

The Litmus Paper

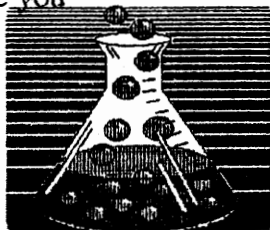
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Lab Technician - Debbie Butler

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Editor - Larry Feldman

LAB NOTES by Debbie Butler

By the time you read this, May 4th will be hard upon us. I needn't remind



anyone, even the most neophyte of Sherlockians, what occurred a century ago on May 4th. Yes, it's the centenary of **The Big Dive at Reichenbach Falls**. I doubt if any of the **Lab Members** are flush enough to make the pilgrimage to Switzerland and to Reichenbach Falls, but some memorial might not be out of place for local Sherlockians. For my part, I will take myself to the local rec center and throw myself into the municipal swimming pool.

On a drier note, the **Chem Lab** has already put two meetings under its belt since the first of the year. In January, 25 Lab members invaded the home/office of **Jane Cracraft** for a meeting and talk, given by Jane, on the modern private investigator. Jane, who "plays" the contemporary "Paul Drake" for many local Denver defense attorneys, has been in the PI field for some years. Her firm, **Brown, Cracraft & Associates**, is the leading detective agency in the area. She gave a
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THE BEST WATSON EVER by Larry Feldman

Of all the actors to portray the Master Detective's "Boswell", who was the best? While all Sherlockians have their favorite actor to play Holmes, it is interesting to note that even more controversial is the subject of the portrayal of Watson. To many of us who grew up on this side of the Atlantic, the "original" Holmes and Watson team will always be Rathbone and Bruce due to the seemingly endless movie series that they did for Universal. I remember watching these shows throughout my childhood every Sunday morning on a local station which billed them as "Sherlock Holmes Theatre." While Rathbone will forever appeal to one as Holmes, those of us who enjoy reading the Canon (which is, of course, the only "true Sherlock") must always wince a bit when thinking of Nigel Bruce and his comic relief interpretation of
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THE MEDICAL BULLETIN BOARD

Famed Sherlockian Peter Blau (of Washington's The Red Circle) brings to our



attention an article published in an in-house publication of the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress. The article announces the appointment of a new Chief of Cataloging, a Mr. Bill Collins, as of last January second. The piece goes into detail about Mr. Collins' career and background, though it saves this gem for the next to final paragraph.

"Although Bill's articles have been published in library journals and [elsewhere], he seems especially proud that many of his articles on Sherlock Holmes have appeared in The Baker Street Journal and The Medical Bulletin of Dr.

Watson's Neglected Patients."

Peter further informs us that Mr. Collins had articles in the BSJ in Sept. 1976 and Sept.

1977. Is there anyone out there whose been around long enough to remember or have record of Bill Collins or his participation in our august organization? Inquiring minds and all that.

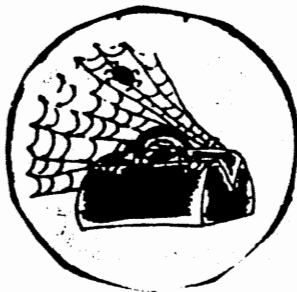
Most all local Scion members are familiar by now with Ed and Mary Rochette and their interesting little mail order concern that features Sherlockian novelties. Well, Ed
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recently shared with us some news from across the Atlantic. It seems that a Sherlockian souvenir store will be opening up at the sight of the Baker Street set of the Granada Sherlock Holmes TV series. Among the souvenirs featured will be Ed and Mary's 221B Doorknocker Pin, which has enjoyed much local popularity for some time now. Ed seemed as proud as he did bemused when he said "I guess our little 'hobby' is turning into a *real* business." Congratulations, Mary and Ed, from all of us!

For more information of interest to PATIENTS, particularly on the upcoming DOCTOR WATSON'S TEA, see our Chief Surgeon's new column FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BAG.



