

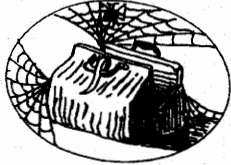
# ◆ The Medical Bulletin ◆

The official newsletter/journal of Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients, a Scion Society of The Baker Street Irregulars

Series 2, Issue 19

Winter/Spring 2003

From the Chief Surgeon's  
Medical bag....



As you are receiving this issue at our dinner, may I wish you greetings to our 29<sup>th</sup> annual Banquet. Would you join me in a hearty and warm welcome to our speaker, Mr. Rex Burns?!

I've not as much to report this time, since we released our last issue about 6 months ago.

We had two story discussions/seminars this fall. September 21<sup>st</sup> along with a hearty group of fellow Holmes fans, I led a discussion of 'The Musgrave Ritual'. On October 5<sup>th</sup>, I filled in for Ron Lies and led a discussion of 'A Scandal in Bohemia'; our discussions were preceded by the group viewing the Jeremy Brett videos, which added greatly to our chats.

These videos, incidentally, are now part of our club collection, acquired last summer. I believe we now have a complete set of Jerry Brett films housed in our audio/visual library at John and Priscilla Licht's.

In passing, I will also note that all attendees of our discussions have been highly enthusiastic participants, but no more so than our Bulletin's former editor, Larry Feldman! I really appreciate your contributions, Larry!

On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, we held our second Guy Fawkes Night, potluck at the V.F.W. Hall. We all had a wonderful time socializing and enjoying the dishes members brought. Joanne and Fred

Bantin once again outdid themselves by contributing two roast beasts.

At Guy Fawkes Night, we all enjoyed this year's film 'The Return of Sherlock Holmes', a 1987 made for TV movie. Michael Pennington starred as Holmes supported by Margaret Colin as Jane Watson. Larry Feldman brought the video and led a most congenial discussion.

I wish to thank all the club members who have attended and helped support the club's activities through out the year. I especially want to express my thanks to those who have helped with our events this year: First I would like to thank Larry Feldman, Bill Dorn, and Ron Lies for leading the book discussions; Priscilla and John Licht for holding the annual Dr. Watson's Spring Tea at their home as well as cheerfully bringing the TV/VCR and other equipment to the gatherings; Linda Rex for taking charge of all the food and details for the Tea and performing all her on-going responsibilities as transcriber and active Board member; Gerry Malmberg for an incredible job editing the Bulletin, and serving as club Bursar; Stan Moskel and Audrey Duman for faithfully attending and serving as active Board members; Ron Lies again for loaning me two books for my Musgrave Ritual presentation, such as it was; Dennis Masel for once again obtaining the use of the VFW Hall facilities and serving as staff surgeon; and the Bantins for cheerfully running the check in table at the 2002 Banquet.

Having thanked our 2002 volunteers, I must issue a heartfelt plea for help in

2003. We have a continuing need for volunteer help at events throughout the year. At the Tea, Dennis Masel donated a carton of video tapes. A woman, whose name escapes me at the moment, donated a box of audiotapes, too. These need to be organized so we know what we have. We need volunteers to help with the Medical Bulletin also. This is not a one person job. In addition, we desperately need new Board members. Dennis Masel has been my Staff Surgeon for four years now. However he is stepping down from that position this year. That leaves me without a successor. After two terms as Chief Surgeon I

Had intended and hoped to occupy a lesser position for a while. However, that does not now seem possible and I'll likely begin a third term as of this evening. I realize that most of the people coming to events have already served their time on the Board, but any help and ideas will be vastly appreciated. Please contact any of the Board members or myself if you can help. If it appears I am begging, you have arrived at the correct deduction! I most certainly am!

On a lighter note, this past June I spent some time in and around New York City. One of my destinations was 'The Mysterious Bookshop' on 129<sup>th</sup> W. 56<sup>th</sup> Street. This is Otto Penzlers establishment. He was there that day, though I didn't get to speak with him. With a completely un-assuming and deceptive exterior, this store is any mystery lover's delight! The entry floor features new paperbacks and hard-covers. Ascending a metal spiral staircase, you reach the used and collectible books.. and a treasure trove it is! One large corner has a most substantial assortment of anything and everything Sherlockian, new and used. I collect Maxwell Grant's 'The Shadow'

series. When I asked for them (not seeing any on the shelves) the saleswoman returned from a back room with an arm load!

I purchased two Sherlockian books which I hasten to recommend. Sherlock Holmes on film, by Alan Barnes was released in 2002. The book is alphabetically arranged, and covers all films and all T.V appearances with delightful discussions and wonderful pictures.

Beyond Baker Street, edited by Michael Harrison, was released in 1976 and is out of print. My copy however is in most excellent condition. It is a collection of essays by Harrison Isaac Asimov, Jacques Barzum, Martin Gardner, Nicholas Meyer, John Bennet Shaw and others. Absorbing reading, indeed! Laurie R.King has released another volume in her Mary Russell/Sherlock Holmes series: Justice Hall. I highly recommend this book and her series. Finally, Carole Nelson Douglas has written two more books in her Irene Adler Norton series 'Chapel Noir' and Castle Rouge. The two books are linked by an ongoing mystery involving Jack the Ripper.

