brain fever” after a shocking event: he had managed to lose a government treaty that might have plunged Europe into a war had its contents been divulged. He had been bedridden for the last ten weeks, yet the treaty had not surfaced. Holmes accepted the case, and before long managed to present Percy with a surprise breakfast platter.

“Brain fever” is a common malady in the Canon, yet our medical experts advised us that there is no such affliction, although some real diseases may resemble it. Though brandy was dispensed, it was not effective in this case. Phelps was nursed by Annie Harrison, his fiancée. Holmes declares Miss Harrison to be “a woman of rare character” after studying her handwriting. Holmes later places Phelps’s fate entirely in her care when he leaves her to guard the room where the treaty was hidden. It would be a stretch to imply that Holmes was romantically taken by Miss Harrison, but she received



After the May session, the Study Group recessed for the Summer.

more credit from him than did nearly all other women of the Canon.

Our group enjoyed the story and felt that it was very well conceived and written. Red herrings were placed in just the right places. It was felt that Holmes was possibly a bit rude in springing his “surprise” on the weakened Percy. On the other hand it was felt that Percy’s incessant whining and lack of confidence invited this. Some felt

that Percy was lacking in some of the classic traits of the detective story victim, but he was honest, loyal, and possibly wealthy, or at least well bred.

It was noted that Percy’s diagram appeared to be labeled in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s handwriting, while most of us expected it to be written in Dr. Watson’s hand. The most unusual passage in the story has our usually stoic Sherlock Holmes taking a stalk of moss rose in his hand and declaring, “There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion.... It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers.” None of us can say for sure what Holmes meant by this, but his words are well contemplated on a bright, warm, spring day.

If you are interested in joining our discussions, please attend one of our meetings, which are usually held on the third Saturday of the month at 2:00 PM. ❖

Charles Clifford



**“It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers.”**

## SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (CONTINUED)

### THE FINAL PROBLEM

The Shriners' Children's Hospital in Minneapolis was the April 19th site for the Study Group's discussion of "The Adventure of the Final Problem." Fifteen Sherlockian devotees were in attendance. Geographer Karen Murdock, who chaired the meeting, chose the location because it is at the geographic center of Minneapolis-St. Paul and thus does not demand an overly long commute from any participants. The weather outside was cool and damp, but the mood indoors was cheerful. Given the story, it was an ideal time for show and tell, and several maps were passed around the tables. A topic discussed was Ronald A. Knox's 1912 classic "Studies in the Literature of Sherlock Holmes," in which Knox named eleven common parts of a classic Sherlock Holmes story.

"The Final Problem" is one of the best known of the Canon's short stories. It is actually a two-part story, but readers were not able to find this out for ten years. The reading public was quite unhappy with the first part's ending and, thankfully, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle eventually relented and wrote the second part, which became "The Adventure of the Empty House." We, a century later, cannot feel the loss that the readers of the 19th century experienced, but we can sympathize. Mention was made of Conan Doyle's visit to the Reichenbach Falls some years before the events of the tale. Other notable visits were made by members of the Norwegian Explorers in the 1950's, leading up to the placement of a commemorative plaque on behalf of the Explorers and the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

Discussion touched on similarities to other figures who came back from near death. It was felt that Sherlock's return was quite significant in his becoming a "cult figure." This was due to the number of additional stories that appeared, as well as his becoming almost a "super hero." His escape from death, though, was quite by natural means, not by some super-

human act. We did, of course, wonder why authorities, and the public readership, were willing to accept that both Holmes and Moriarty had died, when no bodies had been recovered. Speculation was voiced, that Professor Moriarty might not even have died!

The Final Problem is more of a thriller than a detective story. Dr. Watson does the only detection, when he follows traces of the struggle to the cliff – another case of Watson's "jumping to conclusions." We wondered about the elaborate departure from London and the chase across the continent. Holmes obviously knew that Moriarty would not be thrown off the scent, but he apparently felt that he needed to make it look as if he were not setting a trap. It seems likely that Colonel Moran might have easily shot Holmes at Reichenbach Falls, but some argue as to whether or not he was there. Three years on the run did not convince Moriarty's second in command of Holmes' death, however. Speculation was made as to Holmes's and Moriarty's last thoughts as they went over the cliff. Discussion turned to movies that involved death – and going over falls. Oh, and what did Mrs. Watson have to say about the extended holiday on the Continent? Did she know where Watson and Holmes were? Did Moriarty monitor their communications? We may never have definitive answers to these questions, but the Study Group is more than happy to speculate. ❖

Charles Clifford



**"We cannot feel the loss that readers of the 19th century experienced, but we can sympathize."**

## SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (CONTINUED)

### THE EMPTY HOUSE

The Explorers Study Group met May 17, 2003 at the University Club in Saint Paul for a lively discussion of “The Adventure of the Empty House” led by John Bergquist. Sixteen Explorers were present, including new members Arlene Kase and Michael Centrella.

