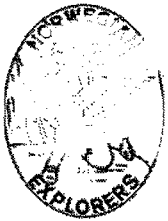


Spring, 2007

EXPLORATIONS Issue #54



EXPLORATIONS



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Spots are going quickly, but there is still room to register for the Norwegian Explorer's conference, "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas" on July 6-8, 2007. The conference is committee is working on another great conference. Confirmed speakers are Michael Dirda, Michael Kean, Bill Mason, Dana Richards, Daniel Stashower, Sue Vizoskie and a couple of local favorites. The conference will be held at Elmer L. Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota and the conference hotel is the Holiday Inn Metrodome (Washington and Cedar Avenues). The conference is jointly sponsored by Norwegian Explorers, University of Minnesota Libraries (Special Collections and Rare Books), and Friends of

the Sherlock Holmes Collections of the University of Minnesota. I look forward to seeing you there. Email or call me to receive a conference brochure or pick it up off the University of Minnesota Libraries Special Collections Sherlockian website (<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/>).

Sadly, I must report that we lost one of our Norwegian Explorer members. Richard Lesh, BSI ("The Fatal Battle of Maiwand") died on February 1st after a full and productive life of 79 years. Mr. Lesh was a holder of the Baker Street Irregular's Two-Shilling Award, given to an Irregular for services above and beyond the norm. Although a Norwegian Explorer, Mr. Lesh retired to

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FROM THE OUTGOING EDITOR'S DESK

After five years of having edited *Explorations*, especially after having recently taken on a major responsibility as Production Editor for BSI Press Publications, I felt ready to hand off the editorship of this newsletter. The question was, to whom? I admit I had misgivings about turning over my "baby" to anyone else, but when Pj Doyle stepped forward to volunteer as the new editor, my misgivings were put to rest. For those newer members who may not be familiar with Pj, she brings a long history of involvement with the Norwegian Explorers to the role. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable Sherlockian, Pj served as President of the Explorers in 1988-1990 and was the first of our scion to be given an investiture in the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes (ASH). A writer and editor by trade, Pj is known in the wider Sherlockian world as co-editor with

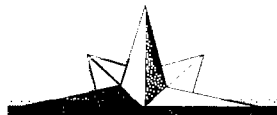
E.W. McDiarmid of *The Baker Street Dozen*. I want to thank all of you who supported me during my tenure and who put up with my highly "irregular" publishing schedule. Not intending to slight anyone else, I particularly want to thank frequent contributors Phil Bergem, Bob Brusic, Charles Clifford, Mike Eckman and Julie McKuras. Julie also proofread each issue, saving me from many an embarrassing gaffe, as well as taking care of the mailing. Tim Johnson handled printing through the University of Minnesota printing facilities, saving our organization much money over having the newsletter printed and shipped commercially. I'm sure you all will continue to give Pj the support you have given me.

John Bergquist, BSI



Collier's
THE NATION
WEEKLY

The
Last Adventure
of
Sherlock Holmes
in this number



**"Register now for
Victorian Secrets
and Edwardian
Enigmas,
July 6-8, 2007**

([http://
special.lib.umn.edu/rare/](http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/)).

FROM THE PRESIDENT (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Fort Collins, Colorado following working as an art instructor at Wayne State College in Nebraska. He was the former president of the Nebraska Arts Council and exhibited his paintings throughout the Midwest. He will be missed.

The June meeting of the Norwegian Explorer's Study Group will celebrate the milestone of finishing all sixty stories in the Canon. When the Study Group starts up again in September, they will begin at the beginning with the Study in Scarlet and work their way through the Canon, again. The Study Group leader prepares discussion points for that month's story and guides the group through a two-hour discussion. I learn something new every time. Let me know if you want to receive notice of the Study Group meetings.

