

Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients

A Scion Society of The Baker Street Irregulars

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"His medical practice had been so punctuated by scandals that he had practically abandoned the practice the better to apply himself to the scandals."

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Scratch Pad

SHERLOCK LIVES! by Garrett Ray

I grew up with a book in front of my eyes.

My parents had a large library of classics, filling the wall next to our living room fireplace.

A complete set of Sherlock Holmes' mysteries was part of that inviting collection and I enjoyed many of the novels during junior high and high school.

Then I got "serious". I began reading textbooks and other things I thought I ought to read, instead of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's delightful tales of the master detective.

LAST SUNDAY NIGHT, I rediscovered Holmes.

Mary Holmes (no relation) had invited Nina and me to help celebrate Sherlock Holmes' birthday with members of "Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients," a Scion Society of the Baker Street Irregulars. 70 Sherlock Holmes fans from as far away as Ft. Collins attended the party at Brock's restaurant on Littleton Blvd.

I can't recall a more pleasant evening. An obsession with detective stories apparently does not dull the addict's interest in other topics. The conversation ranged from raising teenagers to training flight attendants in psychology. Still, the focus was on Holmes.

Mary Ake and Nancy Wynne kept the evening on schedule, moving through the annual swearing of the oath; toasts to Doyle, Dr. Watson, and the Master Himself; and presentations of engraved pillboxes for outstanding service to the Patients.

Gordon Milliken gave a quick preview of the talk he'll present to the society later. He and his family just returned from a sabbatical leave in Sussex; from where he sought out many spots mentioned in Doyle's novels--including, Milliken says, Holmes' home.

FOR THE CLIMAX, the Patients heard brief talks by two Colorado Sherlockians. Ronald B. DeWaal spoke on "Sherlock Holmes and U.S. Presidents," noting that of the nine presidents who have served since publication of the first Holmes novel, six have had some connection with the detective.

Abraham Lincoln was mentioned in one of Doyle's books, and several others have been portrayed as Holmes by political cartoonists. During the Watergate investigations, there were 17 cartoons concerning Nixon and Watergate which had a Sherlock Holmes character or theme!

Then Bill Dorn, newly elected "chief surgeon" of the society, presented his paper on the enigmatic Mycroft Holmes, the detective's older brother. Dorn made an exhaustive and funny analysis of a handful of obscure quotes and descriptions about Mycroft Holmes. Dorn concludes that he was a programmer for the world's first computer, which he contends was used by the British government but was so secret that few cabinet members knew of its existence.

SHERLOCK LIVES! (continued)

HEADING HOME, Nina and I agreed that there is something healthy, in this decade of grim uncertainties, about people who can devote a little of their creative energies to light-hearted discussions of minutiae unearthed from the legends of a Victorian detective.

The evening re-awakened my interest in the British super-sleuth. Now, if only my mom hasn't given away that collection...

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The chief business of the Annual General Meeting which preceded the January 18th Sherlock Holmes' Birthday Party described by Garrett Ray, was election of officers. The members of the new Medical Board are: Chief Surgeon (President), Dr. William S. Dorn; Transcriber (Secretary), Mary Holmes; Wielder of the Scalpel (Treasurer), Dr. W. P. Blake; Interns, Robert Alvis, Ronald B. DeWaal, Dr. J. Gordon Milliken, David M. Poole; Consultants, Mary Ake and Nancy Wynne; and, ex-officio, the President Emeritus, Lt. Col. Morency R. Dame. Mary Holmes and Terrance Teis are Co-Editors of THE MEDICAL BULLETIN.

Nancy Wynne asked for volunteers to form a Telephone Committee to notify members about future meetings, and recruited eight: James and Gloria Farler, Lynn Ceuleers, Jan Frame, Bernard Kelly, Edi King, Charlene Schnelker and Jill Stone. If you can find time to call 5 or 6 people several times a year before meetings, please get in touch with Nancy (798-6430).

AWARDS

The January dinner also featured presenting of the First Annual Pillbox Awards, given by Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients either for service to the Patients or for achievement as a Sherlockian, or both.