Our next big local event will be the Patient's annual DR. WATSON'S TEA. For more details, watch your mail and check out John Stephenson's new column FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BAG, located on page 7 of this issue.



GREATEST WATSON EVER -

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the Master's closest friend and most faithful ally. Of late I have been taking a rather informal survey among a select group of Sherlockians, and what follows is a summary of the results.

Stan Moskal writes that his favorite Watson was James Mason in Murder by Decree. Stan feels that Mason "played a Watson who was not a buffoon, who was an equal and not subordinate, an intelligent English doctor." It is interesting to note that I once heard the highly esteemed Sherlockian John Bennett Shaw express his admiration for Mason's interpretation, though he specifically cited the humorous scene in that movie where Watson becomes obsessed with finishing every pea on his plate despite their rolling around and making a difficult target for his fork. Perhaps a certain amount of humor from any Watson is to be expected?

As you might expect, very popular were Edward Hardwick and David Burke, the two actors to play Watson on the PBS television series with Jeremy Brett. Mary Rochette writes that the series presents "Holmes and Watson interacting on an intelligent level." Someone else writes that Burke "most clearly represents Watson as written by Doyle (i.e. no cross bumbling as in Nigel Bruce)." The thing I personally like best about the series is that it shows Watson to be the emotionally stronger of the two men in a way that suggests that Holmes was more dependent on the good Doctor than the reverse.

John Stephenson was the only one to suggest Robert Duvall in The Seven Percent Solution. I myself would like to second this nomination. With Duvall Watson became a fit and handsome Englishman who obviously both admired and cared for his friend, willing to be there for him when he was really needed. For those of us who believe that Watson should possess the best traits of the idealized (though not satirized) Britisher, I think this particular portrayal has great merit.

I also heard from those for whom the old radio productions will always have a special appeal. Fred Hinz particularly enjoyed the old BBC production from 1949 that was scripted by Michael Hardwick. Fred writes that the old series "had a rather surreal opening which, to my mind, set the proper stage for the stories." Fred further nominates Norman Shelly, the actor who played Watson in that series. Fred asserts that Shelly had "one of the best deliveries I've heard by a British actor on the radio."

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GREATEST WATSON EVER

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Old time radio aficionado Irving Hale voted for Ralph Richardson on the 24 Gielgud/Richardson radio productions that were broadcast by the BBC in the 50's. By way of explaining his choice, Irving cites "The richness of his voice. Also, the scripts were the best I have ever heard on any radio production of Sherlock Holmes."

Lastly, it may surprise you to hear that good old Nigel Bruce actually did get a few votes. Young Jason Robinson writes that he liked Bruce because he "made Rathbone look all the smarter."

But the best reason that I have ever heard for liking the "Nigel Bruce" Watson came from Ed Rochette. Ed shares with us that "My earliest recall are the voices of Holmes and Watson. And, even today, when reading and rereading the Canon - Rathbone and Bruce are the voices I hear." Hmmm. Perhaps I need to reevaluate my own stand on this issue.



POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING JOHN H. WATSON, M.D.

by Larry Feldman

I don't know why this should be true, but it always seems to be around the holiday season that I find myself watching Holmes movies and videos. This year, with all the talk about Watson that we've been doing [See "THE BEST WATSON EVER" on page 1], I could not help but notice the misconceptions that seem to be repeated again and again in drama and pastiche regarding the most celebrated doctor/author since Conan Doyle. Usually I grumble and complain about this to whomever will listen. Now that I'm an editor, I get to grumble about it in print.

So, for better or worse, here are five of the most often repeated errors regarding Watson that I have heard or seen over the years. I will list them in order of how widespread I believe each fallacy to be, starting from the most common to the most esoteric.