-Gary Thaden

Gthaden@Gmail.Com or 612-377-2029

AN ENGLISH DINNER

"Many members of the Norwegian Explorers are also members of other Sherlockian societies. It can add to the enjoyment of playing "The Game" by meeting people from other parts of the world and experiencing how they honor Dr. Watson and Mr. Holmes. On a Saturday in early 2007, my wife and I had the pleasure of fine dining and Sherlockian discussion while attending an annual dinner in London.

On the night of 20 January, members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London gathered in the Parliament building for the Society's Annual Dinner. The black-tie affair began with cocktails in the reception room where friends welcomed each other and mingled with new-comers. The room filled and lively camaraderie spilled into the hallway as most of the 170 guests arrived early.

At 7:30 pm, dinner was called and people made their way to the House of Commons Members' Dining Room overlooking the

River Thames. Dinner began with a royal toast to The Queen and we all took our seats. There was plenty of time to enjoy the company of the eight other people at our table. We had a good mix, including three long-time members of the SHSL, a member from continental Europe, four Americans and the remaining people all living in the London area. Conversations covered a variety of topics, both Sherlockian and non-Sherlockian. After a meal of roast sirloin of Scottish beef, Yorkshire pudding, vegetables, and sherry trifle, our friendly discussions came to a pause and we all turned toward the head table as the program began.

Chairman Guy Marriott presided over this year's event titled "The Twisted Lip Service." Guy covered some traditional topics for the Annual Dinner and even individually acknowledged all people in attendance from over-seas. Awards were presented and Canonical toasts were given. A highlight was David Stuart Davies' toast given as a reading of a "discovered" Holmes story with an exaggerated number of foot notes. Sandi Toksvig, a popular actress in the UK, was the featured speaker. She gave an entertaining talk and poked fun at many of the behaviors of Holmes and Watson in the adventure of "The Man with the Twisted Lip." It was enjoyable to see many of the Sherlockian traditions continue throughout the program. After well-deserved appreciation was given to the appropriate members, the program was concluded around 11:00 pm.

One notable Baker Street Irregular moment of the evening occurred when Guy turned the microphone over to Mike Whelan who presented a BSI investiture to Jonathan McCafferty. When I had the chance to speak with Jonathan at an event the following morning, he was still very excited about his investiture. He had also recently accepted an invitation to speak at our "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas" conference this summer and was delighted about his upcoming visit to Minnesota. I'm looking forward to his presentation.

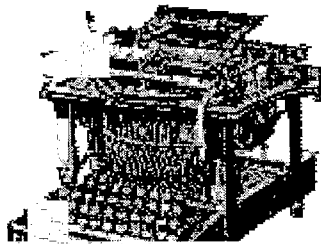
Tim Reich



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"Explorers continue to benefit from the keen eye and sharp wit of our members far and wide — typified by Stanton O. Berg"

Explorers continue to benefit from the keen eye and sharp wit of our members far and wide — typified by Stanton O. Berg. Although Stan has been unable to attend recent Explorer functions because of the serious illness of his wife, June, we thank him for sharing his expertise via his well-crafted website. — Ed.



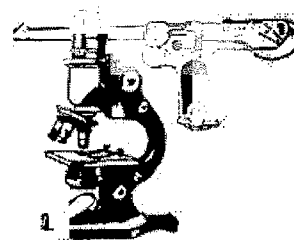
"I do not mean to always appear to trumpet my research article "The Firearms of Sherlock Holmes and Victorian London" but when I read the Study Group report on "The Three Garridebs", I find that I cannot avoid comment. Scant attention seemed to be focused on a rather primary central role that firearms played in this case. This is one of the cases that I review in my paper (Which is available online.) as I do all cases in which either Watson or Holmes made use of a firearm.

What importance do I find in "The Garridebs" case and firearms. The following I think has note.

