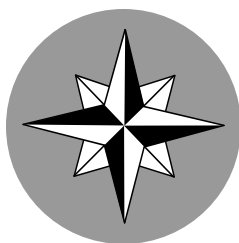




EXPLORATIONS



FROM THE PRESIDENT



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When the Norwegian Explorers first met in January 1948, their intention was to foster fellowship and scholarship in their study and enjoyment of Sherlock Holmes. Founders Theodore C. Blegen, E. W. Zeibarth, E.W. (Mac) McDiarmid, Bryce Crawford Jr. and Wallace Armstrong certainly set that tone, and it seems the foundation they established for the Explorers was a good one that has grown and flourished. As we acknowledge our founders, we send our well wishes to our lone surviving founder, Bryce Crawford, as he celebrates his 91st birthday on November 27.

Fifty-seven years after that first meeting, the Explorers remain a strong group of Holmes enthusiasts. I'd like to welcome the following new members:

- ♦ Jerry Claffy
- ♦ Willow Frelix
- ♦ John Genova
- ♦ Jeffrey and Jeanmarie Iverson
- ♦ Nona and Mike Mozer
- ♦ Art and Judy Payne
- ♦ Raymond H. Riethmeier
- ♦ Janice Schwartzbauer
- ♦ Frances Valasek

(Continued on page 2)

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



The Sherlockian and Doylean publishing world seems to be enjoying a bull market. At least three pastiches have made the best-seller lists over the last year or two, and in this issue Mike Eckman reviews one of them, *A Slight Trick of the Mind* by Mitch Cullin. Also, *Arthur and George*, a fictionalized biography intertwining the lives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, has been garnering rave reviews; look for a review in the next issue. For those who like to hew closer to the Canon, the publication of Les Klinger's new annotated volume of the Holmes novels is a major event, and we review it here.

Bob Brusic weighs in with a whimsical piece on a serendipitous Holmesian connection he uncovered. We report on a recent film evening. And, as always, we have reports on our monthly Study Group sessions from Charles Clifford, this time supplemented by a report from Karen Murdock.

Submissions for *Explorations* are always welcome. Please email items in Word or plain text format to john.bergquist@gmail.com ♦

John Bergquist, BSI
Editor, *Explorations*

FROM THE PRESIDENT (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

One of these new members is returning to the Explorers after a hiatus, others joined after reading an article about our group in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, and at least two came to us through recommendations of friends and co-workers. All are welcome, and I hope these new members enjoy the fellowship and scholarship we aspire to.

Congratulations to Explorers Elliott Black and Sally Cohn on the move to their new home in Swannanoa, NC from the Chicago area. Also, I'd like to extend the wishes of all Explorers to Bill Sturtz on his continued recovery to good health.

Raymond Reister passed away recently. He was a long time member of our scion society and his obituary noted "Reister's interests included the arts, history, nature and wildlife, rare books, music and travel. His service on the boards of civic organizations mirrored those interests." He served on the boards of the Historical Society, Minnesota Humanities Commission, the Minneapolis Institute of Fine Arts and the American Refugee Committee and was a visiting scholar at The Brookings Institution in Washington. He was an attorney with the Dorsey and Whitney law firm in Minneapolis.

Our annual dinner will be held on Thursday, December 1, at the Minneapolis Golf Club. Everyone will receive registration forms for the dinner, and I hope to see many of you there as we bring 2005 to a close and prepare for 2006. ❖

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

FILM NIGHT- THE SIGN OF FOUR

The Norwegian Explorers enjoyed another of our popular film nights at the Andersen Library on Monday, October 24. The film for the evening was the 1932 version of *The Sign of Four*, starring Arthur Wontner as Sherlock Holmes and



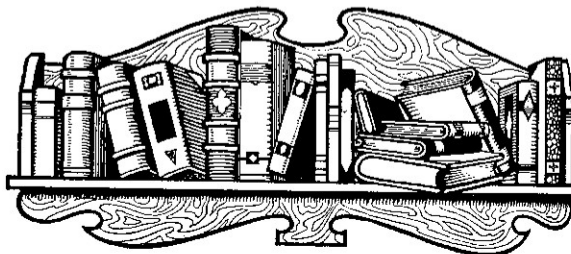
Ian Hunter as Dr. Watson. Although the film and others of its time suffer in comparison to more sophisticated modern efforts, and it certainly took liberties with the Canon, most in the room agreed that Wontner was a superb

Holmes. The late actor bore an uncanny resemblance to the early Sidney Paget illustrations of Holmes as appeared in the *Strand Magazine*.