Five gold and black enamel pillboxes, engraved with the date and the winner's name, and each containing two aspirin, were presented. Recipients were:

Dr. William S. Dorn, in recognition of his contribution to the Sherlockian movement through his recent credit course in SHERLOCK HOLMES at the University of Denver and his several published articles and pastiches, and for his service to the Patients as the speaker of the evening. Lt. Col. Morency R. Dame, as a dedicated collector of Sherlockiana, as first Chief Surgeon of Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients, and first Editor of The Medical Bulletin. Mary Holmes, for service in helping to organize the Society and as its Transcriber. Ronald B. DeWaal, BSI, as author of THE WORLD BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND DR. WATSON and of many published articles on Holmes and Watson, as an outstanding collector of Sherlockiana, as organizer of the first American Symposium on Sherlock Holmes at CSU in February, 1975, and for his continuing help in the form of papers, talks, contacts with the BSI, and service as a Board member from the earliest days of Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients. And Surgeon Captain H. E. B. Curjel, R.N. (ret.) a featured speaker at the Sherlock Holmes Society of London whose articles have appeared in the Sherlock Holmes Journal and The Practitioner, both as a Sherlockian and as a friend of the Neglected Patients, for having widened our horizons through the contacts he has made for us at the Sherlock Holmes Society, and for the gift of his Sherlock Holmes Game.

The Medical Board has established the Annual Pillbox Award not only to thank its friends for their activities on our behalf but in hope of encouraging our own members to achievement as Sherlockians. An Awards Committee which will include non-Board members has been suggested to select future winners of the Pillbox, and in-put from all members in suggesting candidates will be considered.

COMING!

Late March, Gordon Milliken's report on Holmesian explorations and discoveries in Sussex and London. Early May, DWNP Theatre Party, the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of "Sherlock Holmes" at Denver Auditorium Theatre. The Telephone Committee will contact you with dates and details.

James Edward Holroyd's column in "The Journal of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London" is called The Egg Spoon. You will recall that breakfast scene in A STUDY IN SCARLET when Watson, reading a magazine article about observation and deduction, called it "ineffable twaddle!" as he pointed to it with his egg spoon. Only to learn it was one of Holmes'. In compliment to Mr. Holroyd's quiet humor, we have chosen to title our own editors' chat column The Butter Dish. Remembering another scene described by Watson in THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL, where he says that their chambers were always full of chemicals and criminal relics which had a way of wandering into unlikely positions and turning up in the butter dish or even less desirable places!

It seems appropriate that at its first appearance The Butter Dish should report an answer from James Holroyd which I had not been able to get elsewhere. I had heard a rumor that Christopher Morley got into some kind of trouble with the OSS during World War II by innocently sketching plans of 221B, but I could not find out what really happened. In a letter to Captain Curjel, Mr. Holroyd sets this straight:

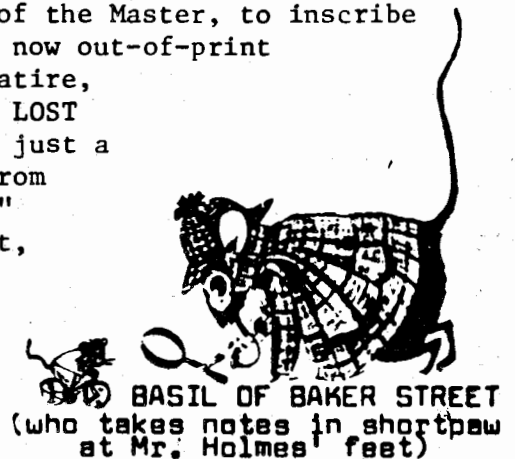
"The Case of the Baker Street Plans' was published originally in The Baker Street Journal (Vol 4 No 1) by Ellery Husted. It was subsequently condensed in the Reader's Digest of April 1950. Husted tells how he took a volume of the SH stories on a naval mission to the Pacific during the last war, and to while away the air journey, drew plans of the suite at 221B. He posted them to Richard Clarke, a fellow Sherlockian and founder of the Five Orange Pips of Westchester County. At the end of the war, a US Services censor told Husted of the headaches his plans and correspondence had caused because 'Baker Street' was the code name of the Office of Strategic Services headquarters in London!"

In a roundabout way (from Gar Donnelson. the Maiwand Jezails) we have received photocopies of the business cards of both "Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective"

and "Professor James Moriarty, Sc. D., Criminal Mastermind." We are pleased to note that Holmes is identified not only by his Royal Appointment to heads of state with whom all of you are familiar, and as Consultant to Scotland Yard, but as "Forensic Pathologist in Association with John E. Watson, M.D." Since, along with London and Washington, D.C. phone numbers, a New Mexico number is given, we deduce that this accomodation of Moriarty with Holmes has been effected by John Bennett Shaw, the man who gives James Moriarty an annual un-birthday party.