1) Watson was stupid. By far the most common misconception, poor Watson will never live down Nigel Bruce's interpretation of him. Movie writers did not know what to do with Watson, whose chief function in the Sherlock Holmes adventures (as they probably saw it) was to tell the story. This type of character seemed superfluous in a play or movie. So, they decided to make him the comedy relief. The truth, of course, is that Watson was, at least, of average intelligence and proved himself to be a quick thinker when the chips were down. Watson only seemed unintelligent when compared to Sherlock Holmes. And who wouldn't?

2) Watson was dependent on Holmes. Nothing could be further than the truth. If anything, the opposite was true. It was the manic-depressive, anti-social Holmes that depended on an emotionally well-adjusted Watson. Holmes once referred to Watson as his only friend, and so he was. Was it any wonder that Holmes expressed anger and resentment at both of Watson's marriages? Instead of being able to celebrate the doctor's good fortune and happiness, Holmes was so dependent on the Watson for companionship that he felt deserted.

3) Watson was always thinking about food. This one is a particular pet peeve of mine, partially due to the fact that even the otherwise excellent Granada TV series perpetuates it. Holmes brings up the particulars of food in the Canon many more times than Watson does. I can think of no good reason for this particular myth. The only rationale of which I can conceive, is that Watson may have seemed more meal conscious than Holmes during a case, as Holmes' did have a tendency to forget about meals when he was "hot on the scent". But we can hardly blame Watson for this, as this sort of compulsive behavior contributed to the two of Holmes' physical breakdowns of which we know.

4) Watson often became angry and frustrated when Holmes beat him at the deduction game. This one also gets my goat, as the chief source of this seems to be our pastiche writers. The great August Derleth (one of my personal favorites) often depicted

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MISCONCEPTIONS -

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the Parker/Pons relationship this way. Clive Brooks in the recent "Sherlock Holmes Revisited" also makes this error. In the Canon, the only time Watson expresses anger at Holmes' deductions is in "A Study in Scarlet" and "A Sign of the Four" which was before Watson became a true believer in his friend's powers. I defy anyone to point out an example of Watson expressing anything but amazement and admiration at Holmes' abilities in any of the other 58 stories.

5) Watson supplied Holmes with cocaine. I almost fell off my chair when I heard this one. Most Sherlockians know that Watson was probably instrumental in curing Holmes of this addiction. What may be less well known is that in Victorian England one did not need a "supplier" as cocaine was a legal drug at that time. Any drug store would do.

Well, there they are. It feels good to get them off my chest. If you disagree with any of the sentiments expressed here or can think of any other examples of libel or slander against the good doctor, please feel free to drop me a line.



LAB NOTES -

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fascinating talk and fielded questions on her training and experiences investigating numerous criminal cases over past years, some front page material, others not so notorious but just as riveting. Afterwards, Jane remarked that she had never had such a rapt audience; we reminded her that she lives the life that the average Chem Lab member reads about in books.



A tip of the deerstalker to Jane for getting the Chem Lab's year off to a rousing start. The quiz for the evening was won, after numerous skirmishes, by Stan Moskal, who, along with an appropriate prize, carried off the dubious honor of providing the quiz for the next meeting.

This meeting was held on March 16th at the Butler home. Several members gathered that evening to catch up on "Doings Sherlockian," swap stories and Iraqi jokes (both good and bad). The quiz, covered the "Mormon Section" of "A Study In Scarlet". The winner on this occasion was The Litmus Paper's own, Larry Feldman, who is now the proud owner of an official Brown, Cracraft, and Associates Sherlockian coffee mug, donated by Jane. The evening climax was the viewing of "The Hound of the Baskerville" starring Ian Richardson. The movie was accompanied by witty commentary and discussion by all members on this particular version of the most filmed of all Canonical tales.

Upcoming meetings of The

Chem Lab will be announced shortly. As always, all members and their guests are invited to attend.

