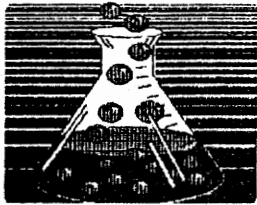


The Litmus Paper

Published in combination with THE MEDICAL BULLETIN, is an Irregular Publication of St. Bartholomew's Chemical Lab and Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients Scions of The Baker Street Irregulars

Volume 1, Number 5
Lab Technician - Debbie Butler

Summer, 1991
Editor - Larry Feldman



LAB NOTES

by Debbie Butler

During the hot days of July and August, it seems that the Sherlockian world has entered the summer doldrums. Most of us have put the Master on hold, as vacations to the mountains, family reunions and little league games take precedent. And for those unfortunate enough not to sneak out of town fast enough, we've been invaded by hordes of relatives, complete with aunts who consider it their Holy Quest to rearrange all your closets, sticky nephews, smelling of chocolate and grape, who lose it all over the guest room bedspread, and loud-mouthed uncles in Hawaiian shirts and plaid shorts.

However, summertime activities coincided with the Canon on the evening of July 20, when eleven Lab members met at the home of

Larry and Liz Feldman in South Denver for the "First Annual Silver Blaze Barbecue And Horseshoe Tournament." Now, normally scheduling an outdoor function in Colorado for the end of July is a pretty
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"LET US STAND UPON THE TERRACE" by Jim Butler

It is a sad note that I write for THE LITMUS PAPER. As most of you know by now, The Chem Lab has suffered the loss of Irv Hale, one of our charter members. Irv passed away this past June 29th after a long battle with leukemia.

Irv was always a joy to have around whenever we gathered. In addition to being an active Sherlockian, he was also interested and active in long-time radio and "Ripperology." Irv will be missed. He was a valuable addition to our scion. As a memorial to Irv, his investiture name in The Chem Lab - Jabez Wilson - will be retired and not available to anyone else. In addition, Irv's widow, Joan, will be made a permanent non-dues paying member of The Chem Lab.



THE MEDICAL BULLETIN BOARD

by Larry Feldman



I actually felt a bit sorry for Chief Surgeon John Stephenson last May at The Patients annual DOCTOR WATSON'S TEA. After all, he went to great trouble arranging to have a special tape of "The Christopher Morely Centennial Symposium" for the event and to have it played on a substantial motion picture screen for everyone's viewing pleasure. Unfortunately for him, those who attended were so enjoying meeting and conversing with each other, that few, if any, paid much attention to the presentation. Of course, it was not exactly helpful that The House Of Windsor, a charming British Tea Shoppe located at St. Paul and 2nd Avenue in the Cherry Creek section of Denver, did a wonderful job of providing pastry, cake, and scones with their excellent tea. So, although the video was a bit of a miss, the event itself was a big success. But don't feel too badly for John. Fortunately for him, Ed Rochette was on hand with the latest item offered up as part of the Sherlockian mail order business that he and his charming wife own and run. This time they were captivating plaster statues of Holmes and Watson, in repose at Baker Street. As per usual, our Chief Surgeon was the first in line for his, so that even *he* went home
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Lab Notes -

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safe bet; unfortunately Denver has had more of its share of rain this summer. I went out to the front yard a few days ago and found mushrooms growing!

Personally, we suspect that the Professor has something on the weatherman. The skies decided to open up about 5:00 that afternoon, and dump their contents over the Feldman backyard, forcing the grille to the front porch, the meeting indoors, and the Horse Shoe Tournament to a later date. The rain, however, did not dampen the meeting for those who attended. We feasted on a whole table of goodies, presided over by fourteen month old Alex Feldman, throwing his peas around the place. Later, we struggled through a masterful quiz on "A Scandal In Bohemia" crafted by Larry. The proverbial laurel wreath was carried off by Ed Rochette. The next meeting of the faithful will be to the south at Ed and Mary Ann's home in Colorado Springs. Time, date, and exact location are to follow.

Since the last edition of this worthy newsletter, the flood gates of Soviet Sherlockians has opened up. I have received more replies to my advertisement looking for Sherlockians behind the Iron Curtain. As I shared with you last time, I have heard from Vladimir, the college professor from Leningrad, and Lena, who is a divorced mother of two (and complains of her ex-husband being forever late with his child support - I guess things aren't so different over there!). Since then, I have contacted Lena and her son and daughter, Yuri and Larissa,

A Special Request From The Editor:

As much as I enjoy working on and writing for The Litmus Paper, I have a vision for our humble newsletter to become known for displaying local talent.