1. Holmes's use of the term my "Old Favorite" comes from this case in which he so describes his revolver. It is found no where else.
2. Other than "Thor Bridge" no other case features firearms more prominently. All three of the main figures are armed with a revolver. Holmes has one, Watson has one and the Villain has one. It was observed that Watson received his only wound from a firearm in this case other than his military days.
3. It is apparent that Holmes is really very fond of firearms. It is true that later in the "Mazarin Stone" that he makes disparaging comments to the Count - "Nasty noisy Things, revolvers, better stick to air-guns." That is however not his opinion of firearms when it comes to his own use of them. It is clear that he owned at least three firearms. a. His "Old Favorite" revolver. b. The revolver that he loaned to Watson. c. His "hair trigger" that he used to adorn their apartment walls with bullet holes. How many more did he own that we have not heard of?

4. The primary illustration by Howard Elcock shows both Holmes and Watson with drawn and aimed revolvers. A major question comes to mind that was never discussed. One might ask, how could the villain have time to draw his own weapon and fire twice when it is obvious that both

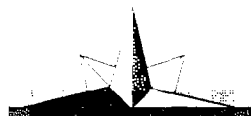
Holmes and Watson had their guns already drawn and aimed. They certainly had the drop on him. I also find it hard to imagine that Holmes would then be able to find time to strike the villain over the head with his own gun when the villain still had three or four more shots available by simply pulling the trigger. Holmes is shown in another illustration doing this after he took time to change his grip from the revolver's own grip to the barrel in order to club the villain over the head with the butt of the gun.



This defies all logic. This was really close quarters combat. The lack of judgment displayed by Holmes in taking such a gross chance is really bizarre. Some might say that "all is well that ends well." However, I suggest that perhaps Doyle was partaking of the "7 percent Solution" or nipping at the "medicinal brandy" while preparing this adventure. One author went so far as to comment that this exchange was a very "curious incident."

Stanton O. Berg
Forensic Firearms Consultant (Retired)
Web Site: <http://hometown.aol.com/forensicb/myhomepage/>

MINNESOTA CENTENNIAL SHOWBOAT: "SHERLOCK'S LAST CASE"

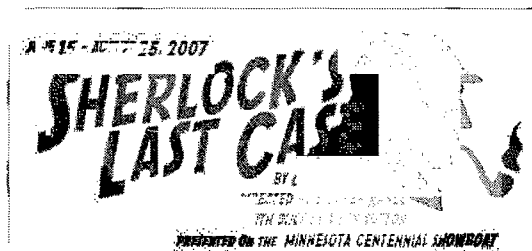


**"Boo! Cheer! &
Sing Along!"**

Get On Board

"I have seen him do some remarkable things." (NAVL) Whether you prefer a great mystery, comedy or musical interludes, the Minnesota Centennial Showboat is a fun destination for live entertainment. Docked at Harriet Island on the Mississippi River, the Showboat players embark this summer on a tale that picks up where the Canon leaves off. Sherlock's Last Case, written by Charles Morowitz, centers on a death threat against the Master by — could it be Moriarity's son?

Join the University of Minnesota Showboat Players this summer for another celebrated season of ol' fashioned, river bound entertainment. This campy interpretation is directed by



Stephen Kanee and is complimented by the Showboat's signature olios, hand-picked by veteran Showboat director Vern Sutton. Marowitz's cutting and funny dialogue drives the twisting plot forward as double and triple crosses occur, mysterious and zany characters appear, and identities suddenly shift. Sharon Perlmutter, of Los Angeles, observes, "Sherlockians, in general, are purists. Sure, they enjoy a pastiche every now and then, but any pastiche is, by definition, not a true Holmes story, and it will be held up against Arthur Conan Doyle's standard, rather than judged on its own. Or, as the guy sitting next to me at *Sherlock's Last Case* put it, "I hope this guy [playwright Charles Morowitz] knows something about Sherlock Holmes." Thankfully, he does."

This production contains gunshots/simulated acts of violence and may not be suitable for small children.

Contact the University of Minnesota Theatre at <http://showboat.umn.edu> for tickets and more details.

INTERNET EXPLORATIONS

"He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its Web..."