We had special guests from Chelmsford, England with us for the evening: Simon and Karen Rudge, along with their daughters Kathryn and Kayleigh, attended the film night after having toured the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota earlier in the day. Simon is a colleague of Jean Upton, BSI, and Jean recommended that he look us up while on holiday in the Minneapolis area.

As always, many thanks to Tim Johnson for reserving and setting up the room and to Julie McKuras for planning and publicizing the evening and for supplying popcorn and other treats. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI



Arthur Wontner bore an uncanny resemblance to the early Sidney Paget illustrations of Holmes.

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

A REFLECTION ON A PERCEIVED CONNECTION

Recently I had occasion to write a little essay on one of the works of the British artist Sybil Andrews. While her life span (1898-1993) definitely overlapped that of Sherlock Holmes (1854-??), there is no evidence that this fine artist ever met that even finer detective. It is possible, however, that Holmes may have seen and even admired her work, which was punchy, popular, and fraught with energy.

Because of his association with the cricket player Gilchrist (the guilty party in the Fortescue Scholarship cheating case), Sybil Andrews' linocut posters advertising cricket matches at Lords might have elicited a knowing smile from the all-seeing detective. It is also quite possible that Holmes, with his well-known love of concert music and his familiarity with the horse track, might have seen and enjoyed such works by Andrews as "Concert Hall" and "Racing."

These works date from the late 1920s and early 1930s, which means, parenthetically, that the age differential between Holmes and Andrews would be roughly equivalent to that of Himself and Mary Russell. The latter, as many know, is the controversial but popular creation of Laurie R King. Russell, it would appear, was born in 1899 or 1900, according to the dating suggested in King's first pastiche, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*. Although there is a difference of but a year or two between them there is no possibility whatsoever that Sybil Andrews ever met or even heard of Mary Russell.

However, in doing some research for my own trifling exercise, I find myself emboldened to suggest what I perceive to be an indisputable methodological connection between the artist and the detective. In a book of reflections called *Artist's Kitchen* Andrews penned a chapter called "Keep Your Eyes Open." In this little essay she delineated a basic principle for her art: "Watch all the time. By watching, I mean seeing - not blindly looking. Watch and look for pattern everywhere around you, indoors and outdoors...This way you train your eye - your

mind's eye - to see pattern and design, not just pictorial appearance. We have to train ourselves, train our seeing, in order to develop an individual vision." (178)

It is evident in even a cursory reading of the Canon how crucial it was for Holmes likewise to engage in the act and art of observation. He often discourses on the importance of this activity in words that closely echo those of Sybil Andrews. In "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," for example, Holmes puts the matter this way: "You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles." Again, in "A Case of Identity" Holmes observes: "It is my business to know things. Perhaps I have trained myself to see what others overlook."

But we can see best what he is about in "A Scandal in Bohemia" when Holmes rips the scales from Watson's eyes this way: "You see but you do not observe. The distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room." Watson, of course, confesses his ignorance about the seventeen-step stairway, whereupon Holmes drives his insight home this way: "Quite so! You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is just my point. Now, I know that there are seventeen steps, because I have both seen and observed." That, I should note, has become one of my most loved passages in the whole Canon, because over time I have come to look, see, and observe that there are precisely seventeen steps from the sidewalk to the porch of my home in St. Paul.

I think we can likewise look, see, and conclude that the injunctions about observation made by Sherlock Holmes correspond quite closely to those articulated by Sybil Andrews. Without the discipline of watching and seeing neither would have been effective or successful in their chosen fields. Each one, the artist and the detective, had the sense to see; and, because of that vision, both had blood in their veins and art in the blood. ♦

Bob Brusic



"Each one, the artist and the detective, had the sense to see; and, because of that vision, both had blood in their veins and art in the blood."