I know there must be some of you out there that have a Sherlockian related article, poem, story or paper inside you, just bursting to get out. Well, now's your chance! Check at the bottom of "Editor's Notes" for our submission address.



who live in a small town in Moscow. They have gotten hold of some of the Canon, but mostly read whatever Agatha Christie, Ray Chandler, Rex Stout, and James Gardner they can find. I have also received several letters from Vladimir Alexandrovich, an attorney from the Ukraine. He likes mystery stories and westerns in general, but is far more interested in finding a "non-marriage woman" to bring him to the States and set him up in practice. So, if you know any female friends that might wish to take a chance on a fairly well off Ukrainian lawyer who swears he's not a member of the Party, please contact me through the Litmus Paper for a photo and other info. I also received a letter from Elana Rubachyeva, who addresses her letter to "My Foreign Friend." Elana hails from Anapa, near the Black Sea, and works for the Soviet Post Office; she holds degrees in engineering and economics, and what the Post Office needs with an engineer is beyond me. She has a small library of Holmes books collected from various places, and enjoys ballet and classical music. She asks that, as she

does not know English very well, if could write to her in French, in which she is quite fluent. Hey, Elana, I have enough trouble with English! More on my Soviet correspondence will appear in future issues of The Litmus Paper.

As most of you are aware, we have lost one of the best. Irv Hale passed away on June 29th. He had been carrying on a hard battle with leukemia. I remember spending one cold, dark Halloween's Eve with Irv and Ron Lies discussing Jack the Ripper on a local radio show. For an hour we raged about our pet theories. I am proud to say that Irv and I shared the same theory, that is, the right one. He told me later that he also believed that on the Big Day, when each of us has to account for our lives before St. Peter, he would just ask the real Jack to stand up. And, more than likely, someone would stand up that he'd never heard of. Well, I guess Irv knows now; and, knowing Irv as I do, he'll have the wit, humor, and courtesy to come back and tell me. I look forward to it.

That's about all for this go-round. The very best to all till the next time.

Medical Bulletin Board
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happy. As most of you know, nothing cheers John up more than a chance to add to his world class Sherlock Holmes collection.

And speaking of John and his collection, the Arvada Center for The Arts and Humanities will be honoring him in a very singular fashion. Over one third of his hoard of Sherlockian items will be on display as part of their program entitled "Magnificent Obsessions: Collectors/Collecting/Collecti ons" from August 22nd to November 24th at their sight at 6901 Wadsworth Blvd. Now, here's an interesting twist. You've heard of people attempting to recreate Sherlock Holmes' sitting room? So have I, but I've never heard of anyone trying to duplicate the sitting room of a fellow Sherlockian. Nevertheless, they'll actually be borrowing furniture from John's home in an effort to recreate *his* sitting room. The program will also feature collectors and collections of beads, headgear, Star Wars, teapots, rocks, and fire engines. Particularly good times to stop by would be on August 22nd, from 7-9PM, for an opening day



reception, as well as October 3rd at 7:30PM for a special seminar with the collectors. This event is no small deal (twenty to thirty thousand people are expected to attend), so it would be great if a bunch of us could show up to show John our interest in, and support of, the contribution he makes to our Sherlockian

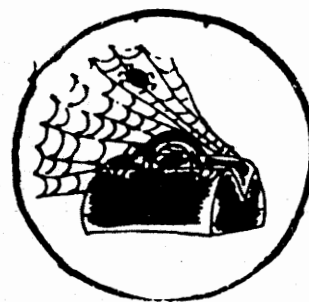
community. I know that I intend to attend the seminar just for the pleasure of asking John some embarrassing questions in public, like "Is it true that, in order to find room at home to display some of your pieces, you've had to purchase wall space from your wife?" Feel free to use *that* one, I've got a few more in mind.



The Heritage Square Opera House plans to offer, a

play entitled "Sherlock Holmes: A Little Night Mystery". This dinner theatre presentation, according to my sources, is *not* the famous play by Gillette, but some sort of original victorian melodrama that the Opera House has featured in seasons

past. The play will run from mid-August to mid-September and attending as a group will be out next official NEGLECTED PATIENTS event, in lieu of our usual fall picnic. Dinner and the show will cost our group \$24 including gratuity. Tickets have been reserved for Sept 21st, though checks to John Stephenson are due by Sept 1st. Members should have received most info in the mail by now. If not, feel free to contact John, or treasurer Stan Moskal, directly.



