

# The MEDICAL BULLETIN

Volume 5, Number 1

March 1979

## FROM THE CHIEF SURGEON

by David Poole

In this first issue of THE MEDICAL BULLETIN for 1979 I want to report on the status of the BULLETIN. As of now, we have no editor. Terrance Teis has resigned because his work left him little time to edit the BULLETIN. Our thanks to Terry for his time and effort during his tenure as editor. Presently a committee is acting as editor, and will continue to do so until another editor is found. Any volunteers?

All members were notified by a letter dated January 1979 that the dues were raised to \$10.00, by a vote of the membership at the Annual meeting. This will cover the cost of printing and mailing the BULLETIN. We can no longer have the BULLETIN printed without charge. However, the editorial committee will be able to determine these costs after the first issue has been printed and mailed. If the costs of these items are less than anticipated the Medical Board may recommend at the next Annual Meeting that the dues be lowered. I know that doubling the amount of the dues discouraged some renewals of memberships, and also kept some potential new members from joining the Patients.

We are planning a spring meeting for the Patients, but plans for it have not been completed as we go to press. All members will be notified of the nature and date of this event.

## PATIENTS CELEBRATE HOLMES' 125th B'DAY

By Charles Hansen

On Saturday evening, January 6th, the members and guests of Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients met at the Phipps House to attend the annual meeting and dinner in honor of the 125th birthday of Sherlock Holmes. About 50 Patients were in attendance, and a rare good time was had by all. As the members and guests arrived they were tagged by a pair of watchful Patients who pinned to each one's back a small card: the title of a canonical story, or the name of a character, or a specific place mentioned in the canon. The ensuing game, as everyone asked questions to aid them in deducing what was inscribed on their card, was indeed merry. Some fascinating comments were overheard as one moved about among the group, listening to the questions and answers.

By the time the entire gathering had finally deduced what was inscribed on their card, and the hum of conversation was beginning to wane, dinner was announced. The dinner, a typically English one, was catered, and the Master and the good Doctor, had they been able to attend, would have felt right at home eating good roast beef, boiled potatoes, brussels sprouts, Yorkshire Pudding, coffee or tea washed down with plenty of wine. For a considerable time conversation languished or was limited largely to appreciative comments on the excellence of the cuisine or requests to pass the wine. All the traditional toasts were drunk along with a few spur-of-the-moment ones.

(continued on page 2)

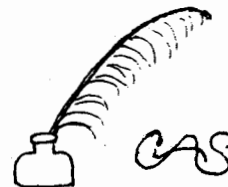
## Patients Celebrate cont. from p.1, col 2

When all were replete and looking smugly self-satisfied we were requested to drift into the front parlor, while the caterers whisked away the evidence of the feast. The business meeting was called to order by Dr. Bill Dorn, who in the absence of any Chief Surgeon was chosen to chair the meeting. The newly-revised bylaws were presented to the assemblage by Chuck Hansen, the chairman of the committee, and were approved without dissent. Ballots for the annual election were distributed and nominations opened from the floor. There being no such nominations the officers nominated by the committee were unanimously elected. Nominations for Intern were opened but none were offered so the election proceeded and ballots were collected, counted and checked. Election results are:

Chief Surgeon for a 2-year term, David Poole - Staff Surgeon for 1 year, Chuck Hansen - Transcriber for 1 year is Charlene Schmelker - Bursar (treasurer) for 2 years, John Stephenson. Interns for two years are Dr. J. Gordon Milliken, Dr. William Dorn, and Guy Mordeaux. Interns for one year, Jill Stone and Dan Daugherty.

After the business meeting was over the Patient's Players, featuring Mary Ake, Dr. Milliken, Dr. Dorn, David Poole, and John Stephenson, entertained us royally with their rendition of the Adventures of the Blue Carbuncle and the Yellow Face. Eventually the party wound down, but as the celebrants donned their wraps in preparation for departure all the comments to be heard were of what a fine and enjoyable bash it had indeed been. Everyone seemed to express this reporter's thoughts on the subject, Let's do it again in the same place, in the same way. It was unquestionably one of the finest events we have ever had! Vast amounts of kudos and bouquets are due to Mary Ake, who masterminded the event, and to all who helped her. Easily one of the finest and most enjoyable evenings of Sherlockian good-fellowship I have ever experienced!

