

Autumn, 2007

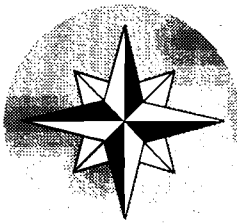
EXPLORATIONS Issue #55



EXPLORATIONS



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



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July's "Victorian Secrets, Edwardian Enigmas" Conference, hosted by the Explorers along with the University of Minnesota and the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, was a great success. Accolades poured in via email, web blogs, phone calls and U.S. Mail. We had a great line-up and the conference was well executed. Many thanks to conference co-chairs Julie McKuras and Dick Sveum, along with University Special Collections Curator Tim Johnson and the rest of the Conference Committee: Phil Bergem, Pj Doyle, Mike Eckman (also a conference speaker), Tom Gottwalt and me.

Speaking of conferences, all local Explorers should start planning ahead for 2010.

How will we top the 2007 conference? I don't know, but we start planning in 2009.

The Study Group resumed on September 15, with John Bergquist leading us through *A Study in Scarlet*. The once-a-month group will explore the stories in chronological order of publication. Thanks to Phil Bergem, our retiring study group leader. Watch for notices of upcoming sessions. Contact me if you want to be added to the study group notice.

Watch, too, for details of other upcoming meetings. Our annual holiday party will be held at the Minneapolis Golf Club on Thursday, December 6. Included in that notice will be your annual renewal.

(Continued on page 2)

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Adventures and Explorations continue in our world of Sherlock Holmes.

Throughout this issue, you will read about the success of the 2007 Conference. If you attended, you will surely agree and have your own favorite moments. If you didn't make it this year, I urge you to plan ahead for the 2010 event.

For the seasoned Sherlockian, attending conferences is a wonderful way to connect with old friends and make new acquaintances. What could be more fun than taking a few days to immerse yourself in things related to the Canon?

For the novice, the conference experience is an opportunity to delve further into the world of the Master Detective and to discover that you are not alone in your passion.

There are certainly scholarly discussions, but there are wonderfully quirky conversa-

tions and how can one categorize the Victorian lingerie fashion show? These are not your stuffy corporate conferences!

If you'd like a little practice, there are several conferences each year hosted by a variety of Sherlockian societies. For example, The Illustrious Clients of Indianapolis are hosting "Gillette to Brett II," November 16-18. Our own Julie McKuras will be on the program. With very little sleuthing, you can find others.

All Explorers are invited to participate in planning for 2010. The planning team welcomes ideas, energy and elbow grease!

In the near future, plan to participate in the monthly Study Group sessions and mark your calendars for the December 6 Annual Holiday Party.

Pj Doyle, ASH



William Gillette

FROM THE PRESIDENT (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Two items under the heading "Sherlock Holmes is Everywhere" — or is he? At the Minnesota State Fair, the University of Minnesota Libraries Archives and Special Collections had a visual exhibit containing many things from the archives with one exception. There was nothing Sherlockian on display. At least the printed handout acknowledged the Sherlock Holmes Collections.

Second, many have heard of the Sherlockian comparisons to television's "House." Despite bumbling assistants and an interfering administration, Dr. House uses scientific method and rational thought to solve the insolvable medical case. Few know that the series star, Hugh Laurie, penned a novel. *The Gun Seller* uses self-deprecating humor to spoof the military-industrial-complex and terrorism. Check your favorite mystery book store or local library.

Finally, after a summer of falling bridges, heavy flooding in southeastern Minnesota and a drought in the north, be sure to sit back with your Canon while,

*"A yellow fog swirls past the window-pane
As night descends upon this fabled street:
A lonely hansom splashes through the rain,
The ghostly gas lamps fail at twenty feet.
Here, though the world explode, these two survive,
And it is always eighteen ninety-five."*

—221B, Vincent Starrett

—Gary Thaden

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VICTORIAN SECRETS & EDWARDIAN ENIGMAS

It's no secret to the Sherlockian world that our recent conference was a big success, and the reason for that accomplishment is no enigma. Combine a great committee, a stellar assembly of speakers, an appreciative audience, and the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota, you have the perfect recipe for a memorable symposium.

When our 2004 conference ended, we asked our conference committee if they'd like to participate in the 2007 event (we plan on

hosting a conference every three years) and were happy to hear that everyone was on board for a repeat performance. Phil Bergem, John Bergquist, Mike Eckman, Tim Johnson and Gary Thaden were joined by The Red-Throated League coordinators Bob and Lucy Brusic, as well as Tom Gottwalt and Pj Doyle. Please join in thanking this hard working group and other Norwegian Explorers who volunteered to help. Our thanks go to Alice Stelling, Art Bergstrom, Steve Stilwell, Ray Reithmeier, Tim Reich, Tim Payne and Timothy Roden.