Nancy Wynne's book, AN AGATHA CHRISTIE CHRONOLOGY, has gone into the second printing, bringing it to 420,000 copies. It is now in local bookstores. Nancy will be in England in May, and will visit both Sherlock Holmes London shrines and Agatha Christie country. In THE WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, Michael Harrison locates an address she and other Neglected Patients going to England might want to add to their list--No. 6 Southhampton Street in Bloomsbury Square (now Southhampton Place). There, in a house built in 1750, the exterior still virtually unchanged, Watson had his practice before he went to Afghanistan.

Also in THE WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, Michael Harrison says that in the fascinating "ancillary" Holmesian literature, two of the most delightful manifestations are Julian Wolff's PRACTICAL HANDBOOK OF SHERLOCKIAN HERALDRY and Eve Titus' BASIL OF BAKER STREET. He calls Basil perhaps the last word, or the High-Water Mark, of Sherlock-inspired fantasy. We have made special arrangements through the Book House (5174 South Broadway, Englewood, Colorado, phone 789-1009) for Basil the Mouse, who models his life on that of the Master, to inscribe copies of his now out-of-print Sherlockian Satire, BASIL AND THE LOST COLONY. With just a little help from "Dr. Dawson's" Literary Agent, Eve Titus.



THE ADVENTURE OF THE ANCIENT HERO
by Daniel Daugherty

It is a time far removed from our own. Man's world and life-styles have changed (as they always do) for the better and the worse. Some things have stayed (as they always do) much the same. The result is this:

While astronauts set up colonies on worlds man has long wanted to see, and the billions back on earth breathe air man never wanted to breathe, two archaeologists, at an ancient site in a land once called New Mexico, attempt something man has always wanted to do--pull back the veil of time, and look into the distant past.

Professor Melikius descends into the crumbling chamber recently uncovered by his friend and colleague, Professor Lasarium. Lasarium looks up from his work as Melikius enters.

"Ah, Melikius. I am pleased that you could share this remarkable find with me."

"And I am honoured that you have asked me to come, Lasarium. Have you dated this site and discovered its function yet?"

"Yes, yes, that, Melikius--and more! Here, look at this."

"Astounding, Professor! An ancient text, and so marvelously preserved! Are there any more?"

"Can you believe it, Melikius? Beyond that entrance behind us is a room whose shelves contain hundreds of these!"

"A library of some sort?"

"Exactly! A small library, but one which is invaluable because it is so marvelously preserved. This dry desert air has left the volumes practically intact. They give tremendous insight into the culture of the ancient American Empire."

"Melikius interrupts to say, "You're dating this site at the time of that empire, then?"

"Yes," Lasarium responds, "in its second century. About 2100 P.S.--1975 by the old Gregorian calendar used at that time. But here is the amazing part, Melikius. There is bountiful evidence

here of a cult which is not mentioned in any of the old texts discovered to date. It was centered in the American and British Empires, but its influence was felt throughout all the civilized world of the day."

Melikius is fascinated. "Some sort of cult, you say?"

"It would seem so, from what I've read of the texts. Rather like the Dionysus cults formed in early Greece. This one grew up around a popular folk hero."

"Another Hercules or Beowulf?" Melikius ventures.

"Exactly, Melikius, but even more popular. This one library contains hundreds of volumes, all devoted to this one man. They are mostly in English, but dozens of different languages are represented. Think of it! We now have more written material about him than all the other heroes of antiquity put together! He must have pervaded the minds and lives of the people in America and Britain. And we did not even know he existed, until now."

A thought occurs to Melikius. "There is no chance, I suppose, that this was a mythological figure--some sort of man-god like Achilles?"

"No chance at all, my friend. These volumes, while reverent, are not written in the awed terms used to set down legends, but contain straightforward biographical data. Some are written by a doctor who served as this hero's biographer and companion, and the rest are mostly criticisms of the writings of the doctor. No, Melikius, there can be no doubt that this hero was as real as you or I."

"Did he live here, Lasarium?"

"No, in Britain. This was apparently the dwelling of one of his followers--a man named Shaw. From the number of texts and artifacts he possessed, I take it he was some sort of high priest of the cult. He apparently belonged to the central body of worshippers, but there is mention of other bodies which were offshoots of the first. They call themselves Scions, and each had its own name. Look at some of these titles, Melikius: The Dancing Man, The Neglected Patients, The Speckled Band, The Scandalous Bohemians, and the name of the parent body itself--The Baker Street Irregulars."

"They are rather sinister sounding, aren't they?"

"I agree. Think what strange rites must have been performed at their gatherings! Right here, perhaps, since this Shaw belonged to a local Scion called The Brothers Three of Moriarty."

"That one, at least, has an innocent enough sound to it," Melikius observes.

