



THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS
OF MINNESOTA, INC.



EXPLORATIONS


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ISSUE NO. 87

"You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson,
but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend."

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travelogues, reviews, pastiches, or anything reasonable for *Explorations*, we would welcome any of it. Please contact one of the editors at the email address listed at the bottom of the last page. 

A Word from the President

BY TOM GOTTWALT




As you will note from the many articles throughout this issue, our group has been busy since the publication of the previous edition of *Explorations*. Some notable recent and upcoming events include:

- Our annual "Baker Street West" event was held at Brit's Pub where we celebrated the Master's January birthday and heard reports of happenings at the New York weekend and highlights from the Baker Street Irregulars Dinner.
- Our Study Group has met and discussed "The Crooked Man" (in January), "The Dancing Men," "The Devil's Foot," "The Dying Detective," "The Empty House," and in June, our non-Canonical detour of "The Ardlamont Mystery: The Real-Life Story Behind the Creation of Sherlock Holmes" by Daniel Smith. In September the Study Group Leaders started again with "The Engineer's Thumb," and continued with "The Final Problem," and "The Five Orange Pips."
- The Minnesota History Center hosted "Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition."
- The Red Throated League Recorded performed "The Case of the Missing Heiress" at the Minnesota History Center in conjunction with the exhibition.
- The University of Minnesota Libraries hosted Glen Miranker's collection "Sherlock Holmes in 221 Objects."

(Continued on page 11)

Editor's Desk

ello and welcome to Fall 2023. You will have noticed that the *Explorations* editors have had a bit of a hiatus. Luckily it was for one year instead of three. We did not get to Tibet, Mecca, or Khartoum, but one of us did drive past Montpellier this past September, although we did not stop to research coal-tar derivatives. We hope that you consider this issue worth the wait. You will find articles on various activities that Norwegian Explorer members got up to around the United States and Canada, as well as events that took place in Minnesota.

Our thanks go to Lindsay Hall who helped pull together some of the content of this issue, Karen Murdock for her continued accounts of Study Group sessions, Ruth Berman for her reflections on favorite Sherlockian stories to read in Autumn, and Peter Bailey for a pastiche with regional connections. This is Peter's first foray onto the pages of *Explorations*, and we hope to see more of his contributions in the future.

The hardest part of producing any newsletter is generating interesting content for the readers. If anyone is interested in writing articles, essays,

Norwegian Explorers' Activities of the Past Year

BY PHILLIP BERGEM



One of the functions of *Explorations* is to provide a record of the activities of the Norwegian Explorers as a group or as individuals. Much has happened in the last sixteen months. As Covid restrictions lessened, there were a number of conferences held that had been put on hold. The first of these to write about was the BSI Summer Conference, "Sherlock Holmes and the British Empire," held July 29-31, 2022, at Bear Mountain Inn and Conference Center, situated along the Hudson River, just a little south of West Point, New York. The conference was well attended and the sessions were very informative. Dick Sveum, Jen Olson, Mike Eckman and Monica Schmidt, and I were some of the Explorers in attendance.

My wife, Karen, and I had some Sherlockian adventures on our way to Bear Mountain. We planned a trip to Boston where, among other sites in the area, we saw the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual* at the Houghton Library on the Harvard campus. We also visited Gillette Castle. William Gillette's former home, what he called Seventh Sister after a series of nearby hills, is now a State Park. The home was built between 1914 and 1919 with the design and construction supervised by Gillette. The interior contains beautiful woodwork, and the site is a popular tourist destination, even among non-Sherlockians. The only signs of Gillette's Sherlockian life are in the visitor's center/gift shop and in an exhibition room on an upper floor. After that we made it to Bear Mountain where we met up with friends at the conference.

From mid-July to late August, the Park Square Theatre in St. Paul presented the play *Holmes and Watson*, written by Jeffrey Hatcher. A number of Explorers attended the show, several of them as a group event.