What can I say about our speakers? We were so pleased that Michael Kean, Cliff Goldfarb, Michael Dirda, Leslie Klinger, Daniel Stashower, Jon Lellenberg, Dana Richards, Curtis Armstrong, Jonathan and Elaine McCafferty, Mike Eckman, Bill Mason, Randall Stock, Gary Thaden and Susan Vizoskie said yes to our request to present at the conference. We knew they would all be good. What's amazing is *how* good they *all* were. We've been honored in the past when told we had fabulous symposiums, but many people told us that this might have been the very best one because of universally well-done presentations.

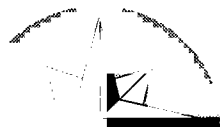
Attendees came from far and near. Near: the Twin Cities and surrounding area. By far, we mean FAR! From all over the United States as well as from Japan, Canada and England.

The exhibit that Tim Johnson staged at the Elmer L. Andersen Library was a hit. You could look in at any time and see people looking at items the display cases and admiring the 221B Baker Street sitting room donated by the late Allen Mackler. The conference booklet was a wonderful keepsake.

Put all of that together, and you have a conference that was memorable. We were even fortunate enough to have it be a profitable event as well, and those profits will be donated to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. 2010 will be here before we know it so start thinking about the next conference...

Julie McKuras ASH, BSI
Richard Sveum, MD, BSI
Conference Co-Chairs





"...the Elmer L. Andersen Library—a very pleasant place to spend two-and-a-half days."

MORE VICTORIAN SECRETS & EDWARDIAN ENIGMAS

When a good friend of mine contacted me in late 2006 with the news that Julie McKuras—*la belle dame sans merci*—was planning to hold a Victoria's Secret event in Minneapolis in July 2007, my first thought was that it was something I should make a point of attending. On reflection, however, my feeling was that Julie surely wouldn't besmirch her fine reputation by doing something like this in front of a gathering of Sherlockians. Normally Langdale Pike's information is trustworthy, but this time I couldn't help feeling he'd got things totally wrong. As things turned out, he was partly correct (but more of that later).

This was our family's second visit to Minneapolis for a Sherlockian conference, and we still held fond memories of *A River Runs by It* in 2004, when we had spent two weeks driving from British Columbia to The Land of Ten Thousand Lakes, and then home again. The journey had given us a chance for sightseeing: The Old State Prison in Montana, the Little Big Horn battlefield, Devil's Tower in Wyoming, the Black Hills and Hill City with its nearby steam railway, and Mount Rushmore. Nor would we ever forget the spectacular thunderstorm which the Minnesotans laid on for our entertainment on the night of our arrival. This year was to be different: we flew in from Seattle, but I confess I spent a good deal of the flight trying to spot landmarks we might well have encountered three years earlier. The thunderstorm was there again this year, though we had to wait until the Sunday of the weekend for it: and it was even more spectacular, with flash upon flash upon flash, and crash upon crash upon crash. So strong, in fact, that the good folk at the Holiday Inn Metrodome told us that it knocked out their power, forcing them to run on back-up generators for half an hour or so.

But to the event itself, which took place over a weekend of blistering heat, with temperatures well into the high nineties the whole time: thank heavens for the air-conditioning of the Elmer L. Andersen Library—a very pleasant place to spend two-and-a-half days.

We turned up early for registration and were able to **take our** time looking around the mar-



velous display of artifacts that Tim Johnson and his staff arranged for our delectation. Here were letters from Conan Doyle to family, friends, and acquaintances; the 221B sitting room bequeathed to the Sherlock Holmes Collections by Allen Mackler; the miniature 221B assembled over many years by Dorothy Shaw; and other choice items.

Now it was time for the conference proper to begin, with opening remarks from Co-Chairs Julie McKuras and Richard Sveum, and welcomes from the Collections' Curator, Tim Johnson, and Norwegian Explorers President Gary Thaden.

Michael H. Kean kicked off the papers with his study 'Who Was Bruce Partington'? Michael has been working on this topic for some time, and confidently set the ball rolling. He was followed by Cliff Goldfarb from Toronto, who, in highly convoluted manner, attempted to prove exactly who it was who wrote the Sherlockian canon. And the worst of it is, I'm not sure whether he convinced me . . . or anyone else, for that matter.