**"Once Upon a Crime
mystery bookstore in
Minneapolis is
offering Volume III of
The New Annotated
Sherlock Holmes at a
discounted price to
members of the
Norwegian
Explorers."**

SHERLOCKIAN HAPPENINGS

VOLUME III OF *THE NEW ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES* RELEASED

The much-anticipated third volume of Leslie S. Klinger's *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, published by W. W. Norton & Co., is now available in bookstores or for order online. This slipcased volume includes the four Holmes novels — *A Study In Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and *The Valley of Fear*. It follows on the heels of the first two volumes brought out by Norton last year, which included the 56 Holmes short stories originally published in book form as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, *His Last Bow*, and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*. (See Bob Brusic's review of Volumes I and II in *Explorations* #48.)

Any Sherlockian worth his salt has long turned to William S. Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1967, to elucidate obscure points in the Canon and as a starting point for research. In this new annotated version of the Canon, Les Klinger has kept the best of Baring-Gould while greatly en-

hancing it pictorially and updating it with almost four decades of further scholarship. Les also has added several insightful essays to enhance understanding and enjoyment for the general reader.

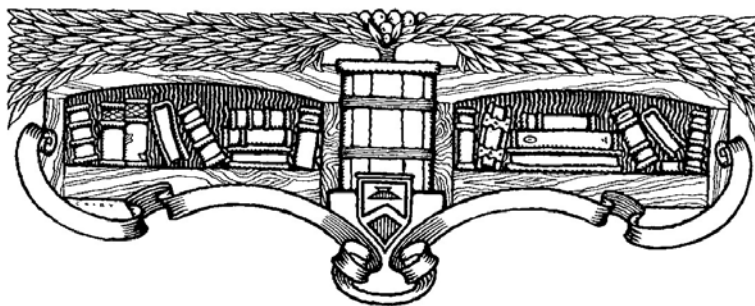
Although Les's book-promotion tour does not take him to Minneapolis this year, as it did last year, local Sherlockians still can benefit from special treatment: Once Upon a Crime mystery bookstore in Minneapolis is offering Volume III of *The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes* at a discounted price to members of the Norwegian Explorers.



Scholars who want to delve even more deeply into Sherlockian lore should look for Klinger's annotated *His Last Bow*, the eighth

volume in *The Sherlock Holmes Reference Library*, due out in January 2006 from Gasogene Press. The *New Annotated* covers much of the same ground as the Reference Library, but the latter is more heavily documented with references to articles from Sherlockian journals and other publications. *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, due out in January 2007, will complete the Reference Library, a multi-year project. ♦

John Bergquist, BSI



BOOK REVIEW: *A SLIGHT TRICK OF THE MIND*

Those who believe that it is always 1895 may have some trouble with Mitch Cullin's novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind*.

The year is 1947, Holmes is 93, and he has just returned from a trip to Japan that included a stop in Hiroshima.

Holmes's long white hair and beard indicate his age but the use of two canes tells more about the effects of age.

The book tells three stories: the narrator tells the story of Holmes's relationship with his housekeeper, Mrs. Munro, and her son, Roger, as well as the story of the trip to Japan. Holmes tells a story from the past of Mrs. Keller, who it could be argued becomes "the other woman." Watson has died and Holmes admits that despite his complaining about the way Watson wrote the stories, "even a truthful account must be presented in a manner which should entertain the reader." In addition, Holmes defends John, as Holmes claims to have always called him "John" and not "Watson," from his detractors and criticizes the depictions of Watson in the media.

Holmes makes other efforts to set the record straight. He reports to his client, Mr. Umezaki, that "I'm afraid I never wore a deerstalker, or smoked the big pipe – mere embellishments by an illustrator, intended to give me distinction, I suppose, and sell magazines." In fact, Jamaican cigars are the smoke of choice in 1947 and he smokes "John's fine Bradley cigarettes" during the Keller case.

Holmes's trip to Japan was because of the past. Mr. Umezaki, seeking information about his father, whom he last heard from in a 1903 letter sent shortly after his father visited Holmes

and decided to stay in England. Earlier, Mr. Umezaki's father had sent his son an English copy of *A Study in Scarlet*.