I've already ordered copies of Sherlock Holmes on Film for three of our members and will be most happy to help you obtain this book or any of the other available books. Just contact me at the Tattered Cover Bookstore, ext.2836.

That's about it for this issue. Please pay heed to the plea for board members and volunteers I issued earlier. The club is only as successful as its members want it to be. Please join us at our next event. I look forward to seeing you there!

Sincerely,  
Mark Langston  
Chief Surgeon

Or call her at 303-699-8504.



Celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients. DWNP was founded in 1974 by Mary Ake and Nancy Wynn. Thru the years the club has offered different pins to represent our club.

Most of you have the latest pin-the English man with the top hat. To honor our clubs 30 years in existence, a new pin will be available in 2003.

The pin will be our medical bag logo with the letters DWNP on the medical bag. On the bottom arch of the pin will be our anniversary dates

1974-2004

The spider will have a diamond- color crystal for its' body. I did some research and the stone that represents 30 year anniversaries is either a pearl ora diamond. The cost per pin will be under \$10.00. Since this is a special pin, we need to know approximately how many people would purchase this pin before we place the order. There will be a question on the invitation to the 2003 banquet asking if you interested in ordering the pin. Do NOT include any money for the pin until I have them in hand! If you didn't respond to the banquet invitation, please call or E-mail Gerry Malmberg and let her know as soon as possible. Gerry's E-Mail is [dimondgem@aol.com](mailto:dimondgem@aol.com)



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#### Upcoming events in 2003



Dates have not yet been firmly established, however you can look forward to our Spring Tea, at least 2 seminars and another enjoyable Guy Fauks night that is held in late fall. With the recent release of 'Portrait of a Killer the Ripper, Case Closed' the Jack the Ripper case solved' By Patricia Cornwell. Perhaps we can induce Ron Lies to provide us with an addendum to his Jack the Ripper paper he presented in 2001!

*Ron, I have thrown down the gauntlet!*

THE  
CHICAGO  
LITERARY  
CLUB



FOUNDED 1874

The following essay is from the Chicago Literary Club's site on the web. We hope you enjoy reading this fine paper. One of our out of town members, Gerald Kreyche, who is Gerry Malmberg's father sent her this article and thought others in the club would find it a good read. I have reproduced this fine document with permission from the author.



HYPOTHESES

by

Philip R. Liebson

delivered to

The Chicago Literary Club

March 18, 2002

When you entered this club tonight did you observe all the furniture and the windows to evaluate whether there was any unusual change? When encountering a new member tonight, one you did not know particularly well, did you attempt to assess his or her profession from the characteristics of his appearance? Did you attempt to surmise his or her habits and character from the appearance of the hands, or the wear and tear of the shoes, the way the laces were tied, or the speech patterns? If you have this observational ability, and have a special interest in crime, you may become a consulting detective or a masterful criminal, depending upon your moral inclinations.

No doubt while listening to these comments, some of you have almost intuitively thought of Sherlock Holmes, whose characteristics have had enough of an influence on erudite readers to form clubs devoted to the minutiae of the 56 short stories and four novelettes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Are there such clubs devoted to Miss Marple, Father Brown, Hercule Poirot, or Nero Wolfe? Is there an annotated Dupin or Maigret?

There is something in the character of Sherlock Holmes that has transcended The

Canon, as the classic Doyle stories are called by the aficionados. And we are talking not only of the present. The first collection of Holmes stories was published monthly in a new middle-brow London journal, *The Strand*, from 1891-1893. After just two years of these stories, Conan Doyle decided that enough was enough and he decided to kill off Holmes in the Reichenbach Falls so that he could go onto his more important historical novels. The resulting protest was enough that Conan Doyle revived Holmes eight years later with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and continuing the publications of the short stories in *The Strand*, with occasional breaks, through 1927, three years before he died. Virtually simultaneously, these stories were published in the American periodicals, mostly *Harper's Weekly*, but also *McClure's* and *Collier's*, and *The American*. Holmes's following became immense on both sides of the Atlantic. One of the early American organizations dedicated to Holmes was and is the Baker Street Irregulars, which meets in New York annually, and has done so for over 70 years. Its constitution calls for three officers, a Gasogene, Tantalus and Commissionnaire. The latter is responsible for the White Rock, ice, and other assorted beverages. The by-laws indicate that all business be left to the monthly meetings. The by-laws also indicate that there will be no monthly meetings, and finally, no by-laws.