"Let's go into the library," Lasarium says, gesturing to the entrance behind him. "There is a picture of this hero in there."

The two men walk into the room, and on one wall an aged portrait still clings to its hook. The man pictured looks about 35, but could be more. His cape and odd-shaped hat are dark-coloured, so that the piercing eyes and hawk-like nose dominate the painting. From his lips dangles a long, smoothly curved appendage which forms a sort of bowl at one end, and appears to be on fire.

"How extraordinary!" exclaims Melikius.

"I thought so, too," Lasarium assures him. "That odd thing attached to his mouth has me completely baffled! He is invariably pictured with it in all the texts. His clothing may change, but it is always there."

"Why then, it must symbolise his position and authority, Lasarium. Like a king's sceptre."

"I believe you have hit upon it, Melikius! What a brilliant deduction!"

"Elementary, my dear Lasarium."

Lasarium gestures towards the shelves of bound texts. "Wait until you read some of this man's adventures, my friend. The labors of Hercules and the voyages of Ulysses pale beside them. His function seems to have been to seek out the wrongdoers of society and deliver them up for retribution. Something like the Ravens of Norse mythology, Hugin and Munin, who flew about the world and reported back to Odin the evil doings of men. But this hero was more independent. World rulers came to him, not he to them. They would ask his aid, rather than command it. They would bow to his wishes, rather than he to theirs. And think, Melikius, in the class-structured society of his day, he would offer aid to a beggar as readily as to a prince. He was such a powerful figure that he would himself decide the guilt or innocence of those he sought, and often let them go without punishment."

"He sounds awesome, Lasarium. And yet magnificent! Such men just cannot exist

in today's computerized galaxy. I rather envy the men of his day. They had a hero of real stature to look up to."

"I intend to copy all these texts carefully and publish them, Melikius. I hope you will help me. I can think of several colleagues who will be interested. There are Mallium, Solarius, Neutronius..."

"Perhaps we could form a group, Lasarium. We'll study the hero's life and works. We'll add him to the ancient history books, beside Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great."

"I have already planned five monographs on various aspects of his life and times. He's quite an astounding character, Melikius."

"Yes, Lasarium, and it just goes to prove what we archaeologists have always known."

"What's that, Melikius?"

"How right the old philosopher was, Lasarium. Truth is, indeed, stranger than fiction!"

(In WHODUNIT?, Dr. Wolff notes: "Daniel Daugherty, an instructor at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado, originally hails from Columbus, Ohio. A Sherlock Holmes fan since the age of 12, he has recently become a serious student of the Canon and all things Sherlockian and is an active member of Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients.)

The Editors invite you to submit original material for THE MEDICAL BULLETIN. Manuscripts should be mailed to 6730 South Clarkson Street, Littleton, Colorado 80122. We would, however, appreciate queries first about subject, length, and our availability of space. We are especially interested in having either new material or suggestions for reprints of articles which focus on Dr. John H. Watson and other medical aspects of the Canon.

The Editors and the Medical Board thank Marathon Oil Company for their help in producing this issue of the BULLETIN.

Mary Holmes (798-7947)
Terrance Teis (789-3027)

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND U.S. PRESIDENTS

by Ronald Burt DeWaal

Nine of the sixteen presidents in office since the publication of A Study in Scarlet (1887) have been associated with the Master Detective. One U.S. President is named in the Canonical tales: In "The Problem of Thor Bridge" Watson likens J. Neil Gibson to an "Abraham Lincoln keyed to base uses instead of high ones." The earliest known mention of a president in Sherlockian context is in a pastiche entitled "The Adventure of the Campaign Issue," by Bert Leston Taylor (Puck, October 19, 1904). In this pastiche, Holmes aids the Doubtful Voter who is in despair over issues of the presidential campaign. After some cogitation, the detective declares that Theodore Roosevelt is the issue, and his agitated client then knows how to vote. The illustrator of the pastiche, L. M. Glackens, also portrayed Roosevelt in a colored illustration on the cover of Puck (Feb. 3, 1909). The President, shown peeking through a keyhole into the Congressional chambers, exclaims to Uncle Sam: "Something devilish has been going on here, Watson!" The illustration is entitled "The Adventure of the Crooked House."

In an illustrated article entitled "The Sherlock Cult: Wilson and McGovern as Incarnations of a Detective Hero" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, August 20, 1972), Don Crinklaw quotes historian Ralph Grimes as saying that Woodrow Wilson and George McGovern possessed attributes similar to Sherlock Holmes: "Intellectual, a little cold and aloof, with Victorian moral attitudes."

