

The Medical Bulletin

Volume 5, Number 2

June 1979

TRANSCRIBER'S
TRIFLES



THE PATIENTS AFOOT

Mary Ake, Consultant to the Medical Board, will be visiting the Orient this summer. On her agenda is a visit with Japanese Sherlockians and a tour of China, no doubt to open a new Scion Society. When asked about her bunny suit, Ms. Ake declined to comment. She does plan a donation to the Children's Museum, however, upon her return.

SPRING FLING

The weather couldn't have been better for our Spring Fling at the Littleton Museum, Sunday, June 3rd. The punch was set up under a huge tree which boasted a trunk measuring 25 feet in circumference and provided shade all afternoon.

A brief, but intense croquet game preceded the puppet show; the competitors delighted in sending each other's balls into orbit. That was a fitting introduction to the main event - a Punch and Judy show using a traditional script. Mel Reum of the Mile Hi Puppeteers Guild explained that she uses all authentic scripts, used for centuries, as well as the 16 stock characters (two of which are reserved for adult audiences, the hangman and Polly, who is X-rated). The original presentation of Punch and Judy was a transplant from Italy, derived from Punchinello - a fat, short, humpbacked buffoon.

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FROM THE CHIEF SURGEON

by David Poole

The spring meeting of the Patients was held June 3, and a report is included in this issue of the BULLETIN.

Two other events are planned for the Patients this summer.

The first is a Sherlock Holmes play, The Crucifer of Blood, which will be performed at Elitch Gardens Theatre during July. A block of 40 seats has been reserved for the Saturday matinee performance, July 14. The plot of the play was inspired by the novel, The Sign of Four.

The second event will be our September meeting to celebrate Dr. Watson's birthday. It will be held at the Heritage Square Opera House on Saturday, September 1. We have 50 seats reserved for that evening. The play is very loosely adapted from Sherlock Holmes by William Gillette. The play was also performed by HSOH in 1976, during the run of the same (well, not quite) Gillette play at the Auditorium Theater which starred Leonard Nimoy. I hope to see you at these performances.

Reservation forms which give times, costs, deadlines, and other information about the two plays are included on a separate sheet enclosed with this BULLETIN. Guests are welcome. Reservations will be filled on a first come first served basis.

Continued from Medical Bulletin
Volume 5, Number 1

(Based on a Clinical lecture at Guy's Hospital, and a Paper read to the Abernethian Society, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.)

Editor's note: We continue reprinting Dr. Campbell's 1934 article on the medical knowledge of Dr. Watson. Part two of the series will conclude in this issue of the MEDICAL BULLETIN. Part one appeared in Volume 3, No. 4 (1977) and Volume 4, No. 1 (1978). We wish again to thank Michael Bourne, Editor of Guy's Hospital Gazette, for permission to reprint these articles.

PHARMACOLOGY

There are so many references to this subject that only some of them can be included. Watson makes frequent mention of many of the common drugs, especially perhaps opium and cocaine, and displayed a considerable knowledge of their use, though some of the more out-of-the-way facts may have been learnt from Holmes, who was well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally (Study in Scarlet).

Watson describes the yellow pasty face, drooping lids, and pin-point pupils of Isa Whitney sitting all muddled in a chair, the wreck and ruin of a noble man; after reading De Quincey's work he had started to drench his tobacco with laudanum and had become an addict to opium and an object of mingled horror and pity to his friends and relatives. It was while rescuing him from the Wapping opium den so graphically described by Watson that he met Holmes and was embarked on the Adventure of the Man with the Twisted Lip.

When powdered opium was used by John Straker to drug his stable boy so that he could get into the stable at night to maim "Silver Blaze," Holmes correctly deduced that the opium must have been given by someone who had also arranged for the lad to have curry for supper, as

this was just the dish to disguise its taste. When it was used by ex-President Don Murillo to drug his governess, whom he wished to carry off with him, Watson noticed her head hanging listlessly on her breast, and recognised that she had been drugged with opium as the pupils were dark dots in the centre of the broad grey iris (Wisteria Lodge).

We do not hear of opium being used medically, but paregoric was recommended for asthma and bronchitis, and Watson was able to inject morphia when Baron Gruner had vitriol thrown at him and when Professor Presbury was severely bitten by his dog (The Illustrious Client and The Creeping Man), but unfortunately he was not present to give it when it was begged for in The Lion's Mane. It is interesting as showing the increasing fashion for injections that all these episodes occurred relatively late-in 1902, 1903, and 1907, while the references to opium were earlier.