TRANSCRIBER'S  
TRIFLES



## THE PATIENTS AFOOT

Sherlock Holmes stalked again as sixty members of Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients turned out for a preview of "Murder By Decree" on February 13, 1979. The showing was arranged by member Bernard Kelly and Joanne Sherman of Sherman Advertizing Agency for Avco Embassy Pictures.

The "Patients were delighted by a worthy and intelligent Doctor Watson (James Mason) accompanying a handsome, human Sherlock Holmes (Christopher Plummer). The movie, rich in atmosphere, explores the warm relationship between the two men who risk their lives in pursuit of "Jack the Ripper," whose identity is the keystone of the plot. The "Patients," a vocal lot, responded warmly to the action, in particular, Watson's pursuit of a pea (and a peevish reaction from Holmes).

Also, as a public relations event, members of the Out-Patients offered a one session seminar on March 11, 1979 from 7 - 10 p.m. through South East Denver Free University. This was an opportunity for those persons interested in the Society, as well as for new members, to learn more about scion societies and to view the movie "The Speckled Band" (1931 version with Raymond Massey as Holmes) which our society owns. Additional entertainment was provided by Charles Hansen and his collection of "old time radio" tapes of Sherlock Holmes programs and his vast arcane knowledge. Charlene Schmelker was the organizer, quizmistress and chief "popper", while Guy and Kathy Mordeaux "reely" helped out on the projector when the mini-crisis arose.

Charlene Schmelker

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CREDITS: Banner -- Teis

Cartoon -- De Waal Collection

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THE ROYAL NAVY IN THE CANONICAL WRITINGS  
 by Harald Curjel  
 Continued from Med. Bull. Vol. 4, No. 3/4

THE RED WHITE AND BLUE ENSIGNS AND THE  
 ROYAL NAVY

These notes are written for the possible help of whoever is reading the paper on "The Royal Navy in the Sherlockian Canon." It will be recalled that reference was made to the fact that the troopers, in one of which Dr. Watson returned from India, at one time sailed "under the White Ensign" but subsequently sailed "under the Blue Ensign." It is felt that the lecturer may like to have these notes in case a member of the audience asks questions.

During the Elizabethan times . . . at the time of the Armada, say, . . . there were no standard patterns in which the fleet fought. It was a case of individual dash and daring.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the manoeuvres of the fleets into sea battles became more standardised. Prince Rupert, in the 17th century when he took to the sea after having been a successful cavalry leader, is said to have introduced certain formations for ships which are reminiscent of cavalry patterns.

By the end of the 18th century, the formations were fairly well standardised and Nelson as a young officer would have used them.

On the way to a fleet engagement, the fleet would sail in one long line. The head of the line was called the "van," followed by the "centre" and followed by the "rear."

When the enemy had been sighted and the formal battle was about to begin, the fleet pivoted on the "van" and approached the enemy in a line, hopefully approaching from the windward position. Thus the "van" was now on the right of the line, while the "rear" was on the left.

All Admirals in command of fleets afloat were designated as "Admirals of the White, the Red, or the Blue," and flew his flag accordingly. Because

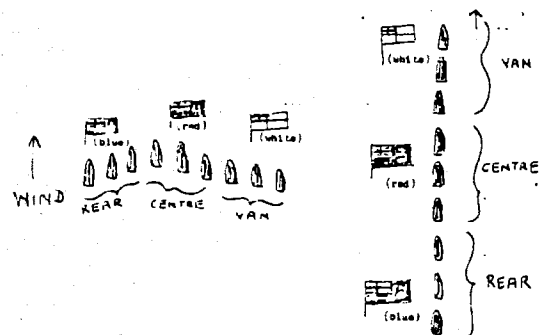
the centre of the battle line was considered to be the most prestigious, the "Admiral of the Red" was always the senior, the Admiral of the White ranking next, while the Admiral of the Blue was the junior. (This custom persists in that when a Captain is promoted to "Flag Rank" (i.e., becomes an Admiral) his first step is to become a "Real Admiral"). We know that Nelson did many original and unconventional things. This has been immortalised as "having the Nelson touch" and he had undoubtedly introduced new tactics and battle formations.