The Chem Lab has ventured where few scions have reached - behind the Iron Curtain, or what's left of it. Last fall, the Rocky Mountain News, in conjunction with the Pravda, allowed their respective readers a window in (or out, depending on your nationality) to exchange personal greetings. I placed an advertisement in the December 25, 1990 issue of Pravda, asking for a "penpal-ship" with any Soviet Sherlockians. With a readership of over 14 million daily, (how about delivering to that neighborhood!) I felt certain that my ad would snag the eye of at least one or two Sherlockians. On March 29th, a very Russian looking envelope landed in my mailbox; the following week, another envelope turned up amidst the junk mail.

The first letter was, frustratingly, in Russian. However, the second was in English that was actually coherent enough to understand! Through Lab Member Becky Jones, I was able to obtain the services of a translator whom will allow me to pick her brains for a relatively small fee. So, it's my pleasure to announce that we have two new members, Luba Igorava from Vicrairie, and Vladmir Lioussine, who lives in Leningrad. Luba is the 31 year old mother of two boys. She tells us that she reads any Sherlock she can get her hands on and asks for anything American/Sherlockian I can send her. Vladmir is a 31 year old College Professor who is interested in The Master and the Wild West. I'm sure they'll

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EDITOR'S NOTES -

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collection has grown quite nicely due in great part to that little corner on the upper floor. If at some time you would like me to make a purchase from them for you, it would be my pleasure.

The entire PAPER makes most enjoyable reading, and I'll keep looking forward to copies whenever they're issued. Continued good luck with it.

Best Sherlockian Wishes,
Kathleen Hink
North Arlington, NJ

Well, Kathleen, It's very gratifying to hear that Sherlockians so far away are enjoying our local publication. I really envy you being so close to the MYSTERIOUS BOOKSHOP that you can visit every week. Thanks particularly for your kind offer. What would be really nice if you could write us once per month or so and share with us whatever is new that you may find in the BOOKSHOP. We could then share this with our readers and people could order from the MYSTERIOUS BOOKSHOP directly. What do you think?

Our next letter came to my place of business addressed to somebody else completely.

Dear Ms Reffel:

Larry Feldman's editorship of THE LITMUS PAPER makes for fine reading. Case in point is the fine article on your encouragement of students to read classic literature.

I especially liked Larry's opening quote, attributed to Sherlock Holmes, which described English board schools, "Lighthouses my boy! Beacons to the future!" The

quote generated an idea that falls into place with the sidebar request for contributions to help further your students interest in matters Sherlockian.

Partly for love of Sherlockian collectibles and, in part, to help finance a Holmesian research project, my wife and I operate a small mail order business catering to the fans of the world's first consulting detective. Lapel pins have been the most popular of our items and we have acquired a number of stock dies. Included is a lighthouse, much like the one pictured on the reverses of the large English pennies in circulation during Holmes' time.

I propose to make fifty of these pins (14kt gold plate) and donate nine, one for each month of the school year, to be used as a monthly award to the student "shining the greatest light on Sherlockian studies," or for whatever reason you would choose. We would sell the remaining pins to collectors to underwrite the cost of the project. If successful, the project could be repeated on an annual basis.

Your comments would be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Ed Rochette
Colorado Springs, CO

Ed, on behalf of Ellen, I want to thank you for your generous contribution. Those of you who were with us last issue will remember Ellen Reffel, the English teacher that does a unit on Sherlock Holmes with her Junior High School students. Well, you'll all be happy to hear that Ellen and I wrote a \$500 grant to pay for a new Sherlockian library and reference section to further

develop ways to make the master detective a part of the educational experience. Ellen and I not only love the idea of your reward pins, Ed, but we may be using this money to buy some of those additional pins, and perhaps other items as well.

This money should go a long way towards acquiring Ellen's "wish list." However, donations of educational materials will still be greatly appreciated. If you have anything that you think might be useful, you can contact me or Ellen herself at Meritt Hutton Junior High in Thornton.

You know, all this talk about Ellen and her work has got me thinking. There's a lot of talk in Sherlockian circles about keeping "the memory of The Master green," and there's no better way than promoting the teaching of Sherlock Holmes stories in your local school. Figuring how to accomplish this will take some creativity of thought. If you have any ideas on ways to do this, please write to me and I'll publish your suggestions in THE LITMUS PAPER.