When Holmes made use of belladonna to help in simulating a dangerous attack of fever, Watson described how his eyes had the brightness of fever with a hectic flush on either cheek, but it was due to starvation and belladonna and rouge; Watson's mistake was only pardonable because he was given no chance of coming near and detecting that there was no rise of temperature or pulse rate (The Dying Detective). The use of belladonna for its effect on the eyes has sometimes its devotees even in hospital circles.

Holmes's use of cocaine is too well known to elaborate. At first it was only occasional, but by 1888 (The Sign of Four) it had become a regular habit. Watson no doubt realised the immediate danger as well as the risk of addiction when he read an article in the British Medical Journal of October 30th, 1886, describing a case where the injection of 12 minims of a 10 per cent. solution under the skin had been followed in three minutes by a syncopal attack with twitching of the face and a cold clammy perspiration-in fact, all the appearances of impending death. We are not told how much cocaine Holmes used, but when Watson was led to remonstrate about its use he was injecting a 7 per cent solution three times a day;

even 5 minims of this would be above the maximum dose recommended in the British Pharmacopæia.

In the following year, perhaps because of Watson's remonstrances, he was only using it from time to time (The Scandal in Bohemia and The Man with the Twisted Lip). After that we hear no more of it till 1897, and even this is an uncertain reference, for we read that Holmes's iron constitution had given way in the face of constant hard work of a most exacting kind, aggravated, perhaps, by occasional indiscretions of his own. One cannot help admiring the ability of Dr. Moore Agar, of Harley Street, who was able to prevail on Holmes to take a complete rest.

To the modern readers who know the horror with which cocaine addicts are regarded, it must seem strange that Holmes should ever have indulged, but the explanation lies, I think, in the following facts about its history: Though the use of cocaine had been known in Mexico since the 12th century and extended by Pizarro's conquest of Peru in 1542 and brought to Europe in 1750, it did not become well known in medical circles till its use by the Viennese oculist Koller in 1884, so that when Holmes began to use it there had hardly been time to realise its disastrous after-effects in Europeans; and he hoped, no doubt, to find it of great advantage in stimulating his brain and helping him to endure fatigue as the Indians of the Andes had for so many centuries. His ability to give it up when he realised its dangers after he had acquired the habit firmly shows the stuff of which Holmes was made.

Although the hypodermic syringe had been introduced into medicine a generation before by the French surgeon Pravaz, it seems to have become increasingly popular about this time, and we read in the Lancet of 1887 that "the growing practice of giving and taking hypodermic injections needs to be stopped. The instrument makers could tell a startling tale of the number of hypodermic syringes sold to the public in a year." We can only hope that the publicity Watson gave to the method did no further harm.

There are many references to vegetable alkaloids of the convulsive group - in-

deed, it seems to have been a favourite subject of Watson. Gelsemium, from the root of the yellow jasmine, is one of these poisons which produce convulsions, and it seems probable that he was familiar with a paper by A.C. Doyle on the action of gelsemium sempervirens in the British Medical Journal of 1879, and therefore specially interested in the cases where similar poisons were used.

The recommendation of strychnine in large doses as a sedative is sometimes quoted as evidence of Watson's ignorance, but this is a mistake; for the episode is to illustrate the confusion into which he had been thrown by falling in love with Miss Morstan: Watson could almost have been forgiven if he actually had given the injection to Thaddeus Sholto, who must have been very trying in the cab on that journey.

Later the same evening when his brother Bartholomew was shot with the poisoned dart and found with the risus sardonicus on his face and with his muscles in a state of extreme contraction, far exceeding the usual rigor mortis, Watson rightly deduced that it was some strychnine-like substance which would produce tetanic contractions; probably it was curare, which is used by South American natives on their arrows, or some similar substance used by the Andaman islanders.

Curare is mentioned by name as the poison used by the small boy on his half-brother and sucked out by his devoted mother. Holmes suspected something of the sort even before he found the walls of the house hung with South American weapons; when he saw the dog dragging its legs with a limp he quickly realised that curare had been injected with some pointed instrument - probably one of the arrows - and that the boy had just practised on the dog and produced a partial paralysis, though the vet. had only been able to diagnose spinal meningitis. (The Sussex Vampire).

It is not so easy to know what Jefferson Hope gave to Drebber for the crucial choice of the two pills - one fatal and one harmless. The dying terrier on which it was tested gave a convulsive shiver in every limb and lay as rigid and lifeless as if it had been struck by lightning. Jefferson Hope had worked in America in a laboratory, and had taken some South American arrow poison one day when the professor had been

lecturing on alkaloids, and has worked it up into a small pill. This might suggest surare again, but it is only poisonous when injected, and harmless when taken by mouth.