Thus at Trafalgar, he was undoubtedly the senior Admiral present, but he was an "Admiral of the White" and flew this ensign in his flagship Victory, in the "van." Admiral Collingwood was an "Admiral of the Red" in the centre, but in spite of this prestigious position, he was junior to and under Nelson's orders. I'm afraid I cannot give the name of the Admiral of the Blue.

Among the many honours showered on the memory of Lord Nelson came the decree in 1864 that the White Ensign alone should be flown by ships of the Royal Navy.

What happened to the others?

The Red Ensign became the flag of the rapidly expanding Merchant Navy, and was affectionately known all over the world as the "old Red Duster." The Blue Ensign became slightly more exclusive (though why it was advanced from its "rear" position, I do not know). It was flown by ships of the Merchant Navy whose Captain and a

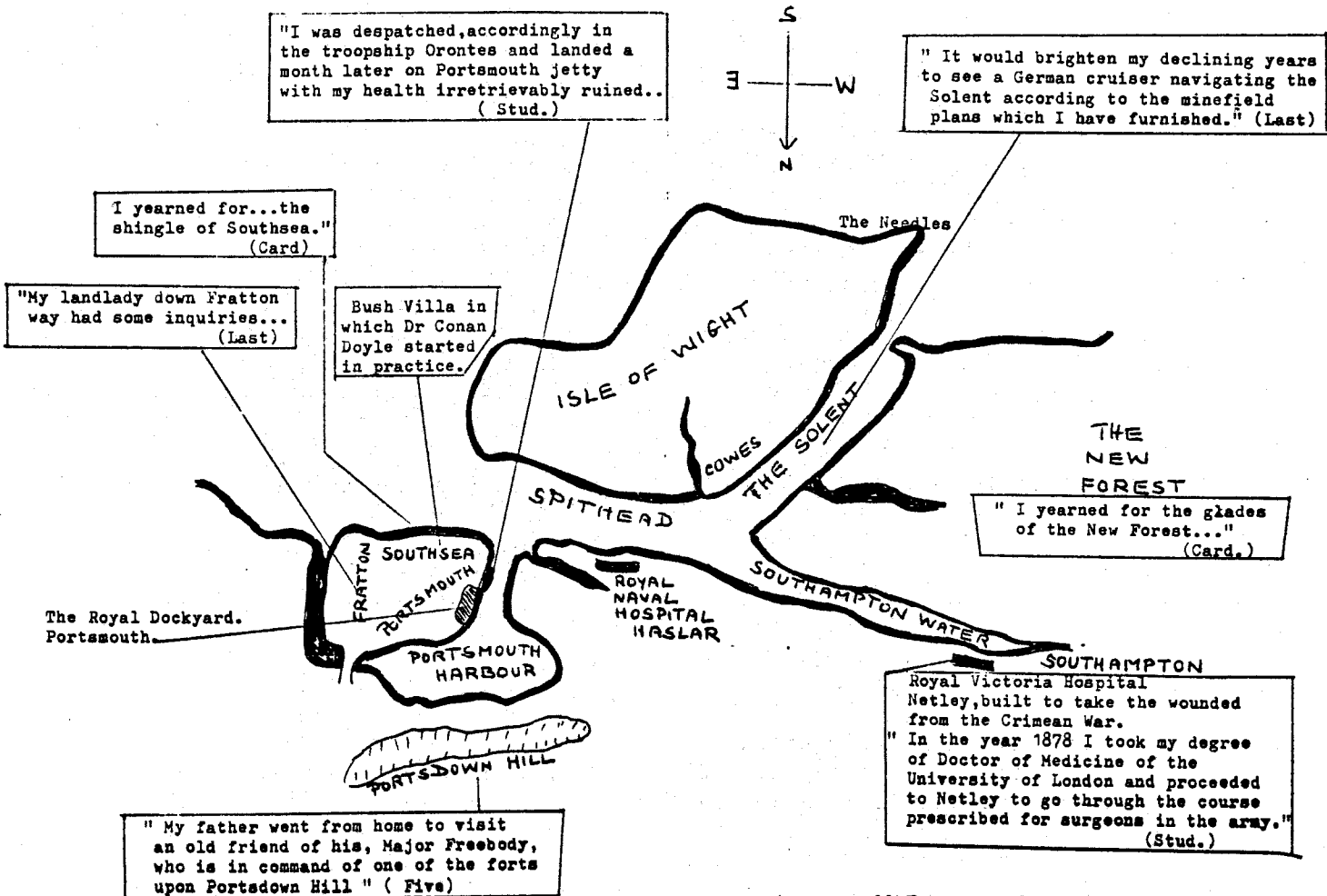


certain number of the officers were members of the Royal Naval Reserve . . . i.e., they would be called up for service in the Royal Navy in time of war. As we have already said in the papers, H. M. Transports originally flew the White Ensign but flew the Blue Ensign from the late 1890s. The Blue Ensign was also flown by vessels of H. M. Customs, by Consuls and Colonial Governors in the old Empire days, and by certain Yacht Clubs who had been specially accorded the privilege. The White Ensign, apart from Her Majesty's Ships, is only flown by vessels of the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes in the Isle of Wight. There's exclusiveness of a club for you . . . but we still can't get back The America Cup!

One final interesting bit about ensigns. In the 1914-18 War it was the custom for H. M. Ships, when hoisting the large

"battle ensigns" before going into action, to hoist the Red Ensign in addition to the White Ensign. This was done because the old Imperial German Naval Ensign . . . white with a red cross and a black eagle . . . could, in the heat and smoke of battle have been mistaken for the White Ensign.

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 Note about the author: Harald Curjel is a retired Surgeon Captain of the Royal Navy and is an expert on naval matters.  
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MAP OF THE PORTSMOUTH AREA  
 See notes on page 5

NOTES TO BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE  
MAP OF THE PORTSMOUTH AREA