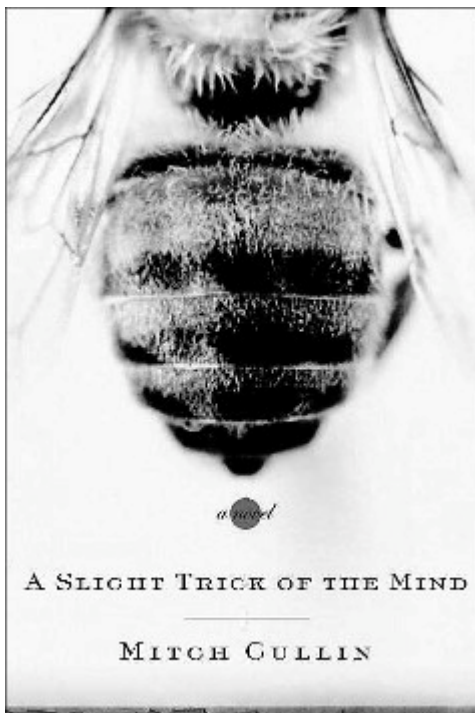
Holmes has apparently employed a series of housekeepers, and Mrs. Munro, widowed during World War II, appears to be having her problems with Holmes. Her son Roger, however, shows a real interest in bees, much to Holmes's delight and eventual sorrow.

The real story, however, is how Holmes deals with aging, a weakened body, a failing memory, and the loss of friends. Although he has mellowed, the fair sex is still Watson's department. Holmes is weaker but still tends to the bees, writes, and embarks on the trip to Japan. The failing memory only encourages him to get Mrs. Keller's story recorded. His mind is still agile, if a little

slower, and he does satisfy Mr. Umezaki's curiosity about his father despite the fact that he destroyed Watson's written record of the encounter.

The losses that Holmes suffers are not easily dealt with. Personal losses and the two world wars have taken their toll. For a man whose "solitary life's pursuit relied completely on scientific methods," the losses are especially hard. Holmes would like to be able to explain them but cannot. The reality of illogical events beyond our understanding is, according to Holmes, "the hardest notion for us to live with." The reader will have to judge whether the Holmes – troubled by the "mutable, inconsistent" world – that Mitch Cullin presents in the book is a logical extension of the one we know from the Canon. ♦

Michael Eckman



"The real story is how Holmes deals with aging, a weakened body, a failing memory, and the loss of friends."

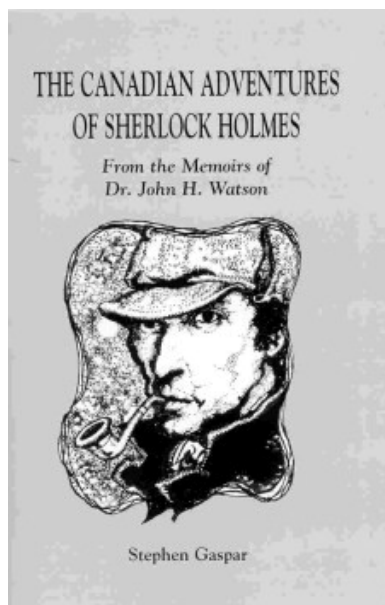


**"Well worth a look
for the
Sherlockian
pastiche reader
who enjoys stories
featuring Holmes
outside his usual
environs."**

OTHER BOOK NEWS

The Canadian Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by Stephen Gaspar. Includes a new chapter not offered in the previous e-Book.

In their Baker Street rooms the famous London detective Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr. John Watson receive an urgent telegram from a distraught Sir Henry Baskerville imploring them to come to his aid in Canada. In this new series of adventures Sherlock



Holmes finds himself in Victorian Canada, encountering remarkable characters while solving memorable mysteries. From the death-by-cannon murder at Halifax's Citadel to the strange death in Victoria, Holmes and Watson must use all their skill and abilities to solve these bizarre cases. The London detective must navigate the rocky shoals of Canadian politics while in the service of none other than Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier, in "The Prime Minister's Papers." Finally, after solving the Montreal mystery of "The McCormick Fortune," Holmes

and Watson travel to Sir Henry Baskerville's Alberta cattle ranch where the detectives encounter mystery upon mystery and a list of suspicious characters while trying to solve the secret of the baffling Baskerville curse.