At the end of September, from the 23rd to the 25th, there was a second Sherlockian conference that several Explorers attended. The conference was "Jubilee@221B: Celebrating 50 Years of The Bootmakers of Toronto & The Arthur Conan Doyle Collection." It was organized by the Bootmakers and was held at the Toronto Public Library. Again, seeing many friends and listening to great presentations was wonderful. As with the BSI Summer

Conference, this event had been postponed because of Covid restrictions. The ultimate event was well worth the wait and was enjoyed by all. Among the presentations, Julie McKuras spoke about lesser-known Sherlockians and characters from the Canon, and Mitch Higurashi, a long-standing friend and Norwegian Explorer member from Japan, talked about Conan Doyle's works that were translated for the Japanese audience in the early 1900s. At the banquet, the keynote speaker was the ever-popular Nicholas Meyer, who spoke at the Explorer's 2019 Annual Dinner.



Yumiko Shigaki, Mitch Higurashi, Karen Bergem,
Julie McKuras, Dick Sveum
Front row: Phil Bergem, Monica Schmidt
Photo by Mike McKuras

The Sherlockian experiences of summer and early fall continued into October. On October 8th there was a meeting of The Hounds of the Baskerville (sic) in Chicago, the first in-person gathering in several years. The Explorers and the Hounds groups have long had a close relationship. Explorers in attendance were Andy and Gary Thaden, Dick Sveum, Monica Schmidt, Julie McKuras, and me. Julie gave the keynote presentation, making the case that the nexus of the Sherlockian world is in the Midwest. She considered various Midwestern Sherlockians (or those who eventually made their homes in the Midwest) whose contributions are invaluable, scion societies, and Collections in Chicago, Minneapolis, Bloomington, and Toronto (which she feels "is almost in the Midwest and that's good enough for me").

Later in the month, on October 22nd, we were more locally situated in Saint Paul, attending the one-day conference "The Timeless Sherlock Holmes," organized by Dick Sveum, at the Minnesota History Center. This was held in conjunction

with “Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition” which was at the History Center from October 20, 2022, until April 2, 2023. Speakers included Dan Stashower who talked about Jon Lellenberg’s involvement and how the exhibition was developed; Matthew Dacy, from Mayo Clinic, who talked about Philip Hench’s role at the Clinic; Tim Johnson who spoke about Philip Hench and Mary Kahler Hench; Steven Swenson of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension spoke about modern forensics; and Jeffrey Hatcher discussed various actors who portrayed Sherlock Holmes on stage and screen.



Dan Stashower at
“The Timeless Sherlock
Holmes”

The exhibition, organized by Exhibits Development Group (EDG) of St. Paul and Geoffrey M. Curley + Associates, was very popular with the public. There were several Explorer gatherings there in the months that it was showing. The exhibition has been touring the United States since it first opened in 2013, as well as making stops in Edmonton, Alberta and

Sydney, Australia. The exhibition has a number of items on loan from the Sherlock Holmes Collections at the Andersen Library, and Dick and Julie worked with the History Center to get the exhibition here.

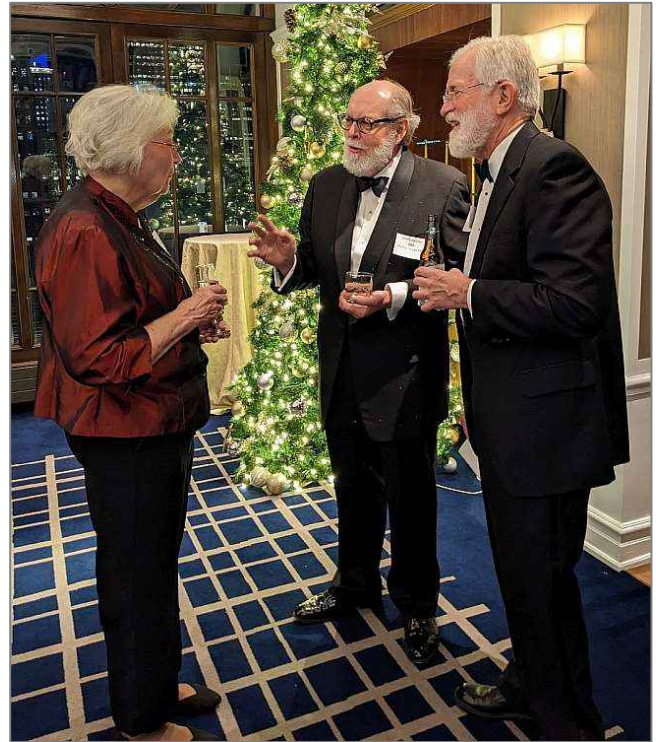
On December 1, 2022, we held the Annual Dinner and Business Meeting at the Minneapolis Golf Club. Once again, the Club did a wonderful job providing food and drinks. In addition to the usual fun toasts, the “Captions Courageous and Canonical Carols” by Bob and Lucy Brusic, and business meeting reports, there were two special highlights. One was a recognition of Ruth Berman, a valued and long-time member of the Norwegian Explorers. Part of the tribute was a book with a collection of her Sherlockian writings, *“Sherlock Holmes in Oz” and Others*, that was given to all Norwegian Explorer members. The other was the featured speaker of the evening, Glen Miranker, who spoke on “A Collector’s Approach to the