The first president with a serious interest in Holmes was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In Born in a Bookshop Vincent Starrett writes of a conversation about Holmes with Roosevelt in 1914. At one point Roosevelt says: "I think I have read all the Holmes adventures ever written. I hope there'll be more someday. They don't come any better." Roosevelt was a member of the Baker Street Irregulars from 1942 until his death in 1945, and corresponded with the Society's founder, Christopher Morley, and its Commissionaire, Edgar W. Smith. In one

letter the President advanced the theory that Holmes was an American reared by a father or foster father in the underworld of crime. A group of cabins sheltering Secret Service men at Roosevelt's retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia, was known as "Baker Street." The address "221B Baker Street," inhabited by the Baker Street Urchins, appears on a map of his "Shangri-La" drawn by members of the Potomac's crew and published in Life (October 15, 1945). One of the chapters in Charles Honce's For Loving a Book is entitled "Baker Street on the Potomac" and deals with the President's interest in Holmes.

In 1946 Harry S. Truman accepted membership in The Baker Street Irregulars. He wrote: "I commend your good sense in seeking escape from this troubled world into the happier and calmer world of Baker Street...I had read all of the Holmes novels before I was twelve years old (sic)." In a photograph reproduced in The Baker Street Journal (January 1949), Truman, Elmer Davis, and Edgar W. Smith are shown inspecting The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle, the first book published by The Baker Street Irregulars Inc. The President is depicted as Holmes in two Chicago Tribune editorial cartoons. In the first, "The White House Sleuth," by H. Ford (January 27, 1950), "Sherlock" Truman investigates the coal crisis from his vantage on a stick of dynamite labeled "Miner's Revolt." In the second, "Sherlock and His Minkhound," by Daniel Holland (January 25, 1952), Attorney General J. Howard McGrath's "investigation" of crooks in the Truman administration leads him to the President.

Although not a Sherlockian, Dwight G. Eisenhower is considered to have been an authority on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In two newspaper articles—one by Eddy Gilmore—concerning the Conan Doyle centennial on May 22, 1959, Eisenhower is mentioned as "one of the greatest living authorities on the creator of Sherlock Holmes." One article notes that the first book Eisenhower read while recovering from his heart attack in 1955 was Sir Nigel. During a news conference on August 11, 1954, the President responded to a question from Chalmers M. Roberts by relating an incident from The White Company. Unfortunately, little else is known about Eisenhower's interest in Doyle.

S.H. AND U.S. PRESIDENTS (continued)

At least two Holmesian items concern John F. Kennedy. In a cartoon entitled "Elementary, my dear Watson," by Arthur Poinier (The Detroit News, April 1961), the President peers into a room in shambles; a dead man is labeled "Cuban liberation attempt" and the scapegoat CIA, tied up in a corner, wears a deerstalker and puffs on a calabash. In an editorial (The Baker Street Pages, August 1967), Chris Redmond speculates on the kind of investigation Holmes would have made into the assassination of President Kennedy.

Nor did Lyndon B. Johnson escape the Sherlockian's pen. The Los Angeles Times featured two such cartoons. In one, "Sherlock's heart just isn't in this case!" by Vaughan Shoemaker (November 30, 1963), the Senate-Holmes probes the Bobby Baker case. In the other, "You know my methods, Watson. Apply them!" by Gib Crockett (January 19, 1966), Johnson-Holmes addresses Marvin-Watson.

Political cartoonists have had a field day with Nixon's Watergate folly. There are no less than seventeen Sherlockian cartoons about the former President. In several, Nixon-Holmes searches for the "truth" about Watergate. He is pictured with a hunting dog pointing to him (the first such representation of Nixon as Holmes, by Mike Peters in The Dayton News, August 22, 1972), being led by his basset hounds towards the White House, standing and seated in the Oval Office confronting himself (Nixon as Holmes and Nixon as President), and in a sewer looking for more "facts" about Watergate. Other cartoons show the Department of Justice investigating Watergate, Congress's probe of the President's tax returns, and the House Judiciary Committee at the impeachment hearings. Each investigating body is depicted as Holmes. At least seven articles suggest how Sherlock Holmes might have investigated "The Case of the Republican Bugging" and "The Case of the Nixon Tapes." In a Time essay by Stefan Kanfer (January 28, 1974), Holmes implies that Nixon was responsible for erasing an 18-minute segment of a Watergate conversation between him and H. R. Haldeman.