Membership Information

Membership for each club includes a membership package, notification of meetings and events, and a subscription to "The Litmus Paper."

If you wish to join DOCTOR WATSON'S NEGLECTED PATIENTS please send a check for \$7.50 made out to DWNP to: DWNP c/o Stan Moskal, 1453 Milwaukee, Denver CO 80206

To become a member of SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S CHEM LAB, send a check for \$7.50 made out to Jim Butler to: St Bart's Chem Lab c/o Jim Butler, 8015-D Holland Ct., Arvada CO 80005.

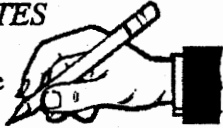
If you live outside the Denver area and you would like to subscribe to The Litmus Paper *only*, send a check for \$4.00 to Jim Butler.

EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the sixth issue of **THE LITMUS PAPER**, which is labeled as, and will henceforth be known as, issue number five. This may, at first glance, appear confusing to any first-time readers. Actually, our irregular numbering system seldom gets clearer, even on the second or third look. The reason behind this fairly random system is to do honor to **The Baker Street Irregulars**, which is ..er..umm..the society of which we are a scion.

Pardon the awkwardness of the previous sentence, but it occurs to me that I don't know of a word which describes our relationship with the BSI. I am clear that **Doctor Watson's Neglected Patients** and **Saint Bartholomew's Chemical Laboratory** are *scion* societies of the BSI, but what are they to us? The Random House Dictionary of the English Language defines "scion" as "a descendant". So, if we are "descendant" societies, we might say the BSI is our "ancestral" society. Or, perhaps, "father" or "parent" society is more appropriate. Another possibility suggests itself from the second definition listed for "scion", which is "a shoot or twig, [especially] one cut for grafting or planting; a cutting." What do y'all think of referring to the BSI as our "root" organization? If anyone knows the definitive answer to this question, I'd appreciate you dropping me a line.

Jim, Debbie and I hereby dedicate this issue of **THE LITMUS PAPER** to our friend and fellow Sherlockian, the late Irving Hale. I'll leave it to



those who new him best speak of him at length. Being new to the area, I didn't know Irv as well as others. I've had several of those magic, enthusiastic discussions that organizations like **The Chem Lab** and **The Neglected Patients** are all about. Three conversations in particular, regarding **Sherlock Holmes**, the colorization of old movies, and old radio adventure programs, stand out in my mind and are fondly remembered. After our first talk about the old radio days, Irv promised to send me some materials about a club for enthusiasts whose membership he enjoyed. It came in the mail three days later. People often tell me they'll send me things, but Irv was one of the few who were prompt about keeping their word. I'll miss his presence at our regular meetings.

Now, let's look at the mail. Once again, I was "neglected" by the **Neglected Patients**, while the **Chem Lab** offered no "solutions." I'd appreciate comments, positive or otherwise, from our local membership so that I can tell if I'm going in the right direction with **THE LITMUS PAPER**. Also, comments and suggestions regarding our two scions themselves (or *anything* of local Sherlockian interest) will be acknowledged and discussed. Let me assure you that I am *not* afraid of controversy. I really want to make this newsletter a forum for the membership.

If your letter was to be printed here, it would be in good company as I did get a letter each from two of the most eminent Sherlockians in the world. Here's the first one.

Dear Larry:

Many thanks for the Spring 1991 issue of THE LITMUS PAPER. Enclosed are duplicate cards for the two articles by you which I thoroughly enjoyed. It's always a pleasure to hear from a fellow Sherlockian in Colorado. I miss not living there! I have not received a copy of THE MEDICAL BULLETIN since the Summer-Fall 1987 issue. Perhaps I am on the editor's black list! Unfortunately, significant items published therein will not appear in my bibliography. The third volume, THE UNIVERSAL SHERLOCK HOLMES, should be published next year by Greenwood Press, after which I plan to prepare three-year supplements, also to be published by Greenwood. Greenwood, of course, published Don Redmond's impressive book, SHERLOCK HOLMES AMONG THE PIRATES.