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1. The Isle of Wight (the "Vectis" of Roman days) plays a dominant part in the topography of the area. It will be seen that it is separated from the mainland by two narrow-ish channels. The easterly one, nearer to Portsmouth is called Spithead while the westerly one is called The Solent. Both connect with the English Channel to the south of the Island but Spithead is by far the wider and deeper. In the days of the transatlantic liners, they all went out through Spithead. The Solent leads into the Channel through a very narrow entrance which can only be practically used by small warships and merchantmen and by yachtsmen. "The Needles" are some distinctive points of chalk sticking out into the Channel which were seen as the first landmark to the White Cliffs of Old England by the incoming Transatlantic passenger.

2. When Holmes talks about a "German cruiser navigating the Solent according to the minefield plans which I have furnished "I feel that he was being geographically careless in his talk. The narrow Needles Channel leading into the Solent would be an absolute death-trap to enemy warships, being dominated by coastal guns and having all-covering mine-fields as well. If a German warship intended to attempt a raid on Portsmouth it would enter by Spithead and it is too much to believe that Holmes intended to imply that the cruiser had survived all the hazards of Spithead and then come to grief in the Solent. While Watson knew the area well, it is possible that, getting a little hard of hearing in his late middle age, he miss-heard "Solent" for "Spithead."

3. The presence of the two converging channels on the north side of the island leads to a rather unusual tidal phenomenon in that Southampton Water has four tides in the 24 hours instead of the usual two. Any of your members who are skilled in the subject of tides will be able to

explain the reason for these double tides when the waters in Spithead and the Solent meet the main tidal run in the Channel . . . that is eastward towards Dover on the flood and westwards towards Plymouth on the ebb.

4. The inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are generically known as "CORKIES." The origin of this name may be a reference to the Island fitting into its place like a loose cork in a bottle, but it has been said that it is because the Islanders are so wooden-headed that they, when immersed in water, float head upwards like corks. Whatever the origin of the word, they cling to it proudly and call us who live on the mainland "Overners."

5. The famous yacht race, in which the American schooner "America" won the Cup, which we have been unsuccessfully trying to get back since, in a race starting at the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes and going round the Island ("back o' the Wight").