"For this issue I would like to highlight the audio side of Sherlock Holmes on the Internet. One site, <http://www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk/HBWEB/VV341/VV341.htm> provides details of the radio dramatizations of the Canon and a number of pastiches. The site, developed by Hugo Brown, has not been updated since 2004 but it is still of interest. It provides a great deal of information laid out in an easy-to-follow format with titles, broadcast dates and actors. This is useful to anyone who has an interest in the radio production of Sherlock Holmes stories.

On the subject of radio dramatizations, one of the best writers of Holmes story dramatizations is Bert Coules. Bert adapted a number of the original stories for the BBC productions originally broadcast between 1989 and 1998. A radio dramatization is quite different from simply reading the story into a microphone. Audiobooks have their appeal, but lack the sound effects, modifications to lines and other dramatic effects that are required to hold a listener's interest. Coules and other writers adapted all 60 short stories and the four novels for the BBC series, the only time the full Canon was performed by the same actors playing Holmes (Clive Merrison) and Watson (Michael Williams). Coules has a site, <http://www.bertcoules.co.uk/>, which after a few appropriate clicks, gets to the section that details the BBC series including broadcast dates, background on the actors and pictures. The site has a few sound files that can be downloaded.

Another website ~ <http://www.sherylfranklin.com/sh-sounds.html> ~ has sound clips from productions by Jeremy Brett, Peter Cushing and Basil Rathbone. Those adept with computers can save the sound files and use them in place of normal (and boring) noises from the computer as it alerts you to various happenings.

INTERNET EXPLORATIONS (cont.)

I now return to a website I have addressed previously, but which has changed enough that it is worth revisiting. It is the website for the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the Elmer L. Andersen Library.

<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/holmes.phtml> Tim Johnson, Curator of Special Collections and Rare Books for the University of Minnesota Libraries, has done a great deal to provide interesting content. The site presents an overview of the Collections as well as giving the interested reader links to relevant websites, access to back issues of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections newsletter and providing search aids for the Collections. These include descriptions of materials in individual collections and information about those who donate materials. It is a strong tool for the serious researcher or for any Sherlockians interested in treasures contained in the Collections. These resources are provided as a result of funds from the Hubbs family and individual donations.

Another major achievement is the updated Ronald Burt DeWaal *Universal Sherlock Holmes* (USH). The USH has been available in electronic form on this website, but supplements bring the improve access to this resource.

Also of interest is the Baker Street Blog providing "updates on The Baker Street Journal, the Baker Street Irregulars, and the world of Sherlock Holmes." <http://www.bakerstreetblog.com/> Scott Monty maintains the blog and adds interesting content on at least a weekly basis. It is well presented, has interesting items and is definitely worth a frequent check. Scott also provides the opportunity to comment on the various entries.

Scarlet Street at <http://p219.ezboard.com/Sherlock-Holmes/fscarletstreetsherlockholmes> is a forum where, if you are so inclined, you can register and join in discussions with others on a variety of Sherlockian themes. There is also value in just reading the threads of discussion. Archive contents are worth going back to read. As with many such sites, frequency of participation or updates varies with wide gaps between postings. But, continued exposure may increase the involvement by computer savvy enthusiasts.

Phil Bergen



16TH ANNUAL STUD

On Friday April 27, 2007 past-president Julie McKuras and I hit the road early for a drive to Chicago to attend the STUD (A Study in Scarlet) Sherlockian Society meeting. We try to make the annual trek to visit our friends in Chicago and attend these weekend festivities. We also manage to stop in Madison, Wisconsin, a University town with many great bookstores including the mystery bookstore, Booked for Murder.

The dinner was at the Sheraton Four Points near the O'Hare Airport. The evening started with the "Criterion Bar" social hour. STUD-master Allan Devitt led the program, which included a "Stand with me here upon the Terrace" in memory of Ely Liebow as presented by Don Terras. After dinner entertainment was provided by Francine Kitts, ASH, BSI who delivered "I Saw it in The Strand" with audience participation.