In one of your articles you write that Watson "was, at least, of average intelligence." I say that he was far above average. Could someone of "average intelligence" obtain an M.D. degree or record Holmes's cases? Surely he must have been intelligent enough to accomplish these two tasks. Even though Holmes has a superior intellect (he may not be quite as sharp at 137 as he was in his youth), he was, after all, a college dropout and, unlike Watson, was never known for his writing skills. In some respects Watson was Holmes superior!

Thanks again for the latest LITMUS PAPER.

*Best wishes,
Ronald B. De Waal*

*I was very gratified to receive your kind letter and I'm glad to
Continued on the following page.*

Editor's Notes - Continued from the
previous page.

hear that you enjoyed THE LITMUS PAPER. I am further pleased that you enjoyed my humble writing attempts and I'm excited about the possibility of their inclusion in the next volume of your world famous bibliography series (or one of the supplements.)

I am personally aghast that a Sherlockian of your stature does not normally receive a complimentary copy of every local Sherlockian publication, particularly considering the kind of work you are doing. Rest assured that you will receive all future copies of THE LITMUS PAPER as long as I am editor, even if I have to mail it out personally. In addition, I am sending you photocopies of our two previous issues for your perusal. We're very proud of them and I hope that you enjoy them.

As to the matter of Watson's superiority to Holmes, there seems little doubt that Holmes deferred to Watson on many matters, affairs of the heart and medical considerations being the two areas which spring to mind the most readily. However, consider this: If Watson was so clever, how did he let that infamous spiritualist and writer of romantic and improbable stories get the credit for most of his written work?

Our second letter is from none other than the head of our aforementioned "root" society.

Dear Larry,

I enjoy reading THE LITMUS PAPER and in the recent issue was particularly interested in the correspondence from Ed

Rochette to Ms. Ellen Reffel and your comments. Since Ms. Reffel is working hard to "keep green the memory of the Master" I will be sending you for presentation to her a few books donated to the BSI. These are to be used in any way at her discretion.

For some time the BSI has been trying to aid teachers who have shown an interest in helping their students become acquainted with Mr. Holmes. I have appointed an Irregular to try to maintain contact with interested parties concerning these matters. The job is a big one as there are many times we do not hear about what people are trying to do.

Your suggestion of a national grant by the BSI presents some problems. The idea of handling a project of such size and scope for a volunteer organization is mind boggling. The BSI charges no dues and its modest treasury is used for operating expenses. As head of the BSI I have no desire to get involved in any more fundraising operations. I will be interested in hearing any suggestions that you may receive and will certainly give full consideration to any part that the BSI can or may play. Canonically,

Tom Stix

Tom, I apologize for not writing to you personally, but Ellen and I really wanted to thank you in print for the carton of books that showed up on my doorstep. A few of them were already on our "wish list" while others (like Dakin's A Sherlock Holmes Commentary) opened up some new possibilities. Thanks again.

As for my idea about the national grant, I can see now that I was being a tad unrealistic with my off-the-cuff

suggestion. Upon consideration I have decided that anything done to promote literacy through the teaching of the Canon should begin at the local level. I still have a few ideas in this area and will keep you informed. Also, perhaps you can forward the name and address of the Irregular that you've appointed to support educators making use of the Canon. I've got some ideas for him too.

This would probably be a good time to mention, for those local members who don't keep up with the doings of the BSI, that last January the world shook just a bit, as, for the first time ever, five ladies were invested into the august organization. Most of you know that, since 1934, when Christopher Morely published a Sherlock Holmes crossword puzzle in the Saturday Review and invited all successful entries to form the Baker Street Irregulars, the BSI has always excluded women from membership. Among those who were successful in solving the puzzle then, was Katherine McMann. Now, almost 50 years later, Ms. McMann has received her BSI investiture! Also receiving the coveted "shilling" was Dame Jean Conan Doyle (Sir Arthur's youngest daughter), Edith Meiser (writer and producer of the best of the Sherlock Holmes radio series which contributed much to an American revival of interest in Holmes in the 1930s), Evelyn Herzog, Julia Rosenblatt, and Susan Rice. These last three ladies are founding or longtime members of THE ADVENTURESSES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (ASH), the all female Sherlock Holmes society that (both as a group and through the

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Editor's Notes - Continued from previous page

individual talents of its membership) has contributed so much to the world of Sherlockiana. Congratulations, ladies! And particular kudos go to Tom Stix and the BSI administrators for showing this kind of bold and forward-looking leadership.