Attempts have been made to crystallize Holmes's entire life from the brush strokes placed in the stories. One such book, by William Baring-Gould, has Holmes born in 1854 and living a grand total of 103 years. According to this book, Holmes died on the shore of the English channel sitting sedately in a beach chair and murmuring the name of "Irene", referring to Irene Adler, the one woman who outsmarted him (in *A Scandal in Bohemia*). Parenthetically, Watson was supposed to have died in 1929, aged 77, exactly one year before Conan Doyle himself passed away. This particular book, *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street, A Life of the First Consulting Detective*, gleaned from these subtle clues such interesting deductions such as the evidence that Nero Wolfe was actually a product of the union of Holmes and Irene Adler.

Another interesting proposition in this book was the evidence that Jack the Ripper was in fact none other than Athelney Jones, one of the stable of Scotland Yard detectives whose careers Holmes was constantly advancing by his brilliant interventions. From the *Sign of the Four*. Holmes: "I am the last and highest court of appeal in detection. When Gregson or Lestrade or Athelney Jones are out of their depths (which, by the way, is their normal state) the matter is laid before me."

The identity of Jack the Ripper remains in doubt but the fanciful play of fiction and fact always fascinates. In this particular case, Holmes decoys Jack while being dressed as a woman, one of his many ingenious disguises. The ending is remarkable in its conclusion. Unlike any of the Holmes stories in the Canon, except one, Holmes is saved by Watson, who at the last moment as Jack is about to advance on the body of the unconscious Holmes with a nine-inch knife in an isolated courtyard, leaps from a wall and smashes Jack's head against the cobblestones knocking him out. In this case, it is Watson who has deduced the identity of the Ripper from evidence that Inspector Athelney Jones had at one time attended lectures in surgery, and could have been the only one of three candidates to have heard a previously murdered woman singing Sweet Violets. He thus shadowed the inspector and was there to save Holmes. "Holmes took his pipe from his mouth" as Watson described his own deductions. "Extraordinary,

my dear Watson", exclaimed Holmes. "Elementary, my dear Holmes", replied Watson. For those of you Sherlockians who have not remembered the one story in the Canon in which Watson saved Holmes' life, by shoving him out of a room with poisonous fumes, it was *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot*.

This contribution notwithstanding, Watson is mistaken by some readers as a bumbler, though adroit athletically, and remarkably supportive to Holmes by his presence. Certainly, although he overlooks clues, he really doesn't get in the way of the progress of Holmes's deductions.

It is generally concluded by the Sherlockians that Holmes was born on January 6, 1854. The evidence for the year is fairly conclusive since Holmes is described as a man of 60 in *His Last Bow*, which takes place in 1914. The date of January 6th is more speculative. Among the most credible reasons are two: in *The Valley of Fear*, Holmes appears unusually grumpy on the morning of January 7th, suggestive of a hangover. It was concluded by some scholars that Holmes had celebrated his birthday the night before. Another reason, perhaps less credible, if possible, was that Holmes liked to quote from *Twelfth Night*, which is, of course, the 6th of January. However, Conan Doyle was by no means disposed to provide a clue to this important fact. How could one rely on the author anyway, for the Canon is filled with inconsistencies? The most notorious example is Watson's war wound suffered in Afghanistan from a Jezail bullet, which involved his shoulder in *A Study in Scarlet*, and his leg in *The Sign of the Four*. Given this example, there may be some question as to whether Holmes was really 60 in 1914.

In science, a hypothesis is made after careful examination of observations. The purpose of the hypothesis is to test a possible connection, a cause and effect relationship that may explain the workings of a small part of the universe. The more focused the hypothesis testing, the more likely a result may be determined for or against the hypothesis, based upon statistical evaluation. The interesting thing about scientific hypotheses, is that the experiment to test the hypothesis attempts to disprove what is called a null-hypothesis, presumably that the results, if they are significant statistically, were not due to chance alone. Even if this is determined to be so, there is always the possibility that a putatively proven hypothesis may be due to bias in setting up the experiment.

In the 19th and early 20th century, before this form of statistical analysis was developed, Holmes nonetheless predicted some of these considerations in his science of deduction. "We must fall back upon the old axiom that when other contingencies fail, whatever remain, however improbable, must be the truth" [From *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*]. Here, indeed, is an expression of the null hypothesis in Holmes's terms.

Much as a current scientific researcher, Holmes begins with a series of related observations before he can develop a hypothesis. In *A Scandal in Bohemia*, he will not interpret without appropriate observation; "I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts". This, in fact, perfectly describes the problem of bias in



scientific evaluation.

Unlike the scientist, who tests observations by performing controlled studies to determine whether the one intervention really produces the desired result, Holmes must analyze the meaning after collecting all the information. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, as an example, Holmes studies the dead corpse of Sir Charles Baskerville. A problem is stated: How did sir Charles die? A hypothesis is developed. The man either died of a heart attack or by a dog. The research process requires Watson to spend time openly in the Baskerville home, keeping a diary, while Holmes himself, as we discover later, secretly spends time in a secluded cave on the moor and visits the nearby village, collecting data. Holmes concludes from his analysis that only Stapleton could have been the killer for a plausible reason that he wanted the family wealth for himself. However, he has to test this hypothesis by a final and dangerous experiment, set up so that Stapleton is provoked to release his hound to attack the younger Baskerville. Such experiments are common in the field of detective literature, whereas scientific investigation involving humans is usually bolstered with safeguards, as much as possible; at least since the Nuremberg conventions for ethical research were instituted.