Finally, there are five cartoons of Ford-Holmes and Rockefeller-Holmes. In an editorial cartoon by "Herblock" (Herbert L. Block) of The Washington Post (November 13, 1974), Ford, dressed like Holmes, is confronted with the recession. Another cartoon, by Edward Sorel (The Village Voice, September 29, 1975), depicts both Gerald Ford and Lyndon Johnson: Ford is smoking a magnifying glass and looking through a calabash pipe! The cartoon refers to a comment made about Ford by Johnson. Three other cartoons feature Vice-President Rockefeller as Holmes "investigating" the CIA.

Because Sherlock Holmes is so recognizable, cartoonists and parodists have long found him an attractive image for communicating ideas about political investigation, crime and intrigue. He has become a symbol of justice, untainted by greed, selfishness, or scandal.

From DR. WATSON'S MAIL

Harald Curjel--"I can't tell you how pleased I was to receive that charming little box as an award. I shall value it just as highly as ever Holmes did the old gold snuff-box with the great amethyst in the centre of the lid given to him by King Wilhelm Gottesreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Falstein and Hereditary King of Bohemia. It really is very, very kind of you all."

Andrew Malec, the Jack Knife of the Unanswered Correspondents, St. Paul, Minn. "Perhaps at some future date I will be able to take a brief vacation out your way and attend a meeting. It would appear that this Scion is a most active one, which makes me regret all the more that I am unable to participate in its activities."

Peter Blau--"The Red Circle had 62 on hand for its first meeting of the year, 'on January 30th, called to welcome Dorothy and John Bennett Shaw back from their trip to England and Denmark and Scotland. They couldn't be at the meeting, of course, which gave me a pretty free hand in inventing a detailed report of their trip."

With kind regards
from
Hugh L'Etang

Some Observations on THE BLACK FORMOSA CORRUPTION AND TAPANULI FEVER

BY HUGH L'ETANG

(Read at a meeting of the Sherlock Holmes Society held at St. James's Court, Buckingham Gate, S.W.1, on Thursday, November 6th, 1958)

IT has always been assumed that Sherlock Holmes invented these two diseases—the Black Formosa Corruption and Tapanuli Fever—for the express purpose of deceiving Watson on one particular occasion, and to emphasise his ignorance of tropical medicine.

Indeed several generations of doctors must have been asked what they know about these two conditions and, never having heard of them before, have fallen into the common and human error of denying their existence.

Holmes, despite his occasional flashes of humour, was predominantly serious and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of certain subjects. In his investigations of Culverton Smith, one can picture him excitedly absorbing that strange and exotic pathology which constitutes tropical medicine. It seems quite contrary to his nature that he should have invented two diseases, when he could equally well have confounded Watson with whole text books of rare but genuine conditions of the sort referred to by struggling medical students as "small print".

Watson, as Dr. Maurice Campbell has indicated, was a sound general practitioner, trained in broad general principles and with a balanced view of medicine, surgery, and obstetrics. But, despite his service on the frontier, he would naturally be ignorant of the minutiae of many tropical diseases.

Having a strong conviction that Sherlock Holmes would not have descended to invention when he had so many real conditions from which to choose, I have recently consulted some of the standard textbooks on Tropical Medicine. I was delighted to find almost at once a reference to Formosa River Fever, one of several names for what is a single condition, with the incredible and unpronounceable name, Tsutsugamushi Fever.

Tsutsugamushi Disease or Scrub Typhus

This is an infectious disease transmitted by mites and found, among other places, in Japan, Formosa, the Pescadores, Sumatra, New Guinea, Northern Australia and the Philippines.

You will all recall that in this particular case which Watson calls *The Dying Detective* there are two references to Sumatra:—

1. Sherlock Holmes says of the disease he is simulating:—

"It is a coolie disease from Sumatra" and,

2. "Mr. Culverton Smith is a well-known resident of Sumatra."

Tsutsugamushi disease is characterised in its early stages by the skin lesion where the mite has bitten the surface. First there is a red area, then an ulcer with a striking black crust. The commonest sites of this black ulcer are the neck, armpit, upper arm, groin, calf, and ankle. The neighbouring lymph glands are enlarged. At the same time there is headache, chilliness, fever, weakness and generalised aches and pains. From the fifth to the eighth day a rash appears mainly on the trunk. The rash is dull red in colour, and when it fades leaves a brownish stain. During the second week the illness reaches a peak, the patient becomes apathetic and even delirious, and involvement of lungs and heart may be found. In some types of typhus, the face develops a blue-brown colour.

However, I suggest that it is due to the characteristic black scar, rather than from the dark rash on the skin, that another name, the "Black Formosa Corruption" may have been derived. The mortality in Formosa is 12%.