Canon; or, Why do you collect (Sherlock Holmes)?” It was truly a treat for the whole audience.

On the Saturday following the Annual Dinner a group of Norwegian Explorers gathered for brunch at The Lowry in Minneapolis. The reason, in addition to camaraderie, was to celebrate the release of a book written by Heather Edwards and illustrated by Amanda Downs, two fellow Explorers. The book, *Sherlock Cat and the Missing Mousie*, was available at Once Upon a Crime bookstore where Heather and Amanda had a book signing that day.

On Saturday, February 4, 2023, the Red Throated League gave two performances at the History Center as one of many events that the Center hosted to go along with the Exhibition.

Several Explorers had attended the New York Sherlock Holmes Birthday Weekend festivities in January. On Sunday, February 5th Explorers



Pj Doyle, Jeffrey Hatcher, and Dick Sveum at the
Yale Club with pre-BSI Dinner drinks

gathered for our annual Baker Street West event to gather in friendship and to hear NYC attendees talk about their experiences.

The Elmer L. Andersen Library at the University of Minnesota was able to host treasures from the collection of Glen Miranker. The exhibition, “Sherlock Holmes in 221 Objects,” had previously been shown at the Grolier Club in New York and at the Lilly Library in Bloomington, Indiana, and



Glen Mirakner, Tim Johnson
and Cathy Miranker
Photo by Carl Stover

it was a privilege to have it appear locally. The objects had been selected by Cathy and Glen Mirakner and both of them graciously showed up several times, coming from San Francisco, to give presentations and lead tours. The exhibition ran from February 13th through May 5th. An opening reception was planned for February 22nd but had to be postponed a week due to a snowstorm. The selection of objects was astounding, informative, and entertaining and the events were well-attended.

On May 26th and 27th there was a conference at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas that several Explorers attended. Two months later, on July 28th to the 30th there was another gathering of Sherlockians that saw Explorers attending: "Holmes in the Heartland 2023: Arch Enemies" in St. Louis, Missouri. Tim Johnson writes of experiences at these two conferences elsewhere in this newsletter.

In addition to all the other events, the Study Group Leaders, Steve Miller, Steven Schier and Mary Loving continue with their brilliant work of hosting monthly Study Group Sessions.

All of these activities and people contributed to a wonderful Sherlockian year, and we look forward to the fun continuing in 2024, especially with the upcoming Conference to be held July 26-28, 2024.



Sherlockian Conferences in 2023

BY TIMOTHY J. JOHNSON

Editor's note: Tim wrote the following account for the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections Newsletter. It was topical enough and highlighted experiences of several Norwegian Explorers so well that we thought it was worthy of an appearance in Explorations.



his summer I was able to travel, with my wife, Beth, on two Sherlockian journeys — the first to Dallas, the second to St. Louis. It has been a long time since many of us had the pleasure of meeting face-to-face. When the invitation came to be a part of the celebration of Don Hobbs's collection at Southern Methodist University at the end of May, I jumped at the opportunity. And when The Parallel Case of St. Louis announced its next iteration of "Holmes in the Heartland" I was ready to pack my bags.