This is not always the case. I have been involved in a large scale study published 10 years ago where the results indicated that, surprisingly, the drugs used presumably to save lives were associated with a higher mortality rate than the placebo controls.

In scientific investigation, plausibility is important in testing hypotheses, but plausibility depends upon a rational view of the universe. If you believe in witchcraft and the supernatural, plausibility expands immensely. Plausibility is therefore a weak link in the chain of hypothesis testing, along with bias in collecting data. In terms of my experience, from the same study, it was biologically plausible that a drug that decreased abnormal heart rhythms in people with underlying heart disease would save lives. In fact, it was more dangerous. Parenthetically, this study had a remarkable effect on the treatment of heart arrhythmias.

Sherlock Holmes's method of collecting information frequently mystifies the Scotland Yard Inspectors calling for his assistance, as well as Watson. One example should serve. In the very first novelette, *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes and Watson are called to investigate a murder in a vacant house in London. The dead body is present in one of the rooms. Watson, not knowing Holmes that well yet, expects that he would "at once have hurried into the house and plunged into the study of the mystery". However, Holmes slowly and nonchalantly assesses the surroundings of the house, including the pavement, railings, sky, and opposite houses. Satisfied, he finally enters the house and spends the better part of an hour examining not only the body but the dust on the floor, scratch marks on the wall in which a bloody word "RACHE" is inscribed, meanwhile using a tape measure for some unexplained purpose. Finally, Holmes deduces that the murderer was a man, that he smoked a particular brand of cigar (from the type of cigar ash on the floor), that he came with his victim in a four-wheeled cab, that he had a florid face susceptible to nosebleeds (no blood or wound was present on the victim to account for the bloody word on the wall) and that the fingernails of his right hand were remarkably long (from the scratch marks near the bloody letters). However, he needed

something more than observation to conclude that the word "RACHE" was not an uncompleted woman's name, but the German word for revenge. This took imagination, or intuition, a leap from analysis alone.

Many analyses have been entertained about Holmes' techniques. It is too bad that the *Whole Science of Deduction*, which Holmes was to write in his retiring years, was never compiled by Conan Doyle. Although, it is commonly assumed that deduction is the main factor in Holmes's systematic approach, it is in fact inductive reasoning that is the initial mechanism of approach more often than deduction. Thus, inductive reasoning is used to develop hypotheses as to why a bloody fingerprint appears on a wall well after the crime is committed, why a sailor's knot is used to tie up a victim, and why one of three empty glasses of port has no dregs. Lastly, the hypotheses produced from the inductive reasoning lead to testing of these hypotheses by deduction. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes states: "By the method of exclusion, I had arrived at this result, for no other hypothesis would meet the facts". Holmes characteristically used the word "hypothesis" to describe this aspect of his reasoning, rather than the term "induction". For example, in *Silver Blaze*, "I have already said that he must have gone to King's Pyland or to Mapleton. He is not at King's Pyland. Therefore he is at Mapleton. Let us take that as a working hypothesis and see what it leads us to." In *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*, he remarks "I have devised seven separate explanations, each of which would cover the facts as far as we know them. But which of these [hypotheses] is correct can only be determined by the fresh information which we will no doubt find waiting for us".

Sherlock Holmes's processes of thought may be summarized in sequence of analysis as searching observation, analysis, and imagination. As to the latter, Holmes states, in *The Valley of Fear*, "Breadth of view" is one of the essentials of our profession. The interplay of ideas and the oblique uses of knowledge are often of extraordinary interest. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he comments directly on the importance of imagination in his deductions. "[We are coming] into the region where we balance probabilities and choose the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination, but we have always some material basis on which to start our speculation".

As for the oblique uses of knowledge, Holmes had built up compendia of special knowledge in arcane subjects. He was an expert on tobacco ashes, poisons, the characteristics of special soils, the appearance of hands in regard to the trade of their bearers, and deduction of writing. In *The Reigate Puzzle* for example, he analyzes a written communication of several sentences, concluding that each word was written alternatively by a younger and older man, who were probably blood relations, father and son. He concludes the different ages by the strong hand of half the words, and the "broken backed" appearance of the other half with the loss of crossing of the t's and absence of the i dots in the latter reinforcing older age of one of the writers. The blood relationship of the two writers is determined by the similarity of the peculiar writing of the letter e, and the tails of some of the other letters.