The STUD Dinner is best known for door prizes, raffle and auction, no one goes home empty handed. They also give out many awards. David Hammer, BSI gave out the Special Achievement Awards and Allan Devitt The STUD Awards. I am glad to

report that the STUD Sherlock Society's Highest Honor, The Order of the Lauriston Garden Guards was presented to Julie A. McKuras, ASH, BSI and Richard Sveum, BSI for long-time devotion to the concept of keeping the memory of Sherlock Holmes forever green.

I encourage every Explorer to attend the 17th Annual STUD Dinner in the spring of 2008 and stay for the running of the Watsonians' 49th Silver Blaze, the Fun-Raiser Pizza Party at the Diamond-Devitt Home for Canonical Canines and Compulsives and the Fortescue Honours Brunch.

Richard Sveum, MD, BSI



"Another major achievement is the updated Ronald Burt DeWaal *Universal Sherlock Holmes*."

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

The Adventure of the Three Gables

In January, the Norwegian Explores Sherlock Holmes Study Group read a story

that corresponded well with the Martin Luther King Holiday ~ "The Adventure of the Three Gables". I make this connection because the story prompted a heated discussion about racism. In 2006, we reviewed "The Yellow Face" and some felt YELL lacked respect for non-Caucasians. Language in 3GAB caused us to revisit that issue. Conan Doyle displays a lack of sensitivity and respect for minorities. I do not wish to repeat the offending language and character development, but the time our group devoted to the issue requires mention. Perhaps the story did some "good" in generating enlightening discussion. For the record, it was pointed out that Doyle championed some legal causes that furthered the rights of British minorities.

First published in 1926, 3GAB is not generally a reader favorite. Some even question if it is a "real" member of the Canon, and suggest it was written by someone other than Conan Doyle or Dr. Watson..

The story begins abruptly with a black, former prize-fighter, visiting Baker Street to threaten Holmes. The man, Steve Dixie, was working for gang members Barney and Susan Stockdale who were, in turn, carrying out the wishes of a woman of means, named Isadora Klein. Earlier, the gang had accosted a young man named Douglas Maberley, whose mother, seeks out Holmes for assistance. Rather than dissuade Holmes, they arouse his

interest in the case.

Young Maberley, fell in love with Isadora Klein, and asked her to marry him. Klein, put off by his low status, shunned him. When he

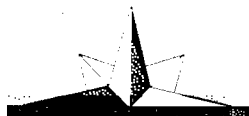
pressed his case, "carrying on" beneath her window, she hired the Stockdale gang to give him a bit of a "thumping". His love changed to hate and he wrote a novel, portraying Klein as the "heartless fiend she was". Apparently, if the public were to read this novel, Klein's days as a "gold digger" would be numbered. Maberley died, before the novel was published,. Was it pneumonia, or a broken heart? His belongings were sent to his mother's house, at Three Gables. While the Stockdale does man-

age to retrieve the manuscript, Holmes does find resolution for the bereaved mother.

Did the detective commit the crime of "extortion" himself? It is doubtful that Klein would have been prosecuted, and the case against the "experienced criminals" likely would have been difficult to make in court.

Mention can be made of the character "Langdale Pike". This is the only time he appears in the Canon. Pike "spent his waking hours in the bow window of a St. James's Street club and was the receiving-station as well as the transmitter for all the gossip of the metropolis". For this he had a "four-figure" income. We do not see, we do not hear Pike, yet, he remains a colorful character and valuable resource for Holmes.

Charles Clifford



"Perhaps the story did some "good" in generating enlightening discussion"

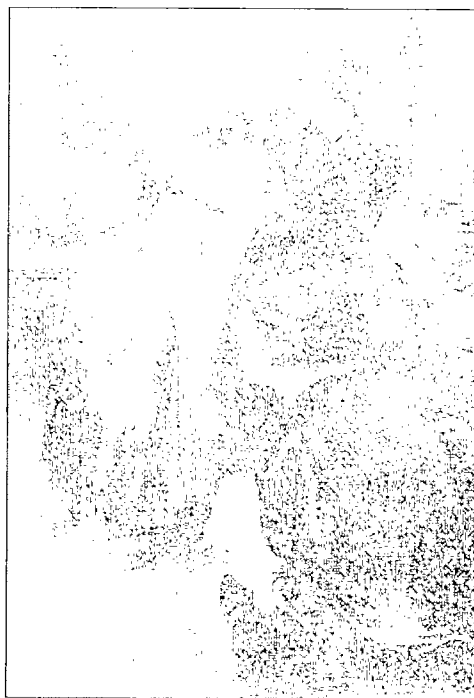


Illustration by Frederic Dorr Steele

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (cont.)