The Crew of the Barque Lone Star, along with staff from Southern Methodist University, hosted "Lone Star Holmes: a look at Sherlock Holmes past, present and future." On Friday, May 26, attendees enjoyed a reception at SMU's Fondren/DeGolyer Library and the opening exhibition for the Donald Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Collection. Additional conversations and merriments continued late into the evening. On Saturday morning participants heard from Rob Nunn on "Sherlock Holmes in the 21st Century," yours truly on correspondence between Don Hobbs and



Dick Sveum, Soren Eversoll, Beth Johnson and
Tim Johnson in Dallas, Texas
Photo provided by Tim Johnson

John Bennett Shaw, and Marino Alvarez on “Simplifying Complexity.” A mid-morning break (and another in the afternoon) gave us time with vendors.

Following lunch, we settled down for presentations by Barbara Rusch on collectors in the Canon, our own Soren Eversoll with his perspective on how “the modern-day student interacts with Holmes and attempts to forge new ground within the stories,” and Glen Miranker on various items from his spectacular collection. A social hour set the table for the conference banquet and a dinner keynote address, “The Future Lies Ahead” from Peter Blau. Customary toasts were offered and after dinner the assembled throng enjoyed a game of “Sherlockian Family Feud.” The conference concluded with a presentation by Steve Mason and Cindy Brown on “The Facts, Legends, and Lore” of the Crew of the Barque Lone Star’s origin and legacy.

A day’s drive from Minneapolis to St. Louis in late July brought us to town for “Holmes in the Heartland 2023: Arch Enemies” sponsored by The Parallel Case of St. Louis. We decided to come down a day early for an evening baseball game between the Chicago Cubs and St. Louis Cardinals (played in hot and steamy conditions). On Friday the 28th some registrants enjoyed an afternoon architectural tour of the St. Louis Public Library and viewing the Sherlock Holmes Research Collection along with other rare items. I had the pleasure of seeing this collection installed and added to during an earlier “Holmes in the Heartland” conference.

Library tourists and other attendees gathered at the Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel on the west side of the city for an opening “Just Desserts for the Professor” Moriarty-themed evening reception. The party also offered conference-goers their first opportunity to secretly identify (or affiliate with) one of Professor Moriarty’s four lieutenants, part of a larger game played during the conference which reached its conclusion on Saturday night.

Earlier on Saturday, vendors opened for business and were available on the perimeter of the conference space throughout the day. Rob Nunn welcomed us and soon we were off. Ray Betzner

launched us with his “Professor James Moriarty and the Quest for Order in the Universe.” Next up — “with a future hope to become an archivist,” a hope we happily and enthusiastically applaud — was Kirsten Mertz and her presentation, “Moran’s Game.” Moving into the first break of the day, Brad Keefauver reminded everyone of a notorious plot afoot by Moriarty’s Minions, eagerly in search of accomplices to sway events later in the day. Before breaking for the book stalls and coffee, Stacey Brengener reached into her box of raffle tickets and called out a few winners. Happily, we can report that our better half came away with a nice piece of art. Back from the break, we heard the fabulous Cindy Brown talk about “Guys I Love to Hate: The List Keeps Getting Longer.” Be it Moriarty, Moran,



Dick Sveum, Monica Schmidt, Tim Johnson, Beth Johnson, Max Magee, Phil Bergem in St. Louis, MO
Photo by Ray Betzner


Milverton, or Magnussen, the list of Ms is impressive... and growing. Steven Doyle wrapped up the morning with his take on “Baron Gruner: The Most Misunderstood Villain in the Canon.” It was a perfect and illustrious conclusion to the morning as the group broke for lunch.

We began the afternoon session with some hilarity as Dr. Mike McSwiggin led off with “The Ultimate Arch Enemies of the Canon: Dr Watson and Calendars.” While the chronologists battled off stage, we turned our attention to a session on “Moriarty for Kids” by a librarian colleague — and current chairperson of the Sub-Librarians Scion Society of the American Library Association — the multi-talented Beth Gallego with her talk, “Ene-

mies for Life: Faces of Moriarty in Sherlockian Literature for Youth.” After an afternoon break, we reconvened for Monica Schmidt’s “BBC, But You Do Not Observe: Sociopathy and Sherlock Holmes.” The Right Honourable Lord Justice Eckrich listened to testimony as Queen’s Counselors Waxenberg and Krisciunas presented their prosecution and defense in “The Trial of the (19th) Century,” our last presentation in the main program of “Holmes in the Heartland.”