Holmes makes a particular point of distinguishing analytical from synthetic reasoning. From *A Study in Scarlet*: "The grand thing is to reason backward" There are fifty who can reason synthetically for one who can reason analytically. Most people, if you



describe a train of events to them, will tell you what the result would be. "There are few people, however, who, if told them a result, would be able to evolve from their own inner consciousness what the steps were which led up to the result. This power is what I mean when I talk of reasoning backward or analytically".

This is seen in the design of studies, well beyond Holmes's time, in what is called a case-control study. In clinical medicine, a group of patients is in the hospital with a certain condition. What is a risk factor for this condition? A hypothesis is generated that a certain cause or a number of causes leads to this condition. How can you test this hypothesis by reasoning backward? The answer is to take another group of patients hospitalized in the same location, of the same age, and with similar physical findings except for the disease investigated and determine compare the presence of risk factors in the past history of each group. If the putative causes of the disease are present in a statistically significantly greater amount in the study group compared with the non-diseased group, a cause and effect relationship is suggested.

One of the most well-known examples of this deductive reasoning by Holmes is found in *Silver Blaze*, when Holmes learns a curious fact in relation to the disappearance of the horse, Silver Blaze, from the behavior of the guard dog in the stable.

Inspector: "Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

Holmes: "To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

Inspector: "The dog did nothing in the night-time".

Holmes. "That was the curious incident".

This deduction leads Holmes to conclude that whoever led the horse out was familiar to the dog and was, in fact, the horse's trainer.

There is considerable speculation about the model for Sherlock Holmes. Most have concluded that it was primarily Dr. Joseph Bell, a surgeon at the Edinburgh infirmary when Conan Doyle was a medical student. Bell was physically similar to Holmes. He was described by Conan Doyle as tall, thin and dark, like Holmes, with piercing gray eyes and a narrow, aquiline nose. Here are the own words of Dr. Bell:

"In teaching the treatment of disease 'allcareful teachers have first to show the student how to recognize accurately the case. The recognition depends in great measure on the accurate and rapid appreciation of small points in which the disease differs from the healthy state" The student must be taught to observe. [It is important that] a trained use of observation can discover in ordinary matter such as previous history, nationality, and occupation of a patient[in the diagnosis of disease]".

Bell would observe the way a person moved, and indicate how the walk of a soldier was vastly different from that of a sailor. Tattoos on a sailor's body would indicate not only that he was a sailor but where he had traveled. The hands of patients were important for determining occupation, by the location of calluses or the appearance of the fingers and fingernails.

Dr. Bell would call a student down to observe a patient brought into the lecture hall by the House Surgeon, and ask for a diagnosis. In one case, observed by Dr. Harold Emery Jones, a contemporary of Conan Doyle, a student was asked for the diagnosis of an obviously limping man. "Use your eyes, sir!" he would exclaim. "Use your ears, your brain, your bump of perception". In one case the student observed the patient and diagnosed hip-joint disease.

"Hip-nothing", responded Bell. "This man's limp is not from his hip, but from his foot. If you observe closely, you would see that there are slits, cut by a knife, in those parts where the pressure of the shoe is greatest against the foot. The man is a sufferer from corns, gentlemen! [Since ] we are not chiropodists, his condition is of a more serious nature. This is a case of chronic alcoholism, gentlemen. The rubicund, bloated face, the bloodshot eyes, the tremulous hands and twitching muscles with the throbbing of the temporal arteries, all show this. These deductions, gentlemen, must be confirmed by concrete evidence' In this instance my diagnosis is confirmed by the fact of my seeing the whiskey bottle protruding from the patient's right-hand coat pocket".

I should comment here that the embarrassment of medical students by the medical faculty has not changed until recently, when the concern about possible harassment has considerably moderated this ordeal. In the 1920's through the 1940's, the Yale Medical School Professor of Pathology would call a student down to evaluate a specimen. According to one student observer, he would hand the student a heart, for example, and ask him " an incessant stream of questions". If a student responded that the heart appeared normal, the Professor would reply, "You think it's normal? Are you normal?" and begin a series of personal insults.

Conan Doyle himself observed a most dramatic example of Dr. Bell's faculty of deduction. In first seeing one of his patients Bell remarked, "You are a soldier, and a non-commissioned officer at that. You have served in Bermuda". To the medical students:

"How do I know that gentlemen? Because he came into the room without even taking his hat off as is his habit in an orderly room. He was a soldier. A slight, authoritative air, combined with his age, shows that he was a non-commissioned officer. A rash on his forehead tells me he was in Bermuda and subject to a skin infection only present there".

Compare this with Holmes famous line on first meeting Watson, in *A Study in Scarlet*. "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive", he says while shaking his hand. "How on earth did you know that?" exclaims Watson. Holmes coyly puts off an explanation until later. When Watson persists in calling for an explanation, Holmes elaborates. "From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps". He arrives at these conclusions from his knowledge that Watson is a doctor, but with the air of a military man, that his face is dark, but his wrists light, indicating a suntan, that his left arm has been injured, that he has undergone hardship and sickness. Therefore he "had been in the tropics in a location of recent warfare- clearly Afghanistan". This was in 1881 or 1882, mind you. Perhaps, history recurs in cycles.