Meanwhile, here's mine. What would you all think of a national Baker Street Irregular grant awarded to teachers for using Sherlock Holmes to further literacy in the classroom? Anyone (particularly an actual invested member of the BSI) interested in pursuing such an idea, please contact me. Please send such communications as well as any other comments or suggestions to:

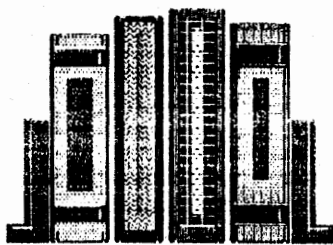
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THE BOOK CORNER

by Larry Feldman

It must be a common experience for a book collector to experience what I have sometimes thought of as "The



Book Syndrome." This is the phenomena of the book collector becoming somewhere between mildly and alarmingly obsessed with the location of a particular book for his collection. This book is soon elevated to the status of "The book!"

When you are browsing the used book store or perusing the collectors catalogue, while you gain an interest in the other books offered, you know in your heart that there is only one book that you are really looking for and that will really satisfy you.

In my career as a Sherlockian book collector there have been several "The books." My first was the classic Ellery Queen collection *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*. This was purchased in the dealers room at my first "Sherlockian Workshop." The next was *The Council of Four's The Science-Fictional Sherlock Holmes*. This was found at an antiquarian book fair in New York which I attended mainly because a priceless copy of a certain Beeton's Christmas Annual was being displayed. I purchased "The SF Holmes" at what I considered an inflated price. But what did that matter? At the time, we were talking *The book!*

The next "must have" item was the seminal work, *Sherlock Holmes: Fact or Fiction?* by T.S. Blakeney. This was found in a large but elegant used book store in Williamsburg, Virginia. More recently there was the more obscure *Raffles Of The Albany* by Gary Perowne. This was given to me as a going away gift from some Sherlockian friends when I left New York. One of them had evidently stumbled upon it by accident in the very store in which I had checked for it for months on an almost weekly basis. Though, of the least monetary value of all my "The books," it will always mean for me fond memories of old friendships.

All of which, leads me to the following collector's tale. Most all fans of the Master are familiar with the many cheap versions of a book whose title is always something like "The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes." These books reprint the pages from the original Strand Magazine appearances of what we Sherlockians sometimes refer to as "The Sacred Writings,"

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FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BAG

by John Stephenson

Greetings to all Patients and Chemists. The month of March saw a display of Sherlockiana at the Christensen



Library, 2305 E. Arapahoe Road, Littleton, Co 80122. The display was to remind the public that "Dr. Watson's Neglected Patients" was alive and well. A nice "thank you" note from librarian Dee Regua stated "It was an attractive eye-catching display!"

The much celebrated Dr. Watson's Tea will be held late May this year. The wait is due to the late arrival of a special video tape of "The Christopher Morely Centennial Symposium" for the "Sherlock Holmes/Christopher Morley Birthday Dinner" that is being held in May. This tape of the proceedings should make interesting viewing and will be the feature attraction of our tea. We will notify all members of the date and it will be limited seating once again.

It is with much sadness that I report the death of a great Sherlockian. Michael Hardwick is dead at the age of 66. Much of his work was in collaboration with his wife Mollie and they produced many fine books on Mr. Holmes. A partial list includes:

- The Man Who Was Sherlock Holmes (1964)
- The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes (1970)
- The Prisoner of the Devil (1979)
- The Private Life of Dr. Watson (1983)
- Sherlock Holmes: My Life and Crimes (1984)
- The Revenge of the Hound (1987)

In 1988 Dame Jean Conan Doyle put a ban on all publications of new Sherlock Holmes narrative without her approval. This stopped Michael Hardwick from writing any more Sherlock Holmes stories. This has proven a great loss to all Sherlockians. In memory of Michael I urge you to read one of his many stories and enjoy what a truly great Sherlockian gave to you.