As is the custom, presentations were followed by a cocktail hour, banquet, and “The Alpha Inn Goose Club Trivia Night” hosted by Brad Keefauver (with a Texas-sized goose in the person of Steve Mason). We laughed away the evening.


On Sunday morning a sizeable remnant of conferees gathered at the Gateway Arch National Park for a guided tour of the museum, viewing of an award-winning documentary film, and a trip to the top of the Arch in our little tramway pods. A final group activity following our trip to the top was lunch at The Old Spaghetti Factory. Back in the car, Beth and I headed to Hannibal for the night and delved into the early life of Mark Twain the next day.

It was great to see so many Sherlockians in Dallas and St. Louis. I look forward to seeing many of you next year in Minneapolis when we host our triennial conference and exhibition: “Sherlock Holmes @50: Celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Collections” on the weekend of July 26-28. Until then! 

Holmes for When the Leaves Fall

BY RUTH BERMAN


Explorations asked its members to share their favorite Sherlock Holmes stories to read in the Autumn. Ruth Berman from Minnesota responded:

 here are several candidates for autumnal Holmes reading — who can forget the “child in the chimney” of the shrieking equinoctial storm in “Five Orange Pips” or Watson’s depression at the gloomy September weather of *The Sign of Four* or the “wild, tempestuous night” of “Gold Pince-Nez.” But I think I’d point to “The Bruce-Partington Plans” — especially when combined with Vincent Starrett — as the quintessential autumn scene:

“In the third week of November, in the year 1895, a dense yellow fog settled down upon London. From the Monday to the Thursday I doubt whether it was ever possible from our windows in Baker Street to see the loom of the opposite houses. ...

‘Look out of this window, Watson. See how the figures loom up, are dimly seen, and then blend once more into the cloud-bank. The thief or the murderer could roam London on such a day as the tiger does the jungle, unseen until he pounces, and then evident only to his victim.’”

Here we have the precise scene of Vincent Starrett’s sonnet, with the autumnal “London particular fog” settled on the streets, and the ghostly gas-lamps failing at only a few feet — “and it is always 1895.”

It is notable that Watson’s autumnal descriptions are all stormy and/or foggy. He delights in the fresh green foliage of spring and summer but takes no note of the changing colors of the fall leaves. 




A Gathering of Study Group Reports

BY KAREN MURDOCK

Given the number of Study Group sessions that have happened since the last repost, the editors felt that it would be best to present a selection of them as a gathering of summaries.

The Cardboard Box

 he September meeting of the Explorers Discussion Group met via Zoom on Saturday, September 17, 2022. Those present, and displaying the international reach of online meetings, were: Cynthia Ali, Ruth Berman, Bob Brusic, Shana Carter (Queens, New York), Louisa Dieck (Greensburg, Pennsylvania), Amanda Downs, Karen Ellery, Erica Fair, David Hitchcock (Syracuse, NY), Margaret Lebien, Mary Loving, Steve Miller (discussion leader), Karen Murdock, Beverly Proud, J C Remont (Paris, France), Steve Schier, Karen Titrud, Will Walsh, Sonia Yazmadjian (Lyons, France).

Steve Miller led the discussion on “The Cardboard Box.” The story was first published in January 1893 and was “a somewhat controversial story.” Conan Doyle later decided to repress the tale and it did not appear in the British version of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* or in the sec-

ond and later editions of the American edition. Karen Ellery said a woman is the aggressor in the story; Sarah Cushing threw herself at her brother-in-law. Karen M. pointed out that Sarah does seem to have an attack of guilty conscience; when she finds out that she has caused two murders, she suffers a severe case of “brain fever.” Mary opined that Sarah faked this all-purpose malady.

Steve M. said the story suffered from the “unreliable narrator” problem, since a high proportion of the story is told by Jim Browner. Bob B. pointed out that Holmes only engages in two episodes of deduction in the story — and one of these is in the opening “reading Watson’s mind” sequence. Karen M. said that Watson is being hypocritical in this story; in the first paragraph he says that he only likes to write up the Sherlock Holmes cases “which presented the minimum of sensationalism” and he then spends the next 19 pages on one of the most sensational stories in the Canon.