"It is the best 'Holmes in Canada' book that I've ever read, easily eclipsing Ronald C. Weyman's books. Well worth a look for the Sherlockian pastiche reader who enjoys stories featuring Holmes outside his usual environs."

– Charles Prepolec
The Singular Society of the
Baker Street Dozen

Further information can be found at any of the following websites:

<http://www.geocities.com/sgasparbooks/cash.html>

<http://www.batteredbox.com/SherlockianPastiche/>

[CanadianAdventuresByGaspar.htm](http://www.CanadianAdventuresByGaspar.htm)

<http://www.sherlock-holmes.com/breese.htm>

Note: I have not read this book nor do I necessarily recommend it. As a courtesy, I am merely passing along information supplied by the author. – Ed. ♦

EXPLORER HAS HIS PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

Earlier this year, Tom Gottwalt of the Norwegian Explorers was featured in his company's internal intranet newsletter. In addition to Tom's educational, professional and family background, there is a paragraph which opens with "People wouldn't believe me if I told them:" and Tom's response of "I am a member of the Norwegian Explorers, a local Sherlock Holmes fan club."

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

STAINS, SPIES, & SPECULATION: THE DISCUSSION GROUP FINDS A SECOND STAIN

Sixteen Norwegian Explorers gathered on Saturday, February 19 at the Merriam Park Library in St. Paul to dissect and speculate on "The Second Stain." Phil Bergem led the discussion.

SECO made its first appearance in the *Strand* magazine in December 2004 and saw print in the United States at the end of January 1905. Therefore our group is very close to the "tracking" pattern of observing the 100th anniversary of Canonical stories by discussing them in the months of their centennials, as we have been doing for the past year, in a happy coincidence of dates.

Karen Murdock wondered about the promise that Watson said he had to keep in getting this story told. "I had given a promise that 'The Adventure of the Second Stain' should be published when the times were ripe," he says. Karen questioned who this promise could possibly have been made to, since absolutely everyone who was a player in the story, from the Prime Minister on down to Constable MacPherson, would want nothing better than to keep the whole matter hushed up for all time. Dick Sveum guessed that the promise had been made to Watson's publisher; Steve Miller thought Mrs. Hudson (who would, of course, have been dying to know what the "two visitors of European fame" had asked of her lodger).

Doris Marquit pointed out that the social setting of the story was in the "highest realms" of society and diplomacy and that class distinc-

tions may play a part in how the various characters in the story relate to one another.

Since this is a "spy story," why doesn't Mycroft Holmes appear in it, as he does in BRUC? The answer may be that there was no time for him to be called in – the letter disappeared from Hope's despatch-box on Monday night and Bellinger and Hope were in Holmes's room asking him to solve the case on Tuesday morning. Or perhaps Mycroft did play some role in

the tale, but one which Watson was not told about or could not relate, due to concerns for national security. Parallels between "The Second Stain" and "Charles Augustus Milverton" suggest themselves, especially the theme of blackmailing. Someone wondered why Eduardo Lucas just happened to have the letter from Lady Hilda to hand just when he needed it to get that lady to do his bidding. Karen speculated that Lucas had

had the letter for a while, perhaps years, but, like Milverton, he waited to use it until he could leverage the best return from it.

Holly Stone, a new member of our discussion group, wondered if there had *really* been a letter from Lady Hilda in the possession of Eduardo Lucas. Or was this merely her cover story to hide the fact that she was herself a spy and a traitor? Julie McKuras pointed out that there was really something odd about Lady Hilda casing the house on Godolphin Street for two days, going to the theatre without her husband (so her husband said, but she was really delivering the letter from the despatch-box to Lucas), playing at being in need of a typing job, and just

(Continued on page 11)



Illustration by Sidney Paget



"Our group is very close to the tracking pattern of observing the 100th anniversary of Canonical stories by discussing them in the months of their centennials."

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

(CONTINUED)

THE ADVENTURE OF WISTERIA LODGE

It is often argued that Sherlock Holmes is the most written about “fictional” character in the history of literature. I make no argument regarding that, but here I am, using the March 19, 2005 Study Group Meeting as an excuse to write about Sherlock Holmes and “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge.” This story is not one of the great ones in most readers’ opinions, but that only serves to generate more volumes of criticism and speculation. Please bear with me as I continue on to that end.