Please send all comments, questions, suggestions, and submissions to:

The Litmus Paper
c/o Larry Feldman
841 S. Corona St.
Denver, CO 80209



THE NUMISMATIC MASTER by Jim Butler

[Editor's Note - As I write these words, Ed Rochette has been scheduled to talk at the "DWNP Annual Sherlock Holmes Birthday Dinner" on the subject of Holmes and coins. Most of us know Ed for his small, though ever-growing, Sherlockian "knick-knack" business. It may surprise you to discover that Ed is an expert on Numismatics with a world-wide reputation. For these reasons, I thought this piece on Ed's accomplishments would be of particular interest.]

One of the newer, but very



active, members of Saint Bart's Chem Lab, Ed Rochette, has just been elected to the office of President of the American Numismatics Association (ANA). For those of you who don't know, the ANA is a congressionally chartered group which is dedicated to the study and enjoyment of numismatics (coins and currency).

Coincidentally, the ANA is now celebrating its 100th birthday, having been chartered in 1891. It is certain that the ANA will be very well served with Ed Rochette at the helm, since he is considered to be a top expert in the field, as well as having the needed leadership qualities. Being a member of the ANA for several years, I had heard of Ed Rochette and, in fact, had read several of his books and columns on numismatics, before I ever had the pleasure of meeting him. I finally had the privilege of shaking his hand, shortly after the Saturday morning he called my home to ask about Sherlockian groups in the area.

Incidentally, Ed is giving a lecture at the AMA 100th Anniversary Convention in Chicago this month. His subject will be "Numismatics and Sherlock Holmes." I also believe his next book will be on this subject.

We all wish Ed the very best in his new position.

AN "OBJECT" LESSON by Debbie Butler

Just as certain objects will remind us of pleasant circumstances, so to do we begin to associate particular items with Sherlock Holmes stories. Name the Canonical story based on the three objects listed for by each numeral. The

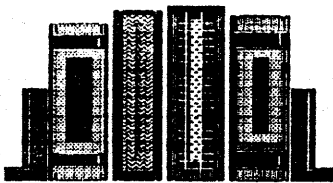
earliest postmarked correct set of answers that I receive will be formally presented with a prize at our next "Lab" meeting. See "MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION" for the "Butler" address. The correct answers, and a list of all those who provided them, will appear in our next issue.

- 1) a) bicycle
b) syringe filled with aniseed
c) dog named "Pompey"
- 2) a) curried chicken
b) rose
c) bell pull
- 3) a) ming saucer
b) vial of vitriol
c) bloody head bandages
- 4) a) cataract knife
b) dressmaker's bill
c) silent dog
- 5) a) 2 plated candlesticks
b) ball of twine
c) ivory letter-weight
- 6) a) large black box at the foot of the bed
b) a monograph on obscure nervous lesions
c) coil of rope
- 7) a) dead goose
b) glass of beer
c) broken fire grate
- 8) a) split level coffin
b) a blue blouse
c) screw driver
- 9) a) bicycle
b) dumbbell
c) sawed off shotgun
- 10) a) loud grey checked coats
b) letter from "Mary Maberly"
c) crown-derby tea set



THE BOOK CORNER

by Larry Feldman



I'm tempted to title this issue's column "The Adventure Of The Case Of The Badly Titled Stories." I'll resist the temptation.

It is not surprising that so many of us who have loved the Master Detective and his world for so much of our lives, have been driven to write on of the most controversial forms of Sherlockian expression, the pastiche. Some feel that those who take this route are "taking the easy way out" since they are either too lazy or untalented to create their own characters. People who feel this way should consider the fact that to write a Sherlock Holmes adventure that rings true, one needs not only to imitate the writing style of a particular author, you've also got to recreate the language, interaction, and culture of Victorian England. This, in the case of either the professional mystery writer or the amateur "fan", has got to be one of the most difficult tasks imaginable, particularly if you happen to be a 20th century American. In addition to this, you've got to hit just the right note with the characters *and* write an intriguing and original detective story as well.