The tour de force of the afternoon, an event which was to impact the remainder of the conference, was Michael Dirda's talk, 'A Case for Langdale Pike'. I'll let Michael describe it for himself. This is what he wrote on the following week's *Washington Post* Book Discussion Page:

My talk—'A Case for Langdale Pike'—seems to have inadvertently established a major theme for the whole conference. In it I constructed the imagined biography of Langdale Pike, who is a journalist who gathers all the gossip of London. He appears in the worst of the Holmes stories, 'The Three Gables', but in it the great detective *says*, at one point, 'This is a case for Langdale Pike, and I am going to see him now.' What I did was to construct a Max Beerbohm like story about my *discovery* of the rare volume of LP's stories (or reminiscences?) titled 'A Case for Langdale Pike'. It was a lot of fun to write, and subsequent speakers took up the game and inserted references to Pike in their talks.

Subsequent speakers certainly did take up the game, with Langdale Pike being blamed for errors and misinformation and even, in one

(Continued on page 11)

MINNESOTA CENTENNIAL SHOWBOAT: "SHERLOCK'S LAST CASE"

On Friday, July 6, we traveled to the other half of the Twin Cities to see *Sherlock's Last Case* at the Minnesota Centennial Showboat. As Sherlockians from Canada, the opportunity to see a play about Holmes on a Mississippi riverboat was irresistible. The Centennial Showboat, with its Victorian era décor, is an ideal venue.

Players are full-time University of Minnesota students. Christopher Kehoe, with his tall, lanky frame and sharp nose, was particularly well cast as Holmes. The cast included Stuart Gates as Dr Watson, Elizabeth Griffith as a Scottish Mrs Hudson, and Chris Peltier as Inspector Lestrade.

Sherlock's Last Case, by Charles Marowitz, pays homage to Holmes and Watson while poking fun at them, too. Holmes and Watson are visited by Liza Moriarty, daughter of the Professor. Liza warns Holmes and Watson that her brother Damion plans to kill Holmes to avenge his father's death. It's up to Holmes and Watson to stop Damion before it is too late.

Purists should be aware that Marowitz's script plays fast and loose with Conan Doyle's characters. As a result, Kehoe's Holmes was arrogant (more than usual) and at times downright mean to Watson, played by Gates as the not-so-bright companion, reminiscent of Nigel Bruce. Peltier's Lestrade was the clueless policeman, while Griffith appeared to enjoy her role as a not-so-retiring Mrs Hudson.

The story was longer than necessary; however, enough plot twists kept the audience interested and the quality of acting was top notch.

Between scenes the cast donned colorful costumes for highly entertaining musical interludes, or *olios*. The highlight was "The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes," written shortly after the publication of "The Adventure of The Final Problem." The cast proved themselves to be just as talented singers as actors.

The cast greeted us as we left the theatre, and learning that we were Sherlockians, eagerly asked whether we had enjoyed the performance. We were please to report that we had indeed!

Karen Campbell and Stephanie Thomas
Bootmakers of Toronto

MEMBERSHIP, THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS AND THE TRI-ANNUAL CONFERENCES

One benefit of sponsoring a conference every 3 years is that we showcase what a great organization we have with the Norwegian Explorers. We make use of the organizers and volunteers who put on the conference; we get to show off talented Explorers who speak at the conference; and the Minnesota hospitality wins lots of converts.

Another by product of this good will is an increase in membership. Many existing members attend the conferences, including many from out-of-town. We have gained new members since July 1 and are up to 164 Explorers.

We are particularly pleased to welcome our newest and youngest Explorer, Tim Roden, who was also a volunteer at registration!

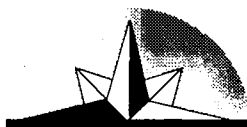


While some join at the conferences, others see the quality publications that we produce like "Explorations", the Christmas Annual, and selected irregular publications like the "Norwegian Explorer Omnibus" (reproducing four out of print Explorer publications). Word spreads about our spring radio shows at the Pavik Museum with The Red Throated League, our celebration of Sherlock Holmes Birthday in January, film night meetings, the study group and our annual holiday dinner.

A good conference puts us in the premier category of Sherlockian organizations. That alone is a reason for those of you who local Explorers who have not attended in the past to think of attending in the summer of 2010.

Why another conference? It's fun, it's challenging, it increases membership and the prestige of The Norwegian Explorers. So, you can proudly say, "I'm a Norwegian Explorer!"