I often try to pick out a “theme” to write about in these meanderings. It appears that Conan Doyle has chosen one for us. In the last line of the story, Holmes states, “but, as I have occasion to remark, there is but one step from the grotesque to the horrible.” At the story’s very beginning, Holmes had asked Watson, “How do you define the word ‘grotesque’?” Holmes and Watson then attempted to define the word for us. “The Red Headed League” and “The Five Orange Pips” were mentioned as being examples of the “grotesque” turning into the “criminal.” In this month’s story, “The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge,” a telegram from John Scott Eccles to Mr. Holmes provides the lead-in for our story. This telegram contains the word “grotesque” in describing Scott Eccles’s experience of the previous night.

The prior discourse on the word “grotesque” should have served to set us up with foreshadowing of the future events in this story. Unfortunately, the story fails to live up to the expectations so created. Perhaps it is the way that Eccles becomes a suspect, but then is

quickly cleared, that muddles the affair. Perhaps it is the questionable quality of the deductions made at the beginning of the story that let us down. Holmes states that “No woman would ever send a reply-paid telegram.” Possibly a faulty assertion, but not a great deduction at any rate. Then there is the matter of how Gregson tracked Scott Eccles to Baker Street from Charing Cross. This month’s host, Karen Mur-

dock, fully discussed that matter in her article “Tobias Gregson’s Luck, or Picking Up the Scent at Charing Cross Post Office.” I would like to stay out of that argument. I *would* say that Holmes showed great wisdom in handling the situation at Baker Street. He got Gregson and Eccles to cooperate in a legal way, and the outcome was such that both parties were satisfied. Could you imagine Holmes saying “Go get a warrant!” to Gregson? What did our group have to say? We talked about the possibility that Doyle may have originally intended to

make a novel of this story. A change of mind and some hastened editing may have weakened this story. We all thought the voodoo and the South American tiger intrigue could have been played for more in a novel. We felt that the extreme “monstrification” of the cook was racist. We wondered about the character of “Miss Burnet.” Was she what she stated she was, or was there more to her story? We felt the five days of seeming inactivity by Holmes took much away from the story. Inspector Gregson is often thought to be among Scotland Yard’s least incompetent, but we meet here Inspector Baynes of the Surrey Constabulary, who seems to be almost brilliant! He matches – maybe even surpasses – Holmes in solving this case. One detractor in the group pointed out that we had only Baynes’s word that he had solved the case

(Continued on page 12)



Illustration by Arthur Twidle

“Inspector Gregson is often thought to be among Scotland Yard’s least incompetent, but we meet here Inspector Baynes of the Surrey Constabulary, who seems to be almost brilliant!”

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (CONTINUED)

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS

Sherlock Holmes's older brother, Mycroft Holmes, only appears twice and is mentioned two other times in the Canon. He is, however, one of the best known and most appreciated of the characters that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ever created. "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter" is where Mycroft is introduced, yet it is not such a great story. "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" is much more worthy of this fine character. In this latter story we find out Mycroft's true stature; he is the British Government. He comes to Baker Street to persuade Sherlock that he must save that Government and all the people under its rule.

We might all wish we had lives as neatly planned as Mycroft's. This trip is one of the few of his professional life that would take him out of the triangle of his lodgings, his government office, and the Diogenes Club. Only a matter of national security could remove him from that triangle. Such an appearance by Mycroft could not fail to persuade Sherlock to take the case. Not only would Sherlock take the case – he and Dr. Watson would flout British law by breaking and entering, surprisingly with Inspector Lestrade's full knowledge.

Of course Sherlock Holmes saves his country. No great amount of suspense is created or maintained throughout the story. Holmes makes one fine deduction at the beginning: that the body fell from the train roof. We are somewhat surprised by who shows up at Oberstein's

house, but weren't we suspicious of someone who would cut short an interview with Sherlock Holmes?