ERRATUM

The crossword puzzle which appeared in our last issue was incorrectly attributed to D. Pearson. The originator was, in fact, Roy Sparkes; our most humble apologies, Mr. Sparkes!

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Charlene Schnelker

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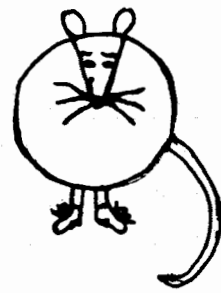
JAS



THE MAD VENTURES

by

Roy E. Sparkes



JAS

With the thousand pounds that he bid,  
From Irene I'll soon have him rid.  
With a little smoke rocket  
Inside Watson's pocket  
I'll know where the portrait is hid.

Through the tunnel he went with a squeeze,  
Ex-Etonian as bold as you please.  
He came through the gap  
And into a trap  
For Holmes had examined his knees.

Though it began as a joke as you say  
You'll end on a gallows some day.  
I've caught you because  
Your typewriter's flaws  
Ensure that crime doesn't pay.

The foot prints you see round the pool  
Were left by Lestrade, the old fool.  
I've found out the game  
Of the culprit so lame.  
Here's the stone that he used as his tool.

With a series of pip-bearing letters  
This Villianous crew have beset us.  
The messages say  
It's the K. K. K.  
But we'll catch them at last if they let us.

As a beggar he played his part well,  
And had boxes of matches to sell.  
When smoking my pipe,  
I saw I could wipe  
The make-up right off in his cell.

At Alpha we drank deep of the hop  
Then called at the poulterer's shop.  
For a crook named Ryder  
Decided to hide a  
Carbuncle inside a bird's crop.

The medical rake with his adder  
Than Palmer and Pritchard was badder.  
When the venoms might  
Put out his light,  
Neither Helen nor blacksmith was sadder.

He said that I'd have to keep mum  
And to Eyford was where I should come.  
Now the schemes infernal  
Of the bogus colonel  
Have left me without any thumb.

The bigamous debutante said:  
"I fear I already am wed.  
My husband's got rich.  
I'm a mercenary bitch,  
So Robert goes single to bed."

While waiting around for Miss Holder,  
George Burnwell got colder and colder.  
His footmarks below  
Went right through the snow  
Ere she gave him the crown as he'd told her.

Said the corpulent rogue at the Beeches:  
"You wears the blue dress and you teaches  
But I'll let out the mastiff  
And not care a blast if  
In your wanderings the locked door you reaches

Continued from Medical Bulletin  
Volume 4, Number 1

II--Their Chemistry, Anatomy, and  
Pharmacology

(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 be published in  
this and the following issue of THE  
MEDICAL BULLETIN. Part one appeared  
in Volume 3, No. 4 (1977) and Volume  
4, No. 1 (1978) of the BULLETIN. We  
wish again to thank Michael Bourne,  
Editor of Guy's Hospital Gazette, for  
permission to reprint these articles.

In the times when Holmes and Watson  
were students, physiology had not yet  
come into its own, and it is to chem-  
istry and anatomy that we must turn for  
their knowledge of the preliminary  
sciences. The chemical researches of  
Holmes and his work at the chemical  
bench are well known. When he first  
met Watson he had just perfected a test  
for haemoglobin which was to replace  
the old guaiac test (The Study in Scar-  
let), and even in his student days had  
spent seven weeks in his long vacation  
working out a few experiments in or-  
ganic chemistry (The Gloria Scott).  
Later, during his absence from London,  
after the encounter with Moriarty, he  
conducted a research into the coal-  
tar derivatives at Montpellier (The  
Empty House) and scattered through  
the stories are shorter references to  
the work he carried on from day to day,  
such as the analysis of the acetones,  
at which he put in an all-night sit-  
ting during the adventure of the  
Copper Beches.

Watson was fond of any reference to  
chemical work, and described Sholto's  
room, which had been fitted up as a

laboratory - the double line of glass-  
stoppered bottles on the wall, the  
table littered over with Bunsen burners,  
test-tubes, and retorts (The Sign of  
Four). In the early days he had  
described Holmes as a first class chem-  
ist (The Study in Scarlet), and he must  
have kept up his interest to carry on  
those investigations.