BOOK CORNER

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which includes the original illustrations, hence the word "illustrated" almost always being in the title. If your copy is like mine, then it's printed on cheap newsprint and doesn't contain more than two thirds of the Canon. Why only two thirds? The answer here is quite elementary. These are the only parts of the Canon that are out of copyright (and therefore cheap to print) in the United States.

These books had the advantage of being cheap and commonplace. So much so that, at first, I resisted buying one, stubbornly clinging to my old Doubleday edition of the Canon, literally the first hardcover book I had ever purchased with my own money. Soon, for whatever reason, my resolve weakened and I purchased one version or another.

Soon the charm of these books overtook me. It gave me a rather magical feeling to think I was reading the original Sherlock Holmes stories in almost the same format as they were originally received by the public. I particularly enjoyed the illustrations by Paget which contributed so much to the public perception of the great man. I became fascinated with this version of "The Sacred Writings" and was very satisfied with my purchase.

However, this did not last. The enjoyment of what I had found soon began to remind me of what I did not have. I longed to own a Strand reprint of the latter part of the Canon, the collections entitled *His Last Bow*, *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*, and the novel *The Valley of Fear*, all still under copyright protection in the U.S., and therefore not yet reprinted in their original form.

It was not long before a collection of the complete Canon reprinted from the original Strand pages became *The book*. I began making inquiries, particularly to British book stores where I hoped that, since the stories outside the States were all out of copyright, I might find what I was looking for. Once I read of such a book in the *Baker Street Journal*, but, for various reasons, the British stores I contacted were either

unable or unwilling to acquire one for me. I almost located one when visiting Bermuda, but it was sold by the time I made it to the store. Everyone I knew of that was making a trip to Europe was sent off with instructions to try and locate such a book for me. All this, to no avail. I even considered trying to purchase the actual Strand editions, though the expense(!) and difficulty of this project eliminated this possibility. Though years of failure followed, I never stopped letting my Sherlockian friends know what it was I was looking for, in hope that someone would hear something that would give me a lead.

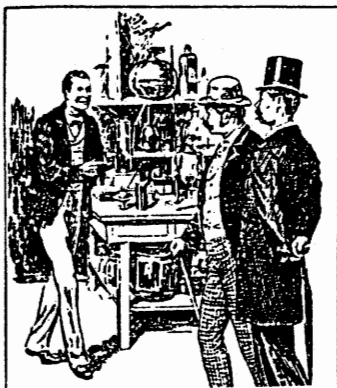
Well, it has all finally paid off. Good friends Jim and Debbie Butler happened to run across just such a book in a small bookstore in Arvada and managed to acquire the two last copies, one for themselves and the other for me. Now, *that's* friendship!

The book is beautiful. It's entitled *The Original Illustrated 'STRAND' Sherlock Holmes, The Complete Facsimile Edition* and is published by The Mallard Press. It is printed on good sturdy paper and (unlike all previous versions that I have seen) each page is as large as the original Strand pages. As a result, as the book jacket itself puts it, "The clarity of the illustrations is remarkable, and all the ones by Sidney Paget and the others are revealed in pristine glory." It is so complete that it not only contains every Sherlock Holmes story and illustration, it actually includes some of the original Strand advertisements.

In short, the book is everything that I could have ever hoped for. For the second time in my life, *The book* has been located due to the kindness of my brothers in Sherlockian scholarship. And, best of all, for the first time in memory, I am rid of "The Book Syndrome." I find myself totally satisfied as a collector.

Or am I? Recently I noticed my old edition of *Sherlock Holmes: Fact Or Fiction?* is looking a bit tawdry. And, after all, it is only the old BSI paperback reprint edition. I have been thinking lately how much nicer it would be to own one of the original hardcover editions.

"The game's afoot!"



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