Illustration by J. Basté from “La Boîte de Carton” in *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires*.
Courtesy of The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia.

Bob B. said an appreciation for “American ephemera” was necessary to understand the mind-reading episode. Steve M. pointed out that Henry Ward Beecher was once the most famous man in America.

Opinions differed on the plausibility of that mind-reading. Steve S. pointed out the Poe original, “Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Karen E. said that con men and serial killers are exceptionally good “cold readers” and can pick up the thoughts of their victims by noting very small changes in a person’s expression. Mary L. said it was easy for Holmes to read Watson’s thoughts because he knew Watson very well.

Karen E. said the moment of the murder was very effective, with the surrounding fog bank.

The Copper Beeches

On a sunny, chilly, November 19th, Mary Loving led 23 participants in an online discussion of “The

Copper Beeches.” People joined from as far away as Oklahoma, North Carolina, and Lyons, France.

Steve Schier stated how he enjoyed the “Gothic” elements in COPP — the creepy house, the woman locked in the attic. Steve Miller said that Arthur Conan Doyle’s mother had suggested the important plot points in the story.

Pete Cavanaugh pointed out that Doyle really liked and respected women. Sometimes Sherlock Holmes does, too. He said Jephro Rucastle was a despicable villain. “At least Moriarty was a businessman” — Rucastle was just a rat. Sandy Kozinn (who lives across the Hudson River from New York City) said the young Rucastle boy would be welcome in the city, where he would have plenty of cockroaches to kill.

Sonia Yazmadjian thought the story was weak. Holmes makes almost no deductions. Thomas Fortenberry thought it was more a Gothic tale than a mystery.

Mary mentioned the theme of women being abused by relatives also occurs in IDEN and SPEC. However, at the time, it was not illegal in Britain to lock up somebody in your family in the family mansion if the person was ill. Sandy said that if the Tollers had complained about what was going on at The Copper Beeches, they would have been fired. Mary reminded the group that mental illness such as “brain fever” was not something that was discussed openly.

Tram Chamberlain asked how the sailor, Fowler, had figured out that Alice was in the attic. Sandy hypothesized that Violet looked like Alice, but not enough like Alice to fool a fiancé. Fowler also had a confidant, Mrs. Toller, inside the Copper Beeches. David Hitchcock pointed out that Holmes and Watson made no difference in the outcome of the story.

Mary wondered how Jephro expected to get away with his scheme. Would he keep his daughter locked up forever? Pete understood that women were at a significant disadvantage at the time the story takes place (1890s). Sandy said Jephro needed only the keep his daughter a prisoner until he could get rid of Fowler.

Ed Videcki observed that abused wives often refuse to leave their husbands; this seems to explain why Mrs. Rucastle did not turn her husband in to the police. Karen M. agreed that she was an abused wife, but Steve S. said she might have been a co-conspirator. Steve S. said sailors are often formidable characters in the Canon (BLAC, ABBE). Doyle served on a whaling ship as a young man and knew sailors well.

Karen M. commended Holmes’s observation “It is my belief, Watson, founded upon my experience, that the lowest and vilest alleys in London

do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside.” Karen thought this was the best line in the story. Thomas said that Gothic stories were always set in the countryside. A country location in the 1890s was really remote — these were the days before telephones and cars.

Mary asked “Who’s the hero?” The general acclaim favored Violet, with a minority choosing Carlo, the dog. Nobody picked Sherlock Holmes. Steve M. was disappointed that Jephro Rucastle did not go to jail at the end of the story; Mary pointed out that he had committed no crime. Holmes and Watson were the ones who committed a crime by breaking into The Copper Beeches.

Mary wondered why Alice’s hair had been left behind in Violet’s bureau. Karen M. said hair was valuable and could have been sold; this is a central plot element in O. Henry’s famous short story “The Gift of the Magi.” Sandy thought the Rucastles might be saving the hair to give to Alice so she could make a wig, or perhaps Mrs. Rucastle put the hair in the drawer then forgot about it. David Hitchcock suggested that Alice had cut off her own hair and hidden it in the bureau drawer, so her parents did not know where it was.