Further on, in the same story, while Holmes and Watson are sitting in their newly acquired flat, Watson looks out the window and points to a "stalwart, plainly dressed individual" walking down the street, and wonders what the fellow is looking for.

Holmes: "You mean the retired sergeant of Marines".

Watson calls this "brag and bounce" but, fortunately, the individual appears at Holmes's door to hand him a request from a Scotland Yard Inspector to investigate the murder and is available to confirm this deduction. Holmes has arrived at this correct conclusion on the basis of the great blue anchor tattooed on his hand, his air of command, his regulation side whiskers.

There are numerous theories about the origin of the names Holmes and Watson, involving considerable studies of Conan Doyle's encounters with these names. One James Watson was a leading member of the local literary and scientific society where Conan Doyle first set up practice, for example. In Dr. Bell's *Manual of the Operations of Surgery*, published in 1883, which Conan Doyle had read, the first two cases described under Disorders of the Hip and Knee Joints cite a Mr. Holmes and a Dr. Watson respectively as authorities of the first two cases. Finally, a Mr. Croft is mentioned in the second case. Is this the source of the name Mycroft, Holmes's brother? There are numerous other coincidences involving these names cited in Conan Doyle's experience. I will take all the elements I have discussed and set up my own hypothesis: this time associating a Bell with a Watson -- Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas A. Watson, in fact. The first telephone conversation, in 1876, was: "Ahoy, Watson! Can you hear me?" Conan Doyle would certainly have heard about this well before 1887, when the first manuscript, *A Study in Scarlet*, was published. To place all this into an all encompassing package, that Yale Professor I previously mentioned who emulated Joseph Bell, quite coincidentally, married Thomas A. Watson's daughter!

It has been proposed by one Sherlockian, Dr. Carl L. Heifetz, that much of Sherlock Holmes's obfuscation concerning his origins, early life and ongoing activities, and his reticence to be photographed and in having his participation in crime ever appear in the newspapers was a result of his participation in British government undercover activities. It has been definitely established that 221B Baker street was not his real address, hidden because of his undercover activities. Similarly, the extreme reticence of Holmes to have Watson publish his cases (only 60 out of over 1000) also suggests an excessive secrecy that cannot be attributed to modesty [Holmes himself admitted that modesty had no importance in his character]. The basis for this hypothesis was his involvement in at least three acknowledged cases in which the government was involved, wherein stolen documents were retrieved, *The Naval Treaty*, the *Bruce-Partington Plans*, and *The Second Stain*.

It was noted by Heifetz that his real calling was revealed in *His Last Bow*, in which it was revealed that he truly served as an undercover agent for the British government.

Other evidence that he participated in government activities includes his undercover work as a Norwegian explorer to the Khalifa of Khartoum, with resulting information delivered to the British foreign office. It is also well known that his brother Mycroft, from

his perch in the Diogenes Club, was the auditor of some government department books and in fact the final resource for resolving government issues. "He actually was the British government", according to Holmes. In the apocrypha [Holmes stories after Conan Doyle's demise], it has been insistently confirmed that Mycroft Holmes, himself, was the founder of the British secret services M.5 and M.6 in 1909. M stands for Mycroft, of course!

Let us now evaluate the mysterious pull of the Sherlock Holmes Canon using one short story as an example, *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez*. The outline of the story is as follows: Holmes and Watson are called by one of the Scotland Yard inspectors to assist in investigating the murder of a male secretary of an invalided professor, who never leaves his home. Through the clue of a pince-nez, retrieved from the murdered secretary's hand, Holmes finally solves the mystery by determining that the murderer could not have left the house and was, ultimately, found hiding in a closet of the professor. In fact, the murderer, a Russian woman, was the long estranged wife of the professor, and had killed the secretary when he discovered her trying to retrieve important document from the Professor's study downstairs. These are the bare bones, so to speak.

The reader who is familiar with these stories and continues to re-read them finds several characteristics in common with many of the stories. First, Watson, the usual narrator, indicates a list of cases with intriguing names ("the repulsive story of the red leech", etc), that are not yet ready for publication, and, indeed, never were, and that Holmes had achieved still another honor from a foreign government for his involvement in solving an international crime. Despite these, Watson admits that the case to be discussed is much more singular. The other point is that Watson draws from his volumes of notes, indicating to the reader that he has not randomly selected the case but determined to present it for its special merits.

The second common characteristic is the weather. It was a "wild, tempestuous night", with howling winds, that would only draw a visitor to Baker street if there were an extraordinarily pressing matter. Meanwhile, Holmes is involved in one of his many side interests, deciphering the remains of the original inscription upon a medieval manuscript, which has been occupying him all day. Watson, however, is by no means idle, he deeply absorbed in a surgical tract. Holmes is also shown to be interested in one of many special areas, including, from other stories, de Lassus motets, wines, warships, medieval pottery, and the history and playing of violins.