The group that John Bergquist led at The University Club on this appropriately rainy and foggy day enjoyed the story.* Some members of the group had their usual go at picking it apart, however. John pointed out, with photos to back

up his assertion, that the premise of a body being placed on the train roof at the Gloucester Road station in Kensington is plausible, as trains do stop there outside the tunnels to this day. Aldgate is an actual station, and there is just such a curve there. The security at Woolwich was questioned. The plans were supposed to be such a great secret, but "everybody" seemed to know about them. Why would Oberstein keep his ads in the

sealed box? Why were the seven pages put back on West's body? Just one corner of one page or one of the keys would have accomplished as much. Not much bleeding took place at Oberstein's house. That seems odd. Wouldn't the illegal break-in have destroyed the government's case? Well, this adventure probably held up against our scrutiny as well as any. Most of us enjoyed it thoroughly. ♦

Charles Clifford

* Our group on this foggy day included a welcome guest: Jim Ragsdale, a reporter for the Saint Paul Pioneer Press, who was researching a story on local Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts. Jim's story was published in the June 5 edition of the paper. — Ed.



Illustration by Arthur Twidle



"Not only would Sherlock take the case – he and Dr. Watson would flout British law by breaking and entering, surprisingly with Inspector Lestrade's full knowledge."

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (CONTINUED)

THE VALLEY OF FEAR

Resuming our monthly meetings after the summer break, the first topic of discussion at our meeting at the Washburn Library in South Minneapolis was a report on each attendee's summer. The meeting date, arranged by this month's discussion leader, Karen Murdock, nearly coincided with the end of summer although the weather still seemed like that of August, not September 17, 2005. About half those in attendance had recently returned from Sherlockian-related trips. Some of us who had not (taken a Sherlockian trip) felt a bit left out, but we thought about "next year." We eventually settled into discussions related to *The Valley of Fear*.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's description of Vermissa Valley, while John McMurdo is first arriving, is for the most part an accurate description of Pennsylvania mining districts. Doyle's writing is rich with detail here; none of us had trouble in creating elaborate images in our minds. We appreciated this, yet our group did point out some small factual inaccuracies. There is no town named Vermissa (at least not in a coal mining district in Pennsylvania). Also, coal and iron do not generally occur in the same area (at least not in Pennsylvania).

The Vermissa Valley episode was undoubtedly copied by Doyle from a historical book in which a Pinkerton agent, James McParlan, assumed the "Birdy Edwards" role. McParlan

went undercover to expose the crimes of the "Molly Maguires," an Irish labor-related group, from late-nineteenth century Pennsylvania. This group was convicted of some sixteen murders and many in the group were hanged. For further background on the Pennsylvania episode, John Bergquist recommended the handbook *Murderland*, prepared by Steve Doyle for the Baker Street Irregulars' expedition to the

"Valley of Fear" in 2004. Study group members Julie McKuras and Richard Sveum, along with their spouses, took part in that expedition. (See *Explorations* #48 –

Ed.) Dick brought up the 1970 film *The Molly Maguires*, based on the same historical events that inspired Conan Doyle's novel. John pointed out that in the film the McParlan character, played by Richard Harris, was much more sympathetic to the plight of the miners than was the McMurdo/Edwards character in *The Valley of Fear*. Our group, not to be confused with the Molly Maguires, then digressed to a discussion of secret societies and Conan Doyle's fascination with them.

Returning to the story at hand, it was pointed out that the name of "White Mason," the local officer at Birlstone, was unusual. The group could not agree on the significance of this name. It is probable that this name refers to an order of an Irish society called "The Holy

(Continued on page 12)



"The Vermissa Valley episode was undoubtedly copied by Doyle from a historical book in which a Pinkerton agent, James McParlan, assumed the 'Birdy Edwards' role."



Illustrations by Frank Wiles

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

THE SECOND STAIN (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 7)

generally “gallivanting about town” on her own.

Phil asked why Hope had brought the letter home with him in the first place, instead of leaving it locked up in his safe at the office. Truman Schwartz thought that “there probably was a mole in Whitehall” and that Hope knew this.