Wade Manthie noted the many changes that seem to have taken place in Sherlock Holmes after his return. Phil Bergem noted that a three-year hiatus would make any person a changed person. Steve Miller thought that Holmes had learned humility from talking to the lama-or maybe the llama-in the Himalayas.

Karen Murdock pointed out that EMPT is “our” story-the story from which The Norwegian Explorers takes its name and pointed out that our discussing it in 2003 was appropriate since this is the centenary year of the story. Julie McKuras provided a little history of the Explorers and explained how she and Dick Sveum deduced that Theodore C. Blegen had been the founding father who had named the scion. She said, however, that the name “Siger” was *not* Norwegian.

Doris Skalstad pointed out that we were meeting on a Norwegian holiday, Syttende Mai, Norwegian Constitution Day, and we all noted the plethora of Scandinavian names on Explorers nametags around the table: Bergem, Bergstrom, Bergquist, Sveum, Skalstad.

Phil introduced his theory that the confusion of “lama” with “llama” and “Montpelier” with “Montpellier” in EMPT was caused by what he called “the migrating ‘L’.”

Dick noted that The Great Hiatus was the biggest excuse for Sherlockian pastiches ever dreamed up.



Art Bergstrom introduced visual aids: bullets, air gun pellets, and a piece of half-inch sheetrock which had been penetrated by the pellets from an air gun (Phil asked if Art had “VR” in pock marks on the wall of his home, but Art admitted that he did not). Art also had a diagram of the angle of the shot that Col. Moran must have made to try to kill Holmes.

Steve Miller pointed out that Canonical people go bad in India – it’s the heat.

There was some discussion of where Camden House might be – was it north or south of Marylebone Road? John showed diagrams, photos and articles arguing for various candidates.

Dick introduced the theory that the “sad bereavement” Watson mentions in EMPT was the loss of Holmes – a view to which Doris Marquit took strong exception. John mentioned that Christopher Morley had speculated that the bereavement was Watson’s loss of his beloved Mary through separation rather than through death.

Reassured that Holmes had made it safely out of the abyss of Reichenbach, the Study Group adjourned for the summer, giving everyone plenty of time to re-read *The Hound of the Baskervilles* before our next meeting in September. ❖

Karen Murdock



“Canonical people go bad in India – it’s the heat..”

– Steve Miller

## SHERLOCK HOLMES IN FOREST LAKE

### A REVIEW

**A**h! The chance to see a live performance of the Gillette/Doyle play, *Sherlock Holmes*. The Masquers Theatre Company, a community theatre operation in Forest Lake, Minnesota, staged the play seven times over two weekends this past July. Presented in the Forest Lake High School auditorium, which holds about 600 people, *Sherlock Holmes* lasted 3 ¾ hours including a ¼ hour intermission.

The story, written by William Gillette and based on Doyle's stories, involves incriminating letters written by a European prince to an English girl he betrayed. The girl's sister holds the letters, and Professor Moriarty uses the letters to stop Sherlock Holmes from interfering with Moriarty's plans. The play was first staged in upstate New York in 1899 and titled, *Sherlock Holmes - A Drama in Four Acts*. William Gillette went on to portray Holmes in productions of the play over a remarkable span of 33 years.

Masquers Theatre Company started their community theatre operation in 1977 and produces three plays per year. This year *Sherlock Holmes* shares the stage with *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and *The King and I*. Joe Hendren, the Artistic and Technical Director, followed the original Gillette play with four acts and the love interest between Holmes and the sister.

Brian Sherman starred as Sherlock Holmes. Mr. Sherman's performance was slow, ponderous — and a couple of times he lost his place in the script. He did not project the force of character or voice to pull off the role. James Patrick Barone played Dr. Watson to good effect, although as somewhat of a bumbler. Matt Jonasen as Sidney Prince and Richard Carlson as Alf Bassick were much too young for their roles. In an interesting bit of gender-neutral

casting, Billy was adequately played by a young girl, Mary Shaw. But, the true star was the bad guy, Professor Moriarty, played by Mary Shaw's father, Mike Shaw. A strong voice, an evil laugh, and great stage presence helped him carry off his character. Oh, that the balance of the cast were so strong.

The director included the controversial cocaine scene from Gillette's original production. Masquers Theatre Company should be congratulated for not excluding this realistic episode, even though the execution was only passable.