The introduction also provides us with an indication of Holmes' characteristic courtesy, when Stanley Hopkins, the young inspector, appears, bidding him to have a warm drink, and handing him a cigar. However, there is clearly a discernment of a class difference. Holmes is a gentleman. Hopkins is, in a sense, a tradesman. He is addressed as "Hopkins", but it is always "Mr. Holmes". Conan Doyle always sets apart the characters with behavior according to the manners and mores of their particular class. This may provide comfort for a broad range of readers who would prefer this distinction to the ambiguities of a blending of dress and manners, and not necessarily confined to the Victorian era. Holmes provides several examples of his infallibility of observation. This is typical of the introduction to many of the stories.

As usual, the crime is summarized comprehensively but succinctly, in this case by the inspector, and the points of mystery delineated: The last ambiguous words of the secretary "The professor, it was she", the golden pince-nez in the murdered secretary's hand, with lenses too close even for a thin-faced Holmes, the murder weapon, a knife obtained from a desk in the study. The inspector is completely stymied. He states that there is nothing really wanting in the details of the inspection.

"Except Sherlock Holmes", says Holmes, with a bitter smile. At another point he indicates to Inspector Hopkins that with all his investigation, Hopkins "had made certain that [he] had made certain of nothing". Although Holmes is always courteous, there is always the barb to indicate his intellectual superiority. It is Holmes's almost complete infallibility that may be one of his attractions to readers.

Based upon this information Holmes concludes that the murderer is a well-dressed woman with a thick nose, closely-set eyes, a peering expression, who has seen an optician twice during the past month. He then goes on to explain immediately the reasoning behind his deductions, which turns out to be based entirely upon his observation of the pair of glasses that the inspector provides him. Thus, the reader, within a short time, is provided with a dazzling deduction, and the explanation, which almost seems mundane. It is a repeated formula, provided only once or twice in each story, designed not necessarily to educate the reader or Watson, but to demonstrate Holmes's ongoing superiority of observation.

Then there is the inevitable trip to the isolated home, this time by train, more likely than not a villa or manor, the careful inspection of the study in which the victim was murdered and in this case, the two passages out of the study, one leading up to the professor's room, the other out to the garden, and the interesting finding that both passages were covered with coconut matting. There is also the red herring of footsteps out on the garden lawn, possibly leading away from the study. The coconut matting is important because the wife, being nearsighted and having lost her pince-nez went the wrong way and entered the professor's bedroom. This is not obvious to Watson, or possibly the reader.

Finally, Holmes meets the professor in his room upstairs and rapidly smokes four cigarettes, deliberately spreading their ashes on the floor, as we learn later, just as a large lunch is brought up for the professor, who himself has a small appetite. This is one of a number of mysterious actions of Holmes that are finally explained by him in resolving the crime. When Holmes returns, he sees new footprints defined by the ashes near the closet, and the murderer is discovered.

However, the mystery is not yet over. It turns out that the woman and the professor were Russian Nihilists, a Russian police officer was killed, and in order to save his own life, the Professor betrayed his wife and companions, who were imprisoned, and fled to England after receiving a large reward for his actions. The wife fell in love with one of the companions, who was imprisoned wrongly. The professor had the evidence in a diary in his study. His wife found out about the Professor's location while after being released from prison in Russia and eventually found her way into the study where the

diary was located, was discovered by the secretary who seized her, and because she was nearsighted and her pince-nez had dropped, she attacked the secretary with the nearest object at hand, which turned out to be a knife.

In the end, everything is neatly rapped up. The woman has already taken poison when she is discovered, the papers are to be taken by Holmes and Watson to the Russian embassy to free the wronged lover and Holmes explains the final details.

The characteristic in all these stories is the eventual control of conditions which may initially seem uncontrollable. The wild November evening turns into a cool but bright and placid autumn day, the characters throughout behave according to their class in society, the criminals, once discovered, quite freely indicate their motivations for the crime. There is the brilliant dénouement in which Holmes ties all the clues together and explains his thinking. This is true of other crime stories, though. What is so special about these stories? Not the least important is the reader's identification with Watson, who is not a really a bumbler but responds as we might to Holmes's flashes of insight. There are also the mysteries of those cases that were never published, like lost tomes.