Gary Thaden, President



More to Sherlock
Holmes than the
Canon...



THE CHARLES SCHULTZ CONNECTION

For those not familiar with the tributes to Charles M. Schulz, done because he grew up in St. Paul, I will briefly mention that there were a series of statues set up around St. Paul. These were sponsored by businesses or individuals, painted with various designs and after a few months of public display, sold with proceeds going to charity.

Five different series of statues appeared from 2000 to 2004, and in 2003 the design was a statue of Linus Van Pelt. One of these had Linus dressed in Sherlockian garb and it was donated to the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the University of Minnesota by the F.R. Bigelow Foundation in memory of Ronald M. Hubbs. This was highlighted in the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections newsletter for June 2004 (Volume 8 Number 2).

Price Books store located at 2041 Ford Parkway in St. Paul. The statue is from the series made in 2004 with Snoopy on his doghouse.

It shows Snoopy lying on the doghouse and Woodstock at a typewriter. Snoopy is holding a piece of paper which reads "It was a dark and stormy night...."

In various Peanuts cartoons Snoopy was often depicted typing out a novel while perched on his doghouse. Many of his stories started with that immortal phrase, first written by Edward George Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) as the opening to his 1830 book *Paul Clifford*.

On the statue, the roof of the doghouse is painted to show a dark and stormy night complete with clouds and thunderbolts. The lower area has two pairs of eyes peering out from the door of the doghouse and shows the spines of books surrounding the base. The books have

"I love mankind. It's
people I can't
stand."

Peanuts

Linus Van Pelt



There is one other statue with a connection to Arthur Conan Doyle that many readers may not know about. It is located outside of the Half



the names various authors modified with a canine twist, such as "Bark Twain," "Edgar Allen Pooch." and "Sir Arthur Bone N. Doyle." It is worth a visit to see and, of course, it's next to a bookstore.

Phil Bergen



*"In the book of life, the
answers aren't written in
the back."*

Peanuts
Charlie Brown

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

The Veiled Lodger

In "The Adventure of The Veiled Lodger" Sherlock Holmes is hired, not to act as a detective in solving some mystery that has baffled Scotland Yard, but rather to serve as judge and jury. Elsewhere in the Canon, Holmes has taken on the role of judge, himself, but never before has he been hired for the role. This story therefore deals mostly with "the sensational" rather than the "science of deduction", which Sherlock Holmes would have preferred.

In our story, Mrs. Merrilow, of South Brixton, visits Baker Street to employ Holmes. Her tenant, Mrs. Ronder, is in need of help. Seven years earlier, Mrs. Ronder first came to the home of Mrs. Merrilow. It was shortly before that time that Eugenia Ronder experienced a life-changing event.

Things happen for a reason, in the Canon, as well as in life. Was the attack that disfigured Mrs. Ronder, punishment for the murder of her husband? If so, what punishment was dealt to her lover and co-conspirator, Leonardo, the strongman? Did Sahara King feel that the attack on Mr. Ronder was unjustified, or did he just react to the smell of blood? Mrs. Ronder shielded Leonardo from the punishment of the law, but was he punished in other ways? We never find out. Holmes does not specifically absolve Mrs. Ronder of the crime; he merely says that she should not pass sentence on herself.

Members of our discussion group felt like Sherlock Holmes had "exonerated" Mrs. Ronder, but I am not sure. We wondered why she had not tried plastic surgery. Did she continue to hide and wear the veil as a means of punishing herself? The poison would have brought an end to this punishment. Did Holmes believe only that she should not end her suffering? We

wondered if Holmes' advice was based on some inner religious convictions, or just on some "mystical sense".

We discussed spousal abuse and supposed that in turn-of-the-century England, a man of Ronder's means might be able to batter his wife and employees regularly, and escape punishment by moving on. We don't know how he treated Sahara King. Why did Mrs. Ronder keep a photo of her husband? Did she

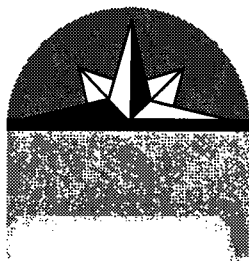
collect on a life insurance policy? Is it common to scream in one's sleep? Would screaming murder necessarily mean that a murder had been committed?

We enjoyed Holmes' pawky humour: "Mrs Merrilow does not object to tobacco, Watson, if you wish to indulge your filthy habits."