Julie wondered how Lady Hilda could possibly *not* have known that the papers her husband brought home and locked in his private despatch-box were vitally important. Art Bergstrom opined that her husband “didn’t marry her for her brains,” but several female Explorers held out for the idea that Lady Hilda was a master spy who fooled everyone in this story, including Holmes and Watson (though all Explorers agreed that Watson was not hard to fool when there was a ravishingly beautiful female involved in a case). Karen held that, like Lady Brackenstall, Hilda “played Holmes like a violin.”

Dick wondered why Holmes did not search Lucas’s house thoroughly himself. He had to be told of the second stain by Lestrade. This question elicited no really satisfactory answer (for thoroughness was Holmes’s usual practice) but it was pointed out that Holmes was trying not to give Scotland Yard any reason to think that the murder of Lucas was anything other than an unfortunate domestic dispute gone lethal.

Charles Clifford asked who Lucas was working for; Doris opined that he was a commercial spy and would work for “anybody that would pay.”

The discursive style of the journal articles quoted in SECO stands in sharp contrast to the terse and to-the-point “inverted pyramid” style favored by journalists of the present day but was an accurate mimicry of the newspaper style of the Victorian era.

The discussion drifted into talk of real spies and real political situations in which an angry letter from a “foreign potentate” did

cause or might have caused a war. Parallels were found in the Boer War, the Spanish-American War, the Balkans and World War I, the Zimmerman telegram, and the Dreyfus letter. Doris asked “are wars caused by indiscretions on the part of individuals?” and answered her own question in the negative; other forces have to be in place in order for such large-scale hostilities to break out.

Charles pointed out parallels between this month’s story, SECO, and last month’s tale, “The Abbey Grange.” Both involve a “second stain”; the bloodstain on the oaken chair in ABBE tells Holmes that Lady Brackenstall could not have been tied up there when her husband was murdered. And both tales involve beautiful, persuasive women—who are lying.

One loose end not addressed in “The Second Stain” was what the British government was going to do about the spy in Hope’s office who had informed Lucas about the letter. “The Adventure of the Whitehall Mole” is the untold sequel to “The Second Stain.” ♦

Karen Murdock



“Parallels were found in the Boer War, the Spanish-American War, the Balkans and World War I, the Zimmerman telegram, and the Dreyfus letter.”

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

WISTERIA LODGE (CONT.)

(Continued from page 8)

independently of Holmes. We never hear of Baynes again after this case. It would have been interesting to hear if his other cases were as well conducted. Then again, maybe his upstaging of Holmes detracted from our enjoyment of this case.

The discussion moved to other cases and Sherlockian happenings, and it wasn't until well past our usual time for adjournment that we all fell silent – as silent as the Sherlock Holmes Action Figure that Steve Miller had brought for our inspection. ❖

Charles Clifford



THE VALLEY OF FEAR (CONT.)

(Continued from page 10)

Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests.” Could it be that with this name, Doyle is saying that “the Scowrers are actually modeled after this ‘Templar Priests’ society”? We can only speculate. Conan Doyle did seem, though, to imply that the Scowrers were an aberration; that secret societies were often good and beneficial to society. He also seemed to downplay the “Irishness” of the Scowrers, as compared to the real Molly Maguires.

Another discussion topic was: “Why did Sherlock Holmes expose the Douglas’ deception? Didn’t he realize that he was sentencing Douglas/Edwards/McMurdo to death?” An explanation was that Mr. Holmes felt required to share all information, since he was called in by the police. An alternative explanation was that Professor Moriarty would never “buy” the Douglas’ ruse anyway; Douglas’s only hope was to move quickly and to be on guard.

We also discussed the identity of Porlock. His lack of future mention may have meant that he was found out. We wouldn’t expect someone who failed to encode the key words “Douglas” and “Birlstone” to last long in the employ of the greatest criminal mind in London, or in the land of the living for that matter. We had not time to discuss the implications of Holmes’s declaration: “Should I ever marry, Watson....” Most were willing to accept that this was merely an expression that Holmes found convenient, not that he could ever trust the fairer sex enough to become engaged in holy matrimony. ❖

Charles Clifford



“We wouldn’t expect someone who failed to encode the key words “Douglas” and “Birlstone” to last long in the employ of the greatest criminal mind in London, or in the land of the living for that matter.”

The Norwegian Explorers

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NEWS OF YOUR
FRIEND.”