There is a reference to the Tsutsugamushi (or dangerous insect) disease in 16th-century Chinese literature, and the first description in Japan was in 1810 by Hashimoto. The first reference in British Literature was in August 1878, in Volume 24, of the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*. By an interesting coincidence there is in this very same volume, an article by a surgeon called Joseph Bell. You may recall that, later in his career, he attracted a good deal of attention by using Holmes's methods of observation and deduction, as an aid to clinical diagnosis.

It is likely that Holmes having, become interested in these diseases during the Culverton Smith case, should have mentioned the "Formosa Fever" which he may have noted during his voluminous reading. Perhaps he did alter the name to "Formosa Corruption" to make doubly sure that Watson would have to plead ignorance. My own opinion is that, in some obscure treatise, he had read of the Formosa Corruption, but for reasons already given he could be certain that Watson

would have heard neither of the Formosa River Fever, nor of the Black Formosa Corruption.

Tapanuli Fever

If, in 1958, the existence of Formosa cannot be denied, the name Tapanuli sounds decidedly spurious. Yet, there is a place called Tapanuli and I am indebted to the Chief of Research of the *National Geographic Magazine* for further details. It is a residency of 15,084 square miles on the North West Coast of Sumatra, and the population is just over one million.

Tapanuli is a mountainous area with many peaks above 6,000 feet; in the north east, there is a lake called Toba, the largest of the mountain lakes of Sumatra. Cultivation is confined to the valleys and flat coastal strips where maize, rice, coconuts, coffee, nutmegs and rubber are grown.

It occurred to me that Tapanuli Fever might be yet another name for Tsutsugamushi disease. The latter is one of a group of diseases called rickettsiae, after Ricketts, a bacteriologist who died as a result of investigating them. These diseases are classified in two ways, firstly by the insect that transmits them, and secondly by the region in which they occur.

In addition to the mite-borne Tsutsugamushi, or scrub typhus, there is the more famous and more serious louse-borne typhus. A number of different Rickettsial diseases are transmitted by ticks, such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, *fièvre boutonneuse* from the Mediterranean, Q, or Queensland Fever and South African and East African Tick Typhus. It might interest you to know that Q Fever is the only one that occurs in Britain, and has been reported in the S. E. Counties of England.

Accordingly, I wrote to Professor Wolff of the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Amsterdam, and asked him what he knew of Tapanuli Fever. I purposely gave no other information, and I should like to reproduce some extracts from his letter.

"I received your letter of the 1st of June concerning your query about Tapanuli Fever which interested me very much. Due to the excellent memory of my colleague Swellengrebel, who is the parasitologist in our Department, Tapanuli Fever was traced to the account *The Dying Detective*.

"As, before the war I worked for fourteen years as a bacteriologist in Medan, the capital of the East Coast of Sumatra, adjacent to the residency of Tapanuli, I know that region rather well and travelled often in Tapanuli doing epidemiological research. I could well imagine that in the past, two diseases which occurred in Tapanuli might have caused special concern to the European Staff of the plantations, namely epidemics of tropical malaria and scrub typhus. Of these two, scrub typhus, later shown to be

identical to tsutsugamushi fever would occur in circumscribed epidemics causing a high mortality in the European population. It may have been that the word Tapanuli Fever was coined for this strange disease. Swellengrebel also, who knows Tapanuli well, did not remember that the local name was given to that illness but agrees with my supposition."

Perhaps, Sherlock Holmes had his little joke after all, when he asked Watson (and succeeding generations of doctors), what he knew of two diseases which are in fact one disease.

The more one thinks of this case, the more fascinating it becomes. The East still has its mysteries and its diseases, unknown to the Western world. As Holmes himself said: "There are many problems of disease, many strange pathological possibilities in the East".

During the fighting around the 38th Parallel in Korea, a new and surprising disease appeared called "Epidemic Haemorrhagic Fever". It is spread by mites, but there is no evidence that the organisms are rickettsiae. Investigations showed that similar diseases had been reported in the 1940s from the Crimea and Siberia, and another disease with a higher mortality had been known in Uzbekistan for a hundred years.

For all this time, this last disease has been known as "The Black Death" and I shall leave it to you to decide whether the last word has been said about the "Black Formosa Corruption".

The Black and White Ivory Box

Let us now consider Mr. Culverton Smith's box and the nature of the substance on the fang which had such lethal effect. It has puzzled me why such an acute and careful observer as Watson did not leave a more complete description of this infernal machine. Perhaps the omission was intentional; for at the time of the case, there was, I think, more reticence than there is to-day in describing methods of destruction that might be copied by others.