The reference to "the politician, the lighthouse, and the trained cormorant" is quite famous itself, in the Sherlockian world. Yet this is the only mention of them, in the Canon. Apparently Watson's warning was taken to heart, and "attempts which have been made lately to get at and to destroy these papers" ceased.

If anyone has these papers, I know of a group who would be interested in them.

Charles Clifford

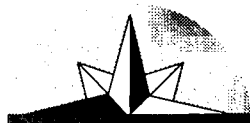


"We enjoyed
Holmes' pawky
humour"



Illustration by Frank Wiles





"Conan Doyle's use of the English language is masterful as usual."

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (cont.)

The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place

The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" is the last of the Canon that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle ever penned. It is thought that, in his failing health and declining interest in Sherlock Holmes, Doyle knew that this was his last effort, but he did not save a great story for his last. Our group did note many fine elements in this story, however. These include a mysterious setting, horse racing, a potentially evil villain, death, crypts, skeletons, and dogs. Watson describes our villain, Sir Robert Norberton: "a boxer, an athlete, a plunger on the turf, a lover of fair ladies, and, by all account, so far down Queer Street that he may never find his way back again." Conan Doyle's use of the English language is masterful as usual, but something is lacking; possibly the element of suspense. Doyle had earlier put many of the same elements together, in "Silver Blaze", but this time failed to entertain to that level.

Scholars place this story in May of 1902, near Holmes' retirement in 1905. Indeed, our group detected signs that Sherlock was no longer at the top of his game. We wondered why he did not bring the spaniel to the crypt, instead of searching around on his own for an hour or more. He had employed the spaniel earlier in the investigation, determining that the dog's "deceased" master was being impersonated. Maybe its new master was unwilling to let him out at this hour. As a side-note, someone pointed out that Holmes turned to high-tech devices late in his career (this was the only mention of the microscope, in the Canon).

Our discussion side-tracked to the topic of dogs, and how the spaniel would have determined that his master was not in the carriage. He probably smelled her scent, left over from when she was alive, rather than just recognizing the carriage by sight. We talked dog's prominent roles

in other stories of the Canon: "Silver Blaze", "Copper Beeches", "Hound of the Baskervilles", and "Cardboard Box."

We had to cover the legal questions regarding the penalties, in that British era, for hiding a body, failure to report a death, burning of a skeleton, and fraudulently putting objects up as collateral. Sir Robert went unpunished, although our group concluded that a man of lower class probably would have been sentenced for such infractions. Yes, the coroner did establish that Lady Beatrice died of natural causes. Yes, creditors did willingly "hold their hand" until after the Derby. Apparently, it was in Sam Brewer's best interest to let Sir Robert win his bet. We might have expected Holmes to withhold information from the police, but he declares "this matter must, of course, be referred to the police. It was my duty to bring the facts to light, and there I must leave it. As to the morality or decency of your conduct, it is not for me to express an opinion."

We wondered if Sir Robert realized that John Mason had betrayed him.

Some speculate that Watson had a gambling problem. That may be why Holmes kept Watson's checkbook locked in his dresser drawer. Watson does admit that he loses half his "wound pension" each month, a sizeable addiction.

And finally, I must mention Doyle's slander of the Jewish people. Granted, the slurs occur in

quotes made by characters in the story. Such uses may have been common in the speech of the time. Yet, we recognized that certain phrases such as are present in this story are unfair and unkind. We all love the Canon, but wish that a few words had been left out.

Charles Clifford



Illustration by Frank Wiles

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP (cont.)

A Study in Scarlet

"A Study In Scarlet" is a great name for a detective novel. We might envision a long sequence of brutal murders when encountering this title. However, when Sherlock Holmes arrives at 3 Lauriston Gardens, Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson inform him that the victim, Enoch J. Drebber, had no marks of violence upon his body. Yet, there was plenty of blood near the body, and "RACHE" was "scrawled in blood-red letters" on the wall.

This novel itself, seems contradictory. It starts out very slowly, introducing the narrator, Dr. Watson and then Sherlock Holmes. We then learn, very slowly, of Sherlock Holmes' profession and the science of deduction. The story picks up a bit as we visit the murder scene and meet the Inspectors. We proceed along, as the investigation unfolds, but then are presented with a "very long" background sequence, in Utah. Those of us who were persistent, ended up back in Baker Street 221-B, for the conclusion and explanation.