An interesting perspective on the popularity of Sherlock Holmes is offered in the book, *Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes*. The author, David S. Payne, hypothesizes that the complex processes of modernity, which encompasses the late Victorian era and continue through the present, brought about consistently swift changes which upset the anchor of stability and brought about nostalgia for a fabricated stable past built on the ideas and customs of the recent past. Presumably, the Holmes stories provide a method of comprehending these changes by bracketing them within a world of traditional virtues, with characters who portray stereotypes of certain social classes and cultures. In a sense, according to this hypothesis, a world was created with its own innate culture and values which was close enough to a nostalgic reality of the past to draw readers from a wide variety of backgrounds into this mystique. Perhaps Holmes is arguably the most famous character in English literature because of that. I would entertain the notion that a good part of the attraction of Holmes and the continuity among the stories is his attempt to provide samples of his analytical skills, his verbal sparring with Watson, and yes, even his gradually developing humanity through the evolution of the canon. Two other characteristics, commented upon by the author Colin Wilson in a Holmes anthology, is Conan Doyle's passion for factual detail, providing "an illusion of reality". Since the first arguably modern novel, *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson in 1740, defined by Wilson as one in which the reader can truly identify with a character, Conan Doyle may have provided a strong step forward by combining in Holmes and his environment, not only a sense of reality, but the addition of the fantasy of wish fulfillment, because of the absence of despair or defeat [aside from Doyle's temporarily killing Holmes off]. That decision was a grave mistake and the large group of Victorian Readers rebelled against it. The readership remains strong today. From this essay it can be seen how easy it is to discuss Holmes and his motivations as if he actually had lived.

We should close by paraphrasing a typical Holmes coda : Ah, Watson "Draw up your chair and hand me my violin for some baroque airs, for the only problem we still have to solve is how to while away these bleak winter evenings.



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<http://www.members.aol.com/DrHumph/scimethd.htm>

Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction. By Ray Betzner.

<http://www.Wm.edu/CAS/english/faculty/morrill/ray-2.html>

Carl L. Heifetz, Sherlock Holmes: Master of Espionage.

<http://www.Geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/8950/holmes/spy.htm>

There are thousands of web sites on Mr. Holmes. Here is a list of what are considered the top Sherlock Holmes Sites on the net.

[Sherlock Holmes - Novels and Short Stories](#)

[221B Baker Street](#)

[A Sherlock Holmes Occasion](#)

[Camden House](#)

[The Sherlock Holmes Society of London](#)

[Sherlock Holmes International - English Page](#)

[Sherlock Holmes Society of France](#)

[The Sherlock Holmes Atlas](#)

[Sherlock Holmes \(Consulting Detective\)](#)

[The Mystery Spider](#)

[The Sherlock Holmes Page](#)

[Sherlockian WHO'S WHO](#)

[Basil of Baker Street's Forum](#)

[Graphic Classics](#)

[The Singular Society of the Baker Street Dozen](#)

[The Sherlock Store](#)

[The Great Mouse Detective: Disney's Underappreciated 26th Animated Film](#)

[Sherlock Holmes Pub](#)

[The Norwegian Sherlock Holmes Society](#)

[Sherlock Holmes on Oxford Lane](#)

[Wraithbone's Sherlock Holmes Page](#)

[Mycroft's brother en français](#)

[Sherlock's Secret Life](#)

[A Sherlockian Scrapbook](#)

[Sherlock Holmes Report](#)

[Mycroft's brother](#)

[Sherlock Holmes Radio Theatre](#)

[Sherlock Holmes in the French Wold Newton Universe](#)

[Baker Street Books](#)

[Mr Frankland's Home Page](#)

[Basil's Public Reading Forum](#)

[Joan Watson's Sherlock Holmes Site](#)

[Conan Doyle's House at Norwood](#)

[Sherlock Holmes in miniature](#)

[Wisteria Lodge](#)

[Sherlock Holmes Cases](#)

And speaking of top sites, you may have noticed The Sherlock Store [www.thesherlockstore.com](http://www.thesherlockstore.com). listed as one of the top Sherlock Holmes web sites.

The proprietor of this fine on- line establishment is none other than our very own Bill Dorn, BSI aka 'The Newgate Calendar". Bill was inducted into the BSI in 1999.



Many of our newer members have asked about the BSI, The Baker Street Irregulars, other than the group of street urchins that occasionally provide services to Mr. Holmes.

#### **The Baker Street Irregulars of New York**

In 1933, Sherlockian extraordinaire', Christopher Morley, inadvertently, according to some, established the Irregulars in the Bowling Green department of his Saturday Review of Literature. Its charter group was made up of some 30 New York followers of the Master and a similar number of corresponding 'kinsprits' spread out across the states. A Sherlockian examination in the form of a crossword puzzle created by Morley's brother, Frank, was published the following year along with a declaration that those persons successfully completing the puzzle would be granted admission to the first dinner of the society. That historic dinner was held in June of that year at Christ Cella's Restaurant in New York. According to all accounts, there was much toasting and spirited celebration. A second dinner meeting followed in December achieving much the same effect. The names of those attending these early gatherings are familiar to all Sherlockians: Vincent Starrett, Elmer Davis, William Gillette, John Bennett Shaw, Rex Stout, Alexander Woolcott, Frederic Dorr Steele and others of slightly lesser renown. Though annual meetings were intended for January 6th, the date was seldom observed in the early days. Morley felt that the BSI was "too wise to hold stated meetings, which would belie their name and take the fun out of their indoctrinated irregularity", this substantiated by their constitution and by-laws.