The noxious substance must have been something that could be placed on the fang and inoculated into the skin. Death, preceded by painful cramps, occurred in three to four days. We know from Culverton Smith's statement that it was "an out-of-the-way Asiatic disease". I have considered many tropical diseases in this connection and though cultures of some casual organisms could in theory be inoculated into the skin by the fang, none could kill the victim so quickly.

Reluctantly, I am compelled to exclude the infectious tropical diseases.

Every textbook of tropical medicine does contain, however, a large section on snake and insect bites; and snake bite, though perhaps not truly a tropical disease, is certainly an illness that may arise in the tropics.

From a practical point of view, snake venom

would be a most convenient poison with which to load the box. The fang may well have been modelled on a snake's fang and hollowed, or grooved, to transmit the poison.

Bercovitz has a most lucid account of snake poisons in his book *Clinical Tropical Medicine*. Snake venom is a colourless or yellow liquid with a fairly thick consistency. It loses its toxicity if it is kept in the liquid state, but it can be dried and kept indefinitely without losing its poisonous qualities.

In the dried state, it is readily soluble in dilute saline or distilled water. I think it likely that Culverton Smith had included a study of such poisons in his researches and, no doubt, kept a supply of the powdered forms. These could be re-constituted when necessary to load the fang in his box.

Snake venom may contain any or all of four main poisons. There are neuro-toxins or nerve poisons, and cytolytins which cause death of tissues and may lead to extensive sloughing and destruction of tissue in the area of the bite. There are also haemolysins which destroy red blood cells and lead to extensive areas of bruising, and haemocoagulins which clot blood.

Symptoms and signs would vary, depending on which of these four constituents predominate.

It seems likely that Victor Savage was killed by a neurotoxic or nerve poison. This could certainly be produced by the King Cobra of Malaya and the East Indies. It would initially cause nausea, faintness and weakness, followed by inco-ordination muscular paralysis and cramps. Soon the centres in the brain stem would be affected, speech and swallowing would be impaired and death would follow from paralysis of breathing. In this type of poisoning the onset of symptoms would vary, of course, with the concentration of the venom and depth of penetration.

The poison could kill in a few hours, or in three days, as with Victor Savage.

It seems to me that in this case we find a further example of Watson's great qualities. Many of us have denied the existence of Tapanuli Fever and of the Black Formosa Corruption, thus showing ignorance, rigidity of outlook and a reluctance to learn. Watson's response is an example to us all, for when asked what he knew about these conditions, his reply showed honesty, humility, and open-mindedness:—

"I have never heard of either."

About the author: The information we have, though not from Hugh L'Etang himself, is that he is a graduate of Oxford University with degrees B.M. B. Ch. (Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery) and holds Diplomas in Public Health and Industrial Health. Dr. L'Etang has left practice for medical journalism. He is Editor of THE PRACTITIONER.

SHOW AND TELL

Robert Alvis

My own first, and for that matter last, memories of the December meeting, are of carrying two very heavy boxes of books. The meeting was held deep in the bowels of the Marathon Oil Company building south of Denver, in Littleton. The auditorium was at least hundreds of miles from the door, unless I lost count.

The evening was given away to show and tell. For about an hour there was a general milling around as people talked, showed off prized possessions and looked at the books displayed by the Book House and Green Toad Books. Ron Dame showed two beautifully bound first editions. The Sign of the Four and His Last Bow were bound in red leather by Zaehnsdorf of London.

Making its debut at the meeting was the card game created by Nancy Wynne and Mary Ake called Mystery Match. Similar to the game of Authors, the object of the game is to collect cards naming works by a given mystery writer. Margaret Hook, the artist who did the illustrations for the cards, was on hand for autographs.

The more formal portion of the meeting was then convened. Ron Dame, our Chief Surgeon, announced that he would not be available for re-election due to the press of business. He then introduced Mary Ake who presented a slide showing on her "Sacred Pilgrimage" to Switzerland during the past summer. Highlights of the trip were her visits to Reichenbach Falls and to the Chateau de Lucens. The Chateau, which was formerly owned by Adrian Conan Doyle, houses a fabulous collection of Sherlockiana including a reproduction of the sitting room at 221B.

The evening concluded with a dessert of cookies, coffee and soft drinks generously provided by Marathon Oil. Special thanks must be given to Priss Kelly, who served as our most gracious hostess throughout the evening. It was a most delightful meeting.

Please add to your membership roster:

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