Our Study Group was not very fond of this novel. Karen Murdock felt that if Conan Doyle had "not" written more Sherlock Holmes stories, then Holmes might well be just a footnote in literary history. Fortunately, most of us have been able to add many more qualities to the characters of Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes that we keep in our minds, as we have read the many stories of the Canon. Yet "A Study In Scarlet" did introduce the great Detective's character, as well as provide a captivating enough plot that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was commissioned to write another Sherlockian novel, "The Sign of Four".

John Bergquist, our host at The University Club, gave us some of the facts about this novel. Conan Doyle received £25, the equivalent, in today's money, of about \$100 for the rights to

this story. He never received any more money for this story. He learned his business lesson, later becoming the world's most "highly paid" author.

What did the group find fault with? We had trouble believing that Jefferson Hope, having discerned Holmes' "wedding ring" trap, would then be tricked into coming to 221-B to pick up the package. We searched for explanations. Maybe Hope wanted to be captured by Holmes, so that Dr. Watson could tell his story to the world? He had gotten revenge and he was dying soon. What did it matter, if he were apprehended now? But then, why did Hope struggle so, after Holmes had slipped the cuffs on him?

We wondered, if Lestrade and Gregson had *not* been present when he trapped Jefferson Hope, might Holmes have released Hope? He had let others walk away before. Was Hope worthy of release? We know, and Holmes knew, that Hope would never be prosecuted. Of course, we cannot condone one man appointing himself policeman, judge, jury, and executioner. Yet, those "evil murderers" would have gotten away, in this world anyway, not prosecuted by law and men. Would Conan Doyle have made us all happier, had Holmes turned away Lestrade and Gregson and merely inter-

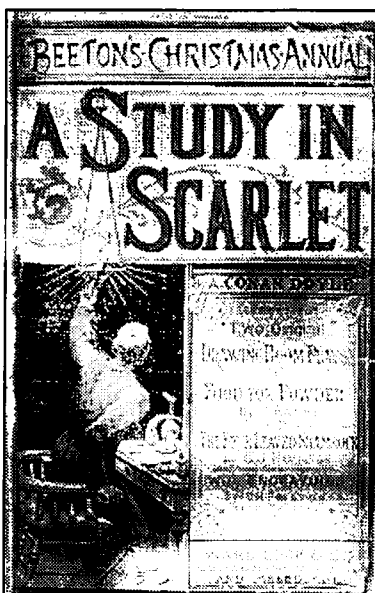
viewed Hope?

We noted that the Mormon's were treated poorly by this story. We don't know of any actual case resembling this, where a father was murdered and the daughter was compelled to marry against her wishes. It may have been popular to "bash" Mormon's in Victorian era literature, but, as in some other stories, we can find fault with Mr. Doyle's victimizing of an unpopular religion or race.

Charles Clifford



"RACHE was
scrawled in blood-
red letters..."



1887

MORSE AND HOLMES



"Dexter, like many mystery authors, mentions that a character is or is not a Sherlock."

In preparation for a week's stay in Oxford, I reviewed the usual tour books and started to read the Inspector Morse books by Colin Dexter. Most of the action in the books takes place in and around Oxford and I was able to investigate many locations, including the neighborhood in which Morse lived and several of the pubs which he frequented.



In Colin Dexter's Inspector Morse books, he sometimes pays homage to the Sherlock Holmes stories and their characters. Morse and his partner Detective Sergeant Lewis do refer to Holmes and Watson. Dexter, like many mystery authors, mentions that a character is or is not a Sherlock. For example, in The Silent World of Nicholas Quinn, Morse is reviewing the evidence.

(a) Position of Quinn's coffee table indicated that he'd probably been sitting in a draught. (Steady, Sherlock!)

In Service of all the Dead, Dexter notes that

...Morse himself had a good many passages of Holmesian dialogue by heart, and before Lewis could reply he proceeded to recite one:

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

"Tot the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

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

"That was the curious incident" 'I see,' said Lewis, seeing not.

Morse then proceeds to look for some evidence that he is sure will not exist.

A character that appears in some of the novels and short stories is PC Watson. The sense of the stories is that Watson is not the most promising member of the Thames Valley police force. In the story "As Good as Gold" (Morse's Greatest Mystery and Other Stories), Morse and Inspector Crawford are discussing the value of some "substitute" evidence. Morse begins the conversation with a question.

"Will anyone notice, though?"

"Watson noticed."

"Not PC Watson?"

"PC Watson!"

Morse raised his eyebrows. "I see what you mean," he said slowly. "Not exactly an Einstein, is he?"

"And if he noticed it..."