We are not told what poison was used by the professor's wife (The Golden Pince-Nez) before she left her hiding-place in the cupboard - possibly coniine, the alkaloid of hemlock, which was also used by Socrates, for, like him, she maintained control of her speech and faculties till the last moment. Coniine is almost without effect on the cerebrum, and causes death by respiratory paralysis.

Another poison mentioned is prussic acid, but Holmes persuaded the "Veiled Lodger" not to take it, and knew that he had been successful when she sent him her supply by post the next day.

Other useful drugs are mentioned less often than poisons, and reference has been made already to the use of quinine in the treatment of malaria. Amyl nitrite was used for catalepsy (The Resident Patient); it is better known for its value in angina pectoris, for which it was introduced in 1867 by Lauder Brunton when he was still a house-physician, but it is still recommended in some modern books as of use in prolonged epileptic attacks, so its use for catalepsy was quite reasonable.

Turning to other chemicals with pharmacological actions, chloroform is mentioned several times. It was used to overpower Mrs. Maberly when her house, the Three Gables, was broken into, and by Holmes when he was masquerading as an Irish-American spy for the German Von Bork (His Last Bow); its most interesting use was in attempting to kill Lady Frances Colefax in the coffin, "which took longer being out of the ordinary," because it was made to hold two. Watson, as always, was prompt in an emergency, and undoubtedly saved her life, his use of artificial respiration probably being more efficacious than the injection of ether which he gave.

Another occasion when Watson's prompt measures were instrumental in saving life was when they found Paul Kratides and the Greek Interpreter overcome by carbon monoxide poisoning from the fumes of charcoal.

There was a dull blue flame from the charcoal brazier and a horrible poisonous exhalation which set them gasping and coughing. After opening the windows they dragged out the two victims. Both were blue-lipped and insensible, with swollen congested faces and protruding eyes. Kratides was too far gone for their aid, but Melas still lived, and in less than an hour, with the aid of ammonia and (as usual) brandy, Watson had the satisfaction of seeing him open his eyes and of knowing that he had been drawn back from that dark valley in which all paths meet. His recovery was, perhaps, rather quick considering that the exposure had killed Kratides, but the latter was already in a poor state of health, so the former would naturally stand it better.

The Retired Colourman also, made use of gas to kill his wife and her lover after he had enticed them into his strong room, and here also death would be due to carbon monoxide poisoning. It is not often used for murder, or, if it is, is not often detected; but during the last twenty or thirty years has become an increasingly common method of suicide.

As at the end of a long day, we turn expectantly to a pipe, it is pleasant to turn from these dangerous poisons to two more harmless alkaloids, caffeine and nicotine - the active principles of coffee and tobacco. Watson and Holmes were keen smokers, and their consumption must have been considerable.

"You don't mind the smell of strong tobacco I hope," said Sherlock Holmes, when sharing the Baker Street lodgings was being discussed.

"I always smoke 'ship's' myself," Watson answered.

"That's good enough," and so the famous partnership began. They would have approved of R. L. Stevenson's advice that no woman should marry a non-smoker.

Both generally smoked a pipe, though they often indulged in a cigar, especially after dinner when celebrating the successful finish of a case. Occasionally we hear of Holmes smoking a cigarette (The Scandal in Bohemia, The Final Problem, and the Bos-

combe Valley Tragedy); they were only then becoming really popular, though they had spread to England after the Crimean War. Watson must have been a more regular cigarette-smoker, for Holmes says that he always bought them at Bradley's in Oxford Street, and recognized him in the hut on Dartmoor by the stub with their name on, which had been thrown away outside.

Holmes probably smoked an ounce of tobacco a day; it makes one envious in these days to read of tobacco at fourpence an ounce, for he remarked that at eightpence an ounce it was a luxury since good tobacco could be bought at half the price (The Yellow Face). Holmes habitually smoked a pipe before breakfast, and, considering what it was composed of, he must have acquired considerable tolerance - his admirers will remember its composition and will forgive the foible of a great man, but others might be more squeamish, so I will only refer to the story (The Engineer's Thumb).

From the Hound of the Baskervilles we know that he sometimes bought a pound of the strongest shag all at once, which suggests a heavy smoker, and as he consumed an ounce of tobacco during one all-night sitting (The Man with a Twisted Lip) and another time three pipes in fifty minutes (The Red-Headed League), our estimate can hardly be excessive. We are less sure about Watson, but he certainly indulged in a comforting last pipe before going to bed (The Crooked Man).