#### ANATOMY

But from the medical aspect we are more  
interested in Holmes's knowledge of an-  
atomy. He was well up in this according  
to Stamford, and Watson tells us that  
his knowledge was accurate but unsystem-  
atic; if Miss Dorothy Sayers is **correct**  
in deducing that Holmes read the Natural  
Science Tripos and chose Comparative  
Anatomy as one of his subjects (Baker  
Street Studies), this might be expected,  
for Watson, like most doctors, would  
think that anatomy meant human anatomy.  
Holmes had not learnt anatomy as  
thoroughly as most medical students have  
to—indeed, Stamford states that he had  
not taken out any systematic medical  
classes—and it was Watson who ident-  
ified the upper condyle of a human  
femur (Shoscombe Old Place), though  
it was Holmes who detected that the  
ears had been preserved in salt and not  
in carbolic or spirit, as would have  
been the case had the parcel been the  
ghastly prank of a medical student from  
the **dissecting room (The Cardboard Box)**.

But there were several more general an-  
atomical points which Holmes had studied  
deeply and referred to frequently—  
especially with regard to the head, the  
hands and the feet. He deduced the in-  
tellectual capacity of Mr. Baker from  
the size of his bowler (The Blue Car-  
buncle), and though this has been crit-  
icised because of the many exceptions,  
he was quite correct in the general rule,  
which has been as late as this year in  
a research on the mental capacity of  
African negroes. Indeed, it is unlikely  
that Holmes would make such a mistake,  
for his was able to discuss skulls with  
the expert anthropologist Dr. Mortimer  
(The Hound of the Baskervilles), and had  
also written two monographs on the human  
ear in the Anthropological Journal of  
1887. (continues on page 8)

The deduction of a client's occupation from its effects on the hands is frequently noted (the manual labour of Jabez Wilson, the typewriting of Mary Sutherland, the music of Violet Smith). Some time before 1888 Holmes had written a work on the influence of a trade upon the form of the hand, with lithographs of the hands of slaters, sailors, cork-cutters, compositors, weavers, and diamond-polishers. The same idea was developed in a rather different way in a series of papers by Lane (now Sir Arbuthnot), which dealt with the skeletal changes produced by different occupations such as the shoemaker, the coal-trimmer, and the washer-woman, and were published between 1886 and 1888.\* It would be interesting to know if Holmes had read Lane's papers, or vice versa, or if this was another example of the simultaneous publication of new discoveries by independent routes as in the famous case when Darwin and Wallace published their theory of Evolution almost at the same time; in one paper, even the title is almost the same.

As I have been unable to trace Holmes's paper, the following extracts from Lane's show the trend of thought: "The body—the changes in whose anatomy form the subject of this paper—was sent to the hospital for dissection. I was **therefore enabled to observe accurately** every structural variation that had resulted from the habitual performance of a definite series of movements, entailing the expenditure of a considerable amount of muscular exercise during the greater part of a long life-time of 73 years. Having concluded from a careful examination of the changes which the body presented that the man had been a **shoemaker**, I wrote to the infirmary in which he had died and was kindly informed that he was entered in their books as a shoemaker."<sup>2</sup>

"Let us now examine into the manner in which a vigorous labourer who carries a heavy load habitually transmits that

weight through his feet. ... he has a well-formed inner arch to his foot. You will observe that the epidermis is thicker beneath the outer part of the heel than the inner, that it is also very thick along the outer margin of the sole, along the whole under surface of the pad and beneath the ball of the great toe."<sup>3</sup>

"What I wish to call attention to here is that the occupation of washing clothes is responsible for the **production of very definite pressure changes** in the joints of the hand and wrist."<sup>4</sup>

"The skin covering the patella and the upper portion of the tibia in front was dense and thick, **as is so commonly seen in charwomen or in those who do much** scrubbing in the kneeling position."<sup>4</sup>

"The changes in the right thumb were very similar to those in the left, the differences which were present being dependent upon the fact that the awl was held in the right hand, and the string alone in the left."<sup>2</sup>

(continued on page 9)

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#### \* REFERENCES

1. A Remarkable Example of the Manner in which Pressure-Changes in the Skeleton may Reveal the Labour History of the Individual. Journal of Anatomy and Physiology, xxi, 385, 1886-87.
2. The Anatomy and Physiology of the Shoemaker. Journal of Anatomy and Physiology, xxii, 593, 1887-88.