Mary said there were 7 cases of “brain fever” in the Canon, most suffered by women. She wondered what the modern diagnosis would be. Guesses ranged from meningitis to severe emotional breakdown. Jennie Paton said brain fever was “an umbrella illness” and covered a multitude of symptoms.

Peter Bailey said he missed the usual explanation given by Holmes at the end of many stories. Holmes and Watson had to leave quickly at the end because they were in The Copper Beeches illegally.

Most of the Explorers rated the story between 3 and 4 on a scale of 0 to 5. The story was criticized for its lack of deduction and treatment of women. It was praised for its great cast of characters, florid Gothic descriptions, poetry of language, good use of color, good “cozy” at the beginning, and strong heroine.

The Creeping Man

Norwegian Explorers gathered by Zoom on Saturday, December 17, 2022, to discuss “The Creeping

Man.” Those present were Cynthia Ali, Ruth Berman, Lucy and Bob Brusica, Tram Chamberlain, Pj Doyle, Karen Ellery, David Hitchcock (aka “Atrium Laptop”) from Upstate New York, Mary Loving, Bonnie MacBird (London, England), Julie McKuras, Steve Miller, Karen Murdock, Beverly and Curt Proud, Steve Schier, Bob Sharfman, Dick Sveum, Ed Videcki, Sonia Yazmadjian and her cat Lulu from Lyons, France.

Steve M. led the discussion. “The Creeping Man” was published in March 1923, almost 100 years ago. Bob B. said that Watson shows humility in his relationship with Sherlock Holmes. Sonia said that Watson does nothing in the investigation of the professor and since “there is no woman to womanize” he does not even get rhapsodize about his favorite gender. Steve S. said the Jeremy Brett

episode of this tale has a subplot about monkeys being stolen from zoos. Bob S. said that a lot of men were being injected with monkey glands in the 1920s.

Karen M. asked, “What’s wrong with taking monkey gland serum?” After all, millions of men today are taking Viagra, and for the same purpose that Professor Presbury took his monkey serum. Dick said the professor had “crossed over the animal-human divide” and Viagra is just a man-made drug. David said this story was similar to Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” and that it was really “a cautionary tale” about going too far.

Dick asked, “Is this a farce or a mystery?” Opinion leaned towards farce, since there really

was not much mystery to the tale. Steve M. observed that there is a whole genre of fiction warning of the dangers of science, from Frankenstein to Godzilla “we’re always thinking science is about to do us in.”

Steve M. asked, “To what extent is Sherlock Holmes necessary in this story?” Tram said if Holmes had not shown up at a critical time, the professor would have been killed by his dog. Steve S. cited the Barbara Rusch essay in *About Sixty* in which she pointed out that CREE touches on sexuality, drugs, literary allusions, and some scientific issues of the day.

On a scale of 1 to 5, most participants in the discussion rated the story a 2 or 3. It was criticized for being “out of character,” “not Sherlockian,” “frankly ridiculous as a story,” and “preachy.” On

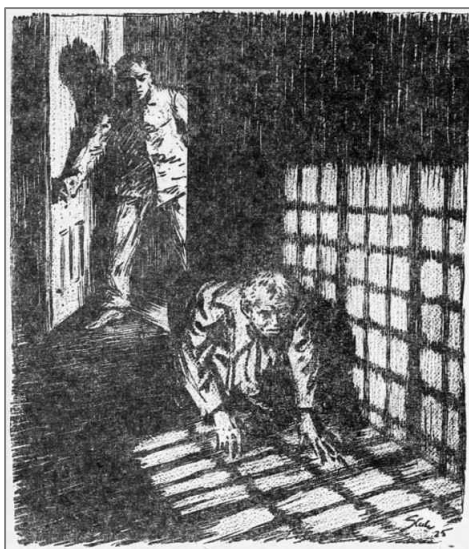


Illustration by Frederic Dorr Steele in *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, KY), March 15, 2025.

Courtesy of The Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia.

the other hand, the tale was praised because “it raises interesting issues,” has “a lot of great quotes” and is “one of the creepiest” (pun intended) of Conan Doyle’s tales. 🐾

Where Would You Go?