Holmes was aware of the curious double action of nicotine (which has been supported by a recent American investigation into its effect on students) of stimulating the brain and nervous system under many conditions, but soothing them when they are already over-excited. Holmes generally used it for the former purpose, but Jefferson Hope illustrated the latter use when he was so excited at having Drebber safely in his cab that he feared that his aneurism might burst.

The effect of caffeine is not like this, for it is always stimulating. Watson quotes cases where this was the effect

desired, as in The Naval Treaty, and cases where it was an unwanted aftereffect - as in The Musgrave Ritual, when Musgrave could not sleep at night because of it and came downstairs, and found the butler in the study with his papers.

We must not forget the famous monograph of Holmes, "Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of the Various Tobaccos," in which he enumerated 140 forms of cigar, cigarettes, and pipe tobacco, with coloured plates illustrating the difference in the ash (The Sign of Four and The Boscombe Valley Mystery). Neither he nor Watson would have approved of a book which was published in New York in 1916: "The Tobacco Habit Easily Conquered; How to do it agreeably without Drugs; with an Appendix on Tobacco the Destroyer."

To be continued next issue. This was the third installment, but part two of the original article.

ERRATUM

Please correct the phone number for our Bursar (Treasurer) on the first page of the membership roster. It should be John Stephenson 795-0693.

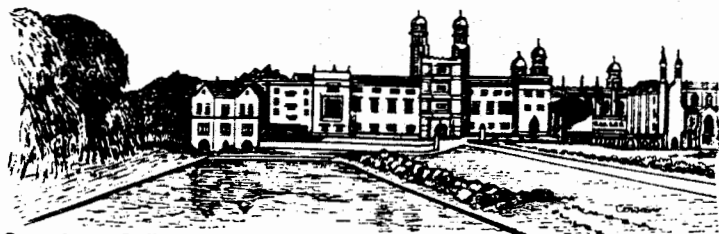
TRIFLES ...

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The character of Punch was physically refined (made less grotesque) and became even more popular with Victorian audiences than he was in Italy. We can only speculate on the psychological release provided by Punch's "anti-social" behavior. To add to our enjoyment, young people visiting the museum were invited to join the audience. Much of the "color" depends on audience participation, and the "little cherubs" soon supported Punch with squeals of "throw him out the window."

A few stalwarts (the Boulder contingent) continued to frolic in the park through the afternoon. Now we know how to get a boomerang out of the trees.

Charlene Schnelker



Stonyhurst College

STONYHURST COLLEGE REVISITED

by
David Pearson

While reading Charles Higham's biography, The Adventures of Conan Doyle, I grew interested in Stonyhurst College, the Catholic "public" school CD attended during adolescence. While in England last summer I found myself within easy driving distance of Stonyhurst and decided to pay the place a visit.

Arriving early one fine summer morning I was immediately impressed by the sight of what looked to be a mellow old Jacobean mansion at the end of a long, straight driveway bordered by ornamental ponds. Putting aside qualms occasioned by such magnificence, which included turrets originally glimpsed through the trees, I parked my car near the college church and accosted a strolling priest. When I stated my interest in being shown around Stonyhurst, he escorted me, via the church, to the office of Father Magill, headmaster.

Father Magill, as bluff and good-natured as Conan Doyle himself, was amused that I represented a BSI scion. After all, everyone must surely know that Doyle's early religious crisis resulted in his leaving Catholicism forever. "We get a lot of Americans here asking questions about Gerard Manley Hopkins (also a Stonyhurst alumnus) but Conan Doyle--not so often," he said. Without further ado he showed me a ledger containing typewritten names of former pupils, and there I saw it: "Arthur Conan Doyle--September 15, 1868--August 3, 1875."

Father Magill then introduced me to Father Macadam, a spare, quizzical, elderly cleric who agreed to give me the Grand Tour. This gentleman turned out to be quiet but scholarly but at the same time possessed of remarkable hidden sources of

strength and a keen wit. I enjoyed his society as we rambled over the old buildings and he filled me in on the history of Stonyhurst.

Stonyhurst College is one of the two most venerable Catholic "prep" schools in England. The other is Ambleforth, also in Lancashire. Stonyhurst is a lineal descendant of the Jesuit college originally founded at Saint-Omer (1593) which moved

perforce to Bruges in 1762 and to Liege in 1773. Begun as a private home in 1594, the buildings and surrounding estate were given to the brothers by one Thomas Weld, an English cardinal whose family had a penchant for affording shelter to emigrés of the French Revolution.