The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier

**"The good Watson
had at that time
deserted me for a
wife, the only
selfish action
which I can recall
in our
association."**

The most notable thing about our March 2007 tale ~ "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier," is Dr. Watson's absence. The narrator, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, explains that "The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I can recall in our association." Members agreed that this "wife" was probably his second or third wife, neither of whom is specifically "named" in the Canon.

Holmes, lacking the sometimes "slow-witted" Watson to contrast with his own intellect, "figuratively" employs Mr. James M. Dodd in a similar role. Dodd employs Holmes to explain strange events at Tuxbury Old Park. After being dumfounded at the first few deductions, Dodd quickly catches on to the Master's techniques, almost expecting Holmes to explain the events without hearing his story.

Holmes, as is often the case, finds the matter quite elementary. There are, after all, only a very few reasons why a family would keep one of its members shut up in an outbuilding. Holmes only needs to ask about the publication that the man with Godfrey was reading, and although Dodd cannot be absolutely sure of it, Holmes seems satisfied with the answer. Only one piece of evidence is missing.

Holmes has his missing clue that same day when he and Dodd visit Tuxbury Old Park. The clue comes in the form of a tarry smell from the leather gloves. Holmes makes it known that he has deduced that the mystery can be summed up in one word: leprosy. Upon visiting the outbuilding, Holmes and Dodd hear Godfrey's story right from his own lips. The night he was wounded in South Africa, he found his way to a house and slept in a bed there. When he woke up in the morning, he found himself surrounded by lepers. The doctor there told him that he was in a leper

hospital, and would likely contract the disease after sleeping in a leper's bed. The doctor helped heal his wounds, and once Godfrey got back to England, the dread symptoms began to appear. His family's fear of their son's seclusion in an institution, and possibly the stigma attached to leprosy, have forced them to keep his presence secret.

When I think back on our discussion, I marvel that we failed to question how young Godfrey could have been wounded in the shoulder by a "bullet from an elephant gun" and still have a shoulder. Some would think that we might have spent our entire two hours discussing various weapons and their payload. Instead, we kept interrogating Dr. Paul Martin about the history of the Boer War, along with the symptoms of leprosy and other tropical skin diseases.

It should be noted that BLAN contains the only Canonical reference to Holmes' diary. Probably lost forever, we can only speculate on its current monetary and deductive value.

Though Edgar Allen Poe is credited with creation of the crime solving duo, Conan Doyle employed the technique with great success. But why would Doyle choose a doctor for the "slow-witted" role? Perhaps it is that a doctor could be out and about in all levels of society and observe to many strange cases.

While Holmes does explain his methods more clearly than would Watson, he does give the Doctor his due, "And,

here it is that I miss my Watson. By cunning questions and ejaculations of wonder he could elevate my simple art, which is but systematized common sense, into a prodigy. When I tell my own story I have no such aid."

Charles Clifford

Illustration by Frederic Dorr Steele

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (cont.)

The Lion's Mane

While attending an otherwise excellent discussion group on *The Lion's Mane* in March, I felt a strange prickly sensation at the back of my neck – and it wasn't from one of the tentacles of *Cyanea Capillata*. This metaphorical stinging itched in a way that suggested something was not quite right in the narrative. Many in the group agreed that the plot of this story was thin enough to qualify as pastiche, something dashed off by Holmes or, in the absence of Dr. Watson, perhaps by Doyle himself.