1978 marked the centennial year of Doctor Watson's London degree.

Many thanks to D. A. Redmond for the reminder. And congratulations to our dear friend, Dr. Watson!



The words of Lane and the spirit of Holmes. It may not be generally realized that occupation has an equally or more striking effect on the bones of the skeleton, but I have given quotations dealing more with the external results because these are open to easy verification. It may be objected that Holmes could hardly have written such classics before he was thirty, but Lane was not thirty when he wrote these papers, and many men do their most original work at an early age, and in the rest of their lives apply these observations to practical affairs.

Holmes was particularly interested in footprints, and made many deductions from them, and was familiar with plaster of Paris for obtaining casts of them. He made a good deal of use of the relationship between the length of the stride and the height (Sign of Four, Study in Scarlet, and Boscombe Valley Mystery); he does not give us the formula on which he worked, but it was probably:

Height (in inches) = 2.9 Length of Stride (in inches).

The picture of Holmes on the scent of footprints and the amount he was able to deduce are among the most attractive we possess, and outstanding among these is the Adventure of the Priory School with the bicycle tracks and the horses shod with special shoes to simulate the hooves of cows.

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3. Deformities which Develop during Young Life. Guy's Hospital Reports, xliv, 241, 1886-87.
  4. Some Changes in the form of the Spinal Column and Joints of the Hand; illustrated by the Anatomy of the Charwoman. Guy's Hospital Reports, xliv, 359, 1886-87.

Though physiology is less well represented than anatomy, there is frequent reference to one branch of general biology.

To the student of human nature, heredity is one of the most attractive of all biological sciences, though its immense importance is only slowly being realized. Examples of the inheritance of mental and physical qualities were recorded in many of these adventures as they came under notice, and most likely Holmes was responsible and must be regarded almost as a pioneer.

It was Holmes who remarked that he and his brother Mycroft had inherited their powers of observation and deduction from their grandmother's brother, the French artist (The Greek Interpreter), and on another occasion noted the similarity of the ears of Miss Sarah Cushing and of her murdered sister Mary; he had written on the subject in the Anthropological Journal of 1887 (The Cardboard Box). I have not been able to trace this paper in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute for the years 1886-88, and the reference is probably to a lecture on the inheritance of ancestral peculiarities and the hereditary transmission of disease which was delivered at that Institute on November 19th, 1887, at 4:30 p.m. In view of the remarks of Holmes on the relationship of intelligence and the size of the skull, it is worth noting that the same journal contains papers on the skull and the volume of the cranial contents by Rolleston (now Sir Humphrey), and on the localisation of the functions of the brain by Ferrier and Victor Horsley - papers which must have been of great interest to Holmes and Watson.

Holmes was aware of the erratic inheritance of negro characteristics, for though Mrs. Grant Munro was English and her husband had only shown a trace of his African descent, their child was a coal-black negress.

(continued on page 10)

Similar characters in the writing of father and son were noted in the Cunninghams (The Reigate Squires), and the son's cruelty to animals led to a correct deduction of the father's cruel nature, though it was well hidden (The Copper Beeches). Holmes was specially interested in the inheritance of mental qualities, and, when discussing Colonel Sebastian Moran, he puts forward a theory of his own extending to the mind the embryological theory of recapitulation, viz., that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his pedigree. The person becomes, as it were, the epitome of the history of his own family. The theory is somewhat fanciful, but some of the examples that came under his notice seemed to support it.

The wild, fierce strain that was present in the first Hugo Baskerville and gave rise to the family legend of the hound, came out again in the fiery

temper of Sir Henry Baskerville, in his uncle Roger, the black sheep of the family who was forced to fly to Central America, and in the villainous Stapleton, who was really Roger's son. Both Roger and Stapleton had also a striking physical resemblance of the old Hugo, and this was one of the clues that led Holmes to suspect Stapleton, by guessing he was a member of the family with designs on the succession. Dr. Mortimer, too, was interested in the subject, and has published a paper in the Lancet of 1882 on "Some Freaks of Atavism" (The Hound of the Baskervilles).