The Sherlockian community has always had a love/hate relationship with these attempts to recreate the magic first discovered in a minor British publication in 1887. It is certainly a vocal group that dislikes the Holmesian pastiche, and speaks of them derisively. And with all the truly poor ones that have been published since 1974, when Nicholas Meyer's *THE SEVEN PER-CENT SOLUTION* made the best-sellers list, one can certainly sympathize. On the other hand, there were those that did not hesitate to verbalize their frustration when, a few years ago, Dame Jean Conan Doyle announced that she would no longer authorize non-Canonical Sherlock Holmes stories to be published in the United States.

I, for one, have always had a special fondness for the well-written Sherlock Holmes pastiche. It was the above mentioned *SEVEN PER-CENT SOLUTION* that first drew me into the world of Sherlockian scholarship and scion societies.

I had been reading and re-reading the Sacred Writings for about three years when the book came out. I first read of it in the book review

section of my father's "Time Magazine". While I was impatient to acquire a copy, I had no choice but to wait as the book seemed continually "checked out" of my local library and, in those days, actually spending \$6.95 on a single hardcover book seemed an unthinkable extravagance. It was during the next summer that I discovered the book on sale in paperback form in a local "Woolworths" and hungrily scooped it up and began reading voraciously.

While reading, it soon became clear that I had found a kindred spirit in Mr. Meyer. His use of the Canon characters, including the Mycroft and Mrs. Hudson, as well as the unexpected Stamford and Toby, made me think, "Here is a man who appreciates Sherlock Holmes the way I do." This awareness allowed left me open to discovering other works that validated my feelings about Holmes and his world. It wasn't long before I discovered such books as Baring-Gould's *SHERLOCK HOLMES OF BAKER STREET* and *THE ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES*, as well as Arthur H. Lewis' *COPPER BEECHES*. After reading these, it was clear to me that I was destined to participate some day with the greatest of Sherlockians, The Baker Street Irregulars, in some way or another.

Now, just because I enjoy a well-done pastiche, does not mean that I am not critical of them. Due to some of the difficulties discussed above, it is not difficult to find fault with most modern attempts. Understanding this, I *can* forgive a lot. However, it has been my experience that most readers of this sort of Holmes tale have their own set of "pet peeves" or errors made by a writer that can ruin the mood or immediately turn them off to an otherwise good story. Just for fun, I'd like to share one of mine with you that is, admittedly, a little unusual.

Recently, I read June Thomson's *THE SECRET FILES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*.

Ms. Thomson chose the short story format for her pastiche writing, which makes a nice change from all the "novels" that we usually see these days. Without going into an actual review of the book, I will say that I found these stories to be not exactly inspired or terribly clever, but certainly good workable pastiches in which Holmes and Watson are faultlessly in character and never a wrong note is struck.

Continued next page.

The Bookcorner - Continued from previous page.

My one real complaint is with the titles. Each story title begins with the phrase "The Case of the". There's The Case of the Remarkable Worm, The Case of the Abandoned Lighthouse, and The Case of the Amateur Mendicants, to name three. Glancing over my bookcase, we find such examples of Holmes novels as THE CASE OF THE PHILOSOPHERS RING, THE CASE OF THE REVOLUTIONIST'S DAUGHTER, THE CASE OF THE BAKER STREET IRREGULAR, and two novels by L. B. Greenwood, SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CASE OF SABINA HALL and SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE CASE OF THE RALEIGH LEGACY.

Where did these writers get the idea that having Sherlock Holmes stories with the word "Case" in the title is good pastiche writing? There is certainly no Canonical story that begins this way. I imagine that many feel that this is good general mystery writing technique. I, like others, will always associate this sort of title with Erle Stanley Gardner's classic "Perry Mason" series. I am aware that other writers besides Gardner have used this over the years as a way of identifying their novel as part of the detective genre. I don't feel that this justifies its use for Holmes, since in this case one is presumably attempting to recreate a particular style. The aforementioned titles would have been just as satisfying without the "The Case of The" prelude. If we must have some phrase in the beginning of the title, I suggest future Holmesian pastiche writers stick to "The Adventure of the.." which is much more traditional and properly Sherlockian. It is nice to see that Greenwood mends his ways in his third novel, SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE THISTLE OF SCOTLAND.

Well, that's one of my pet peeves. What about yours? What do you like or dislike about the great imitators? I would like to start a discussion of pastiches and parodies in this column if people are interested. Please write to me with your views and I will publish and discuss the most interesting. See *EDITORS NOTES* for the address.