Despite 12 feet of space between the stage and the audience specifically set up for a live pit orchestra; the music (original music by Robert Maderich II) was prerecorded. The Minneapolis Southwest High School quartet should have spent more time in the recording studio.

The cast, in their defense, had to put up with a less than stellar set. A door that pulled off it hinges in the last act had some audience members snickering. In addition, the director had the actors going up a set of stairs to an onstage second floor exit. Unfortunately the stairs creaked — loudly. Every sixty seconds someone ran up or down the stairs and drowned out their own or someone else's dialogue.

In the final analysis, was it a worthwhile production? Was it worth the forty-minute drive there and back, \$10 per ticket and the time? I was glad I was able to see a live production of Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes*, and Moriarty was very good. But in the end, I have seen high school productions that were far superior. ❖

Gary Thaden



**"A strong voice, an evil laugh, and great stage presence made for a good Moriarty. Oh, that the balance of the cast were so strong."**



## WHERE THE DEER AND THE ANTELOPE PLAY: SHERLOCK HOLMES AND HOPALONG CASSIDY



**“Holmes, Holmes  
on the range” ...  
the great  
detective’s  
shadow stretches  
all the way from  
foggy Baker  
Street to the  
sunny American  
West.**

Certain visual icons invoke Sherlock Holmes in the public eye whether or not the detective himself is present. The deerstalker cap, the curved meerschaum pipe, and the magnifying glass in hand symbolically, if not canonically, denote Holmes. These identifying objects appear with great regularity in advertisements, movies, and scion society gatherings. Hence, when Harpo Marx grabbed a magnifying glass and donned a deerstalker, as he did in *Duck Soup*, we know that some kind of game is afoot. Lou Costello did a similar schtick on occasion, as did Laurel and Hardy and the redoubtable Three Stooges.

The merits of these appearances are generally dubious, though they are sometimes humorous. Those visual icons establish a tenuous connection with the ubiquitous Holmes, and the visual message suggests that some kind of detective tomfoolery is in progress. While such references to Holmes often occur in movies, they rarely appear in westerns, a genre not usually associated with Sherlock Holmes.

Yet, late night television did evoke Holmes on the range on at least one occasion. In 1941 Paramount Pictures released *Twilight on the Trail*, starring William Boyd as Hopalong Cassidy. Assisted by Brad King as Johnny Nelson and Andy Clyde as California, Boyd did his usual competent job at rounding up a band of cattle rustlers who were harassing an old friend.

However, in order to throw the gang off their guard, Hopalong, Johnny, and California arrive at the ranch acting like a trio of effete English sleuths. As they debark from the stagecoach, they mask their real competence by wearing effected clothing and speaking in painful English accents. “We are three detectives,” they lisp in order to instill a false confidence in the mind of any desperado who may be present. “We never fail.”

One member of the trio, California, determinedly tries to throw evil doers off the scent by puffing on a meerschaum and sporting

a loose fitting deerstalker. He completes the comedic reference to Sherlock Holmes by inspecting everything in sight with an outsized magnifying glass. At one point this ersatz Holmes inspects the front end of a horse and draws Hopalong’s gravelly question, “What’re ya lookin’ for?”

“Clues,” growls the faux Sherlock. “Never Mind the clues, professor, they can wait,” mutters Cassidy, as he enter the bunkhouse. Later, tossing the deerstalker on the bunk, California/Holmes grumbles, “I’ll sure be glad when this is over – me using those high falutin’ English words...don’t know the meaning of half of them.” Soon enough the timid trio drop their detective disguises and the action picks up. Before long the bumbling sleuth with pipe and magnifying glass becomes a competent cowboy on horseback with six shooter.

On the whole, these early scenes in *Twilight on the Trail* are not an especially memorable addition to the legend of Sherlock Holmes. But this brief bit of burlesque does indicate how far the great detective’s shadow stretched – all the way from foggy Baker Street to the sunny American West. It is intriguing to see how, even in jest, one legend can be linked with another – after all, Hopalong Cassidy had a good run in his day. Moreover, it gives one pause to realize that at the same time Andy Clyde donned his deerstalker at Paramount, over at Universal Pictures Basil Rathbone was trying one on for size for the first of his dozen Holmes movies for Universal, the first of which, in 1942, was *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*. In one of those productions, *Sherlock Holmes in Washington*, the detective actually made it to the eastern part of the United States.

But it was only in the company of Hopalong Cassidy that the great detective made it, albeit briefly and irreverently, to the American west. There, for a few brief moments, it is possible to see, where seldom is heard a discouraging word, Holmes, Holmes on the range. ❖

Robert Brusic



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