Some noted how uncharacteristic it was for Holmes to give himself "up entirely to that soothing life of Nature for which (he) had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the gloom of London." This was almost too much to believe of the London-loving sleuth of the earlier stories. Even more peculiar was his twittery reaction upon meeting Maud Bellamy, who he reported "showed me that she possessed strong character as well as great beauty. Maud Bellamy will always remain in my memory as a most complete and remarkable woman." That sounds more like something a detective like Guy Noir might say, not Sherlock Holmes.

These plot distractions were nettlesome, to be sure, something we all shared in conversation. But privately something more problematic was nipping at my neck. At one point in the story Holmes exudes his old self-confidence when he responds to Inspector Bardle's preening compliment about doing things thoroughly: "I should hardly be what I am if I did not," Holmes puffs airily. Yet later the impatient detective admits to being slow, culpably slow. In our insightful discussion someone observed that a phrase had been deleted from the original manuscript at this

point, a phrase which read: "you have nearly met me at my Waterloo."

That was when it came to me: Holmes was so far off his game that "Waterloo" may be an apt description for the adventure's unconvincing conclusion. Was it really a murderous jellyfish that committed the crime, part of me asked myself? Not likely, the rest of me responded. Indeed, in the end *Cyanea* may be nothing more than a bloated, gelatinous red herring. Sad to say, Holmes may have been so preoccupied with the beauties of nature and the charms of Maud Bellamy that he neglected to see what

was obvious to everyone all along. That is, it really was Ian Murdoch who cleverly contrived the demise of Fitzroy McPherson.

How, one wonders, could Holmes have missed the palpable physiological clue that stared him in the face? When Murdoch arrives, it is, tellingly, his shadow we first see. Subsequently he is described as "the mathematical coach at the establishment, a tall, dark, thin man, so taciturn and aloof that none can be said to have been his friend. He seemed to live in some high abstract region of surds and conic sections..."

When one thinks about that description, what comes to mind is the specter of Profes-

sor James Moriarty!

Of course, in this context, many years after Reichenbach, it could just as well be the description of an evil offspring of Moriarty. So much like his father (or his uncle), we see how Murdoch/Moriarty enjoyed punishing his students by flogging them with "some algebraic demonstration before breakfast" (emphasis mine). As for that infamous incident of once throwing McPherson's dog through a plate-glass window, that too is highly suggestive. Rather than an explosion of foul temper, however, could that in fact have actually been an impul-



Illustration by Frederic Dorr Steele

**"Was it really a
murderous
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SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (cont.)

"I find it
comforting to
realize that
although Homes
was living in
retirement by the
seaside, he was
still in the swim of
things."

The Lion's Mane continued

could that in fact have actually been an impulsive terrestrial demonstration of his forebear's mathematical work on the physical laws of force? The peculiar incident of the dog through the glass pane could be regarded as canine proof of the abstruse mathematics at the base of The Dynamics of an Asteroid. The trajectories of both bodies can be plotted as similar.

From there it is easy to deduce that jealousy was the ostensible motive for the whip lash death of the unfortunate McPherson. As the plot progresses, though, it is apparent that the cunning Murdoch led the besotted detective on in such a way that we might in fact be witnessing some form of ancestral revenge. Having pushed reason this far, we might go on to see how the crime was really committed. The malignant mathematician could have readily obtained a thin wire scourge at any brothel in Sussex. Such an implement was but one of many Victorian secrets and Edwardian enigmas at the turn of the 20th century.

PJD 2007

Moreover, it would have been an easy matter for a man of Murdoch's evil genius to contrive and construct an ersatz Cyanea Capillata. All it would take is a bit of cleverly inflated canvas and a mesh of wire streamers, suspended to mime a mane beneath the surface of the lagoon. Remember, the vibrating, hairy creature was never seen in the flesh (so to speak). Rather, it was observed some three feet below the surface of the water. Moreover, it was hastily crushed by an all too conveniently placed boulder. The thick, oily scum oozing out from below only added a touch of verisimilitude. The reticulated pattern of red, inflamed lines that criss-crossed Murdoch's naked shoulder was doubtless an example of make-up artistry, something Holmes should have spotted instantly. The salad oil that

relieved Murdoch's alleged agony is also suggestive. Could that have been the bottled remainder of the oily scum which we observed oozing out from under the faux jellyfish?