We read of another family where violence of temper approaching mania was hereditary in the males (sex-limited inheritance), and where the family estate had been squandered because four successive heirs were wasteful and dissolute (The Speckled Band). Mr. Roberts (loc. cit.) suggests rather unkindly that the Watson family, with their propensity for gambling, provided another example.

PART 3 - TO BE PUBLISHED  
NEXT MONTH



"Stand back, Watson . . . the boulder may be shamming"

# Book Review

The Adventures of Conan Doyle: The life of the Creator of Sherlock Holmes; by Charles Higham, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1976, 345 pp., (illus)

Relegated as he is to the shadowy role of "Literary Agent", Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has perhaps become too much neglected in Sherlockian circles. If so, this is all the more reason why his latest biography should be aquired.

The Adventures of Conan Doyle is a generally lively and fast-paced narrative of Conan Doyle's life, written by a British-born American whose father was a sometime **associate** of the author's. In no way does it replace John Dickson Carr's 1949 study, but Higham has done his painstaking work with access to many more recent sources, including personal ones.

For the most part the book is interesting and well-balanced, containing numerous Doylean anecdotes, several never before published. Of most interest to Sherlockians will be a fairly extensive discussion of the canonical tales, their origins and inspirations, as well as the recounting of some of Conan Doyle's own "cases" as an amateur sleuth. (These latter include an unexpected footnote for Agatha Christie fans.)

Higham is very good at dealing with Conan Doyle's lesser known **writings**, particularly his supernatural fantasies with their rather surprising emphasis on sexual obsession. There are fine treatments of his major science fiction works, including the Challenger series, and the historical romances which he always considered his most important contributions to fiction. And finally --ever a public-spirited individual-- Conan Doyle produced a number of political and sociological studies, all of which are herein discussed.

However, where the book really shines --some will say "goes overboard"-- is in its treatment of Conan Doyle's controversial spiritualist activities. It is extremely enlightening on the subject, but one may find that Higham tells him more than he ever wanted to know about obscure mediums, floating trumpets, spirit writing, and ectoplasm. This reviewer warns that some Holmes devotees may be disappointed or embarrassed by all of this and (hopefully) return to the canon for a breath of fresh, rational air. (One wonders what Holmes at his zenith would have made of Conan Doyle at his most gullible!) But in fairness to Doyle, he appears to have been totally genuine and concerned with probity in his psychic investigations, and in the eclectic 1970's his activities might very well be viewed more compassionately than they were in his own time.

All in all, Higham treats a many faceted and difficult subject with tact and tolerance, wisdom and restraint. His is the slowly unfolding portrait of a tormented genius who urgently longed for romance, his spirit crying out for adventure even beyond the grave. Conan Doyle emerges as a man far ahead of his time yet simultaneously clinging to painfully conservative ideals. For instance, although he was an ardent reformer in divorce legislation, he bitterly opposed woman's suffrage. The reader will witness the dominant traits of Holmes, Watson, and Challenger all **jockeying for supremacy** in his complex personality. Whereas the early chapters which deal with his unhappy childhood, youth, and young manhood are the most revealing, the latter ones--which recount his gradual loss of respect of many of the millions who had once cherished every word he penned--will be those most remembered.

The Adventures of Conan Doyle is also now available in paperback, containing the same illustrations as in the Norton edition.

-David Pearson



**\*\* BONUS FOR MEMBERS \*\***

At the Medical Board Meeting of March 20, 1979, the Board decided to resolve the confusion resulting from our fiscal year running from September to September, versus the publication of the Medical Bulletin, which is printed one volume per calendar year. It was decided that we "give our members an extra three months membership" and change our fiscal year to run from January 6th through January 6th, beginning in 1980.



**PATIENTS PRAISED**

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"The 'Medical Bulletin' published by Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients strikes us as the most impressive and mature of the scion newsletters we have seen, for it contains scholarly articles of great value."

We thank David K. Maxfield, Ichneumon, for the kind mention in his column, "The Mailbag," and editor Loren D. Estleman (S.O.S.) of The Fluffy Ash.

*Bulletin Board*