Father Macadam was exceedingly good about explaining which portions of Stonyhurst would be known to Conan Doyle and which had been added since his student days. The room that stands out in memory is the Great Hall, which served as entrance hall in the private home era and dining room for CD's contemporaries. Doyle didn't know the present school extension, begun in 1880, which took ten years to build to match the existing structure and complete the now even proportions. The facade or the main building is 200 yards long.

In answer to my question about the over-all size of the estate, Father Macadam told me that Stonyhurst comprises 4000 acres, most of which is rented farmland. We strolled out on the lawn at the rear and I beheld the cricket pitch. Father Macadam said that the scene here had changed little in the past century or so. We gazed off east southeast at a series of picturesque terraces extending for a quarter of a mile. "This is a prospect Conan Doyle would have admired" remarked my guide. "And the playing fields are much as they were in his day." I was reminded of the very vigorous athletics which still form an important part of the Stonyhurst curriculum, and I could picture CD exerting himself joyfully under that blazing June sun.

Returning indoors, we discussed the matter of curriculum. In the nineteenth

century there was a tremendous emphasis on the humanities, by which in those days was meant classical Latin and Greek. Today the name is kept, but, as one would expect, the content is vastly different. Music is studied, and there is a dramatic society. Stonyhurst boasts four orchestras, including a chamber group which tours abroad playing secular as well as sacred selections. Father Macadam told me that violin was certainly offered in CD's day, and suggested that he may have taken it. An interesting idea to a Sherlockian, but I don't yet know the answer.

The Jesuits have always "gone in for" science, and Stonyhurst has a well-equipped laboratory as well as a meteorological observatory. I understood the latter to be off limits to pupils during the Doyle years. When I asked about teaching staff, Father Macadam told me that in CD's day there were no laymen on the faculty except for five or six specialists to about 25 priests. Today priests are outnumbered over two to one, with a ratio of 15 priests to 35 laymen.

Whereas the number of students at Stonyhurst never used to be more than 300-350, now there are 500 of them, aged 13-18, including five girls. (Father Macadam had little to say on that subject!) One hundred students leave each year, frequently bound for the larger English universities.

According to Charles Higham, writing of Conan Doyle's career there, "Life (at Stonyhurst) can only be described as a Survival course."¹ He even refers to the public school as a kind of "Dickensian hell."² Nonetheless, CD endured its spartan lifestyle for seven years. Certainly he got along well with the other boys; he was acknowledged by them as a leader in various devilish escapades as well as a gifted raconteur on rainy afternoons. Undoubtedly he was admired for his prowess on the playing fields.

¹The Adventures of Conan Doyle, Charles Higham, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976, page 29.

²IBID., page 30.

I asked Father Macadam about holidays, since I had read that Doyle was upset over not getting a Christmas vacation. It appears that whereas in the 1870's the boys were only allowed the month of August off, nowadays they have seven holidays a year--including Christmas--plus a half-term of five days. As for a typical scholar's day, my guide admitted cheerfully that things are much less grueling in the 20th century. When Doyle was enrolled the boys would arise at 5:30 and go immediately to their studies followed by mass--all this before breakfast! After lunch they would play briefly and then return to school: a mid-afternoon break would be followed by a long study period in a large hall designed for the purpose but no longer there. Next would come a short chapel service, then supper from 7:00 to 7:30. In the evening the older lads would be given the option of either more study or recreation until evening prayers. After these prayers came a

strictly enforced lights out at 9:30, with silence until the breakfast grace.

Coming to the end of a pleasant hour, I bade the kindly Father Macadam farewell and drove back into the tiny Stonyhurst village, which existed centuries before the school. Nobody seemed to know the exact locations of Dick's or Ravelry's, the local shops where, according to Higham, CD used to buy "tuck" and tobacco on the sly. But all the same I could just imagine the high-spirited youth doing so. His benevolent shade smiled on me as I drank a warm Coca-Cola and looked back at the college turrets through the surrounding trees. "A hamlet can have a pub, but it only becomes a village when it has a church." So said Father Macadam, and the church here was, of course, Catholic. Musing once more on Doyle's heresy and my own brashness in representing him to the Jesuits, I hoped--as I drove away toward Preston--that old hatchets have been long since buried by both sides!



JAS



NEW SHERLOCKIAN GAME

A new board game, 221-B Baker Street, The Master Detective, is now available at toy and department stores or by mail from: John N. Hansen Co, Inc. 2861 La Cresta Ave. Anaheim, CA 82806

"Chase clues through the streets of London and be the first to put it all together - killer, weapon, motive. 20 baffling cases that get more and more difficult. Additional cases available. For 2 - 8 sleuths."

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Set #2(21 - 40)cases 3.00
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(please add them to your roster)

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