The pain in my own neck was easing somewhat as I arrived at these conclusions, though I continued to be perplexed and disturbed at how Sherlock Holmes could have failed to reason thus. However, a new insight gradually surfaced from the oily lagoon of my mind. Perhaps Holmes was not really wrong after all. Perhaps he saw what I saw and much more besides. It could be that he

feigned preoccupation with the natural and feminine beauty in his way. That is, he logically penetrated Murdoch's scheme, but preferred to keep his conclusions to himself. In other words, he needed to bide his time in order to collect evidence on this pestilential progeny of the Napoleon of crime.

I find it comforting to realize that although Homes was living in retirement by the seaside, he was still in the swim of things. Eventually he would gather all the evidence he needed to convict Murdoch/Moriarty and his network of organized crime whose tentacles spread throughout the Empire like a giant jellyfish. In doing so, Holmes would, of course, be playing a dangerous game. It would be like history repeating itself. With his customary determination Sherlock Holmes would go well beyond the matter of a contrived Capillata. In boldly going where only he had gone before, Holmes would be waging war with a vicious crime organization at the beginning of the new century. We can be assured that once again the great detective would selflessly risk life and limb in the cause of justice. As in the days of old, Sherlock Holmes would go from the lion's mane into the lion's den!

Bob Brusic



SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (cont.)

The Adventure of the Retired Colourman

“...the only story
in which the
murderer seeks
out and hires
Sherlock
Holmes.”

Our April 2007 discussion focused on “The Adventure Of The Retired Colourman.” Unique within the Canon, RETI is the only story in which the murderer seeks out and hires Sherlock Holmes. Let me just say that it was not a wise hire on the part of the miserly Josiah Amberley.

Why would a man who had recently murdered his wife and her lover, seek the help of the “World’s Greatest Detective”? Some feel Amberley was such a deluded ego-maniac that he expected to fool Holmes and deflect scrutiny. Others consider Amberley wished to be caught, even later using the act as evidence of insanity.

Holmes sums it up as “Pure swank!...He felt so clever and so sure of himself that he imagined no one could touch him.”

We considered if poison gas would have been detectable hours or days after the crime. Was the green paint really necessary, or was it detectable only by Amberley, the way the murderer in Poe’s “The Telltale Heart” continues to hear the victim’s beating heart? The attempted cover-up merely raised Holmes’ suspicion.

Watson and Amberley’s “wild-goose-chase” brought to mind Nathan Garrideb’s journey. While Watson didn’t seem suspicious, Amberley was. Holmes may have expected Amberley to ditch Watson and possibly return to confront him at The Haven, Lewisham. Hence the instructions to send “Bolted.” Was it ego or folly that Amberley

did not view the episode as meaning that he had been found out? Perhaps he did realize that he was in Holmes’ clutches, because, he began carrying a cyanide pill. Other questions remain debateable: Who was Holmes’ agent, who sent the telegram from Little Purlington? Was that shadow to pursue Amberley if he “bolted”?

Given the time that Holmes had at his disposal, why did he not discover the bodies himself? We do know that he found the note on the wall, “We we—”, written with indelible pencil and the rigged gas-pipe in the strong-room, but not the missing bonds. He examined the box-office chart at the Haymarket Theater, met and chatted with his Masonic-pinned rival, Barker.

Holmes continued with his to let Scotland



Illustration by Frank Wiles

Yard take the credit, and MacKinnon was quite happy to have the solution handed to him. “That is very handsome of you, Mr. Holmes. Praise or blame can matter little to you, but it is very different to us when the newspapers begin to ask questions.”

Charles Clifford



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