The "substitute" evidence that PC Watson has disqualified is necessary because PC Watson himself has lost the actual evidence. The combination of the lost evidence and Watson's power of observation cause Morse to comment that "You know, if that fellow could only stop losing things, he'd probably make 'inspector'."

It appears that PC Watson is fated to suffer the same type of criticism often heaped on poor John H. Watson, late of the India Army. Others on the force suffer from Morse's scorn at times. In The Daughters of Cain, Lewis is struck by Morse's criticism of another inspector Phillotson.

Agreed, Phillotson wasn't exactly Sherlock Holmes, Lewis knew that. Yet Morse could be needlessly cruel about some of his colleagues. And why did he have to be so sharp? As he had been just now?

Although it is usual to refer to references to Holmes and Watson in mysteries, The Jewel that was Ours contains a reference to Mycroft. John Ashenden, a well educated tour guide and suspect in the death of one of his charges, has met Morse and been impressed.

Was Inspector Morse (Ashenden Pondered) quite the man most people seemed to think he

(Continued on page 10)

MORSE AND HOLMES

(cont.)



"Dexter has written a wonderful pastiche with Holmes, Mycroft...and the visiting Watson."

was? A man with a mind that might have left even the mythical Mycroft just floundering a fraction? Ashenden doubted it, his doubt redoubling as

the coach drew further and further away from Oxford along the A34.

Everything would be all right.

As Ashenden discovers, Morse is indeed quite intelligent with an education, but not a degree, in the classics and a love of opera, especially Wagner. One of his truly great pleasures is solving crossword puzzles. The crossword puzzles are not the simple kind we see most often, but cryptic crosswords with clues involving puns, homophones, anagrams, and other wordplay.

Dexter does not often give the solutions to the crossword clues that baffle Morse, but he did provide the answer to one with Canonical connections in Last Seen Wearing. "What's this Lewis? Six letters. Blank A - Blank - S Blank N. *Eyes I had - and saw not?*" Lewis incorrectly guessed "Parson". With a few more comments, however, Lewis leads Morse to "Watson", an anagram of "saw not".

In "A Case of Mis-Identity" (Morse's Greatest Mystery and Other Stories), Dexter has written a wonderful pastiche with Holmes, Mycroft (who is inexplicably staying with Homes at 221B), and the visiting Watson. Using the structure of "A Case of Identity" but with different names for the characters, Dexter relates essentially the same story as the original. Dexter's Holmes provides the same solution that appears in the Canon.

Mycroft, however, provides a new and different solution that the mother and daughter have conspired to make it appear that the stepfather has cruelly misled the daughter. The intention of the conspiracy is to convince Holmes of the stepfather's misdeeds so that he will scare the stepfather away and provide both women relief at his parting.

Watson, however, arrives at a third solution that proves to be the truth. Watson does have the advantage that, unlike Holmes and Mycroft, he has actually been outside of

221B, gathered evidence, and has not just theorized from an armchair.

The Morse books stand up quite well. Taking place in the 1970s through 1990s, most are located in and around Oxford and the fictional Lonsdale College figures into many of the stories. Morse is a little different from the portrayal on the TV series. He is much more troubled, wedded to his work, drinks and smokes more, and takes action when he is attracted to or found attractive by a woman. Lewis too is different. He is older and described as rather stocky and fond of his egg and chips.

Morse does have a tendency, much to Lewis's dismay, to make the solution to a crime more complicated than seems necessary. There are often several false conclusions to a case and the reader must be patient and observant. The solutions are often less complicated than Morse suspects.

Perhaps Morse develops such complicated solutions because as Lewis notes "Morse, he knew, had the maddeningly brilliant facility for seeing his way through the dark labyrinths of human behaviour, and he was proud to be associated with him."

Lewis's comments and observations often put Morse back on track. In Death is now my Neighbor, Dexter uses the following quote from *The Adventure of the Creeping Man* that Watson uses to describe his relationship to Holmes and that could also be applied to Lewis and Morse.

The relations between us in those latter days were peculiar. He was a man of habits, narrow and concentrated habits, and I had become one of them... But apart from this I had uses. I was a whetstone for his mind. I stimulated him. He liked to think aloud in my presence.

Unlike Holmes, Morse is not likely to have a reprieve from his death in The Remorseful Day. The drinking, smoking, and overwork finally caught up to Morse. In Death is now my Neighbor, the second to the last book, we do learn Morse's first name and why he was given it. It is fitting that the one person he voluntarily gives this much sought after piece of information to is Lewis.