BY LINDSAY HALL

The Norwegian Explorers asked our Facebook followers: *Besides 221B Baker Street (of course), which location from the Sherlock Holmes stories would you most like to visit?* 58 people voted, and these were the results:

| | |
|--|-------|
| <input type="radio"/> Baskerville Hall in Dartmoor | 24% > |
| <input type="radio"/> The Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland | 46% > |
| <input type="radio"/> The Diogenes Club in London | 13% > |
| <input type="radio"/> The bee farm on the Sussex Downs | 13% > |
| <input type="radio"/> Added by Karen Ellery Watson's home with Mary | 1% > |
| <input type="radio"/> Added by Howard Ostrom King's Pyland and Mapleton | 1% > |
| <input type="radio"/> Added by Howard Ostrom The Bar of Gold | 1% > |

There was a lot of love for the Diogenes Club. “I picked the Diogenes Club, if only to see how long it would take before I was escorted out,” joked Mary Loving from Minnesota, admin of the Explorers’ social media channels. Added Tammy Lynn Garrison from Pennsylvania, “I hear they now have Wi-Fi in the Stranger's Room.”

Meanwhile, others preferred more adventurous locations. Jeff Falkingham from Minnesota/Colorado chose the Reichenbach Falls. “I’m an outdoors guy — I love waterfalls and mountains. Plus, it’s such a pivotal point in Sherlockian lore!” Max McGee of Wisconsin opted for Sussex Downs, “to chat with Mr. Holmes.”

Visit the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) to join the social conversation. See the end of this newsletter for links to Facebook and X/Twitter. 🐾

The Case of the Golden Spike

BY DR. WATSON, AS RETOLD

BY PETER HITCHCOCK BAILEY

It was some time in the 1890s when Sherlock Holmes and I were summoned to America to consult on a misfortune of a prestigious railroad baron and the disappearance of his prize possession. As it happened, we were on a brief holiday to the village of Hay-on-Wye in Wales, where Sherlock would lose himself for hours in the bookstores for which the hamlet was renowned, prowling through stacks of dusty scientific journals. I wandered through gift shops, intent on securing a trifle to bring back to my bride. We were there when the urgent telegram from America found us.

“Your discreet detective services requested urgently. Please handle with utmost secrecy and diplomacy as this is a highly sensitive corporate matter. Come quickly, all expenses covered.”

– Mary T. Hill, of St. Paul, Minnesota, America.

We discussed the invitation over tea and apple crumble. “What do you make of it, Watson?” he asked, as was his custom to test me.

“Well, I stammered, it certainly feels important, and this Mary seems willing to go to any expense to secure our services —” Sherlock listened with his fingers bridging a steeple to his chin. I trailed off, hesitating to say more as I knew he was already lost in thought. “Very good,” he said absent-mindedly. “Allow me to add a few observations of my own.”

“The Hill family in St. Paul, Minnesota is an affluent family whose riches draw from the Canadian-American patriarch, James J. Hill, of the Great Northern Railroad and whose shrewd, even ruthless business practices have made him one of the wealthiest men in America. Mary T. Hill is his wife, and as it is at her request that we are summoned, I surmise something has befallen her husband of which he is unaware or unwilling to reveal. As she has mentioned the delicateness of this case, I believe her husband’s reputation and quite possibly their fortunes may be at stake, particularly as she has said that this is a “corporate” matter, an area very likely beyond the realm of her jurisdiction.”

I finished the last of my tea as he came to a rest in his analysis. "What do you propose to do," I asked, wiping the remaining crumbs from my mustache.

"There is no time to spare, Watson. We must prepare at once for a trip to America."

Our transit back to London was brisk, and soon we were on to Liverpool where we boarded the RMS *Teutonic* of the White Star Line. We made the Atlantic crossing to New York in a record 5 days and 20 hours. Once in New York, we secured sleeping cabins on the New York Central Railroad to St. Paul where we were welcomed by the gracious Mary T. Hill at their newly built mansion on Summit Avenue. Such lavish accommodations are lost on my companion, but I thoroughly enjoyed the architecture and fairly chortled as I was shown our sleeping quarters upstairs.

The next morning, we were to meet with the railroad baron himself, the great James