Mike Eckman



MORE VICTORIAN SECRETS & EDWARDIAN ENIGMAS (cont.)

talk, being identified as a member of the domestic staff of a Victorian country house. Langdale Pike was destined to become a conference in-joke, and those who were there will chuckle over it for a long time to come (though I suspect those who were not there will think the rest of us quite mad!).

A Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections meeting followed the official programme close, and at this event the ubiquitous Les Klinger made a short presentation on the importance of libraries, after various reports were presented.

Jon Lellenberg and Daniel Stashower opened Saturday morning proceedings with a presentation entitled 'Getting Inside A. Conan Doyle's Mind'. This was an account of their work with Charles Foley on the forthcoming book *Arthur Conan Doyle: His Life in Letters*, and they offered many interesting, mouth-watering snippets of information that had everyone present wishing that November would come more quickly, so that we can all get our hands on the book.

Puzzle enthusiast Dana Richards followed, with a section devoted to the kind of puzzles and amusements in which the Victorians reveled. Dana offered many examples, and tested the audience's 'ability' to solve 'easy' examples of the kind of puzzle that would have been found regularly in magazines such as *The Strand*.

Hard on the heels of the puzzlement came An Actor and a Rare One, in the form of Curtis Armstrong, who brought his many talents to a presentation of 'The Theatrical Adventures of Sherlock Holmes'.

Following an Asian lunch, Michael Miller and Garry Peterson subjected us to, nay, tormented us with, what has apparently become known in Norwegian Explorers' circles as a 'groaner', in other words a fiendish, devilish quiz, packed with puns and, well, groans. Suffer we did, indeed.

Charles Augustus Howell, whom many believe to have been the real-life model for Charles Augustus Milverton, was introduced to us by Elaine and Jonathan McCafferty. Howell, during his life, was extremely well connected, but there is little doubt that he was a wholly unscrupulous rogue.

The conference took a Wodehousian turn, as Michael Eckman introduced us to 'The Mystery of Jeeves's Origin'; and the afternoon wound down with Bill Mason delving into various villains, as he probed 'Angel of Death: Intrigue, Romance, and General Skulduggery in "The Greek Interpreter"'.

Saturday evening's banquet at The Holiday Inn

Metrodome began with toasts and concluded with a presentation by The Red Throated League of The Norwegian Explorers, 'The Sanguinary Spectre'. Old-time radio brought to life—somewhat different to listening to old shows on an MP3 player.

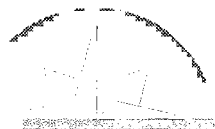
The banquet was something special for our family. Tim, who was along with us in Minneapolis for the second time, was called out by Gary Thaden and presented with an Honorary Membership of The Norwegian Explorers (thank you, Julie and Gary); and we got to meet Terry Kilburn ('Billy the Page' from 1939's *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*), who had been in attendance at the banquet.

With the conference rapidly drawing to an all-too-soon ending, Randall Stock began Sunday's programme with a fascinating illustrated talk on research he has been doing into a number of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes manuscripts. Then Gary Thaden tried to prove a number of links between Christopher Morley and the Norwegian Explorers with his talk 'The Politician, the Alehouse, and the Trained Librarian'. 'Wait and See' saw Sue Vizoskie wrapping up the formal proceedings with a study of domestic servants in Victorian/Edwardian times.

Remember Langdale Pike, and his slip-up about Julie McKuras and Victoria's Secret? Well, at the very end of the programme came the event that proved Pike partly correct. *La belle dame sans merci* had been hard at work, brow-beating, coercing, and generally forcing otherwise respectable people into dressing up (and down) in Victorian garb (over- and under-wear!). Not quite, I think, the kind of clothing that we shall see the next time a catalogue of scantily clad young ladies drops into the mailbox. Good fun, nevertheless.

Once again, the Minnesotans did themselves proud. The warmth of their welcome, and their hospitality in opening up their homes to large numbers of Sherlockian revelers, is second to none. In particular, thanks must go to all the members of the Conference Committee: Julie McKuras, Richard Sveum, Michael Eckman, Phil Bergem, John Bergquist, Pj Doyle, Tom Gottwalt, Gary Thaden, Robert and Lucy Brusic; and, for the wonderful job he did in making the Elmer L. Andersen Library so welcoming and comfortable a venue, Tim Johnson. Here's to 2010!

Christopher Roden, BSI



"La belle dame sans
merci had been hard
at work..."

The Norwegian Explorers

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" YOU MAY HAVE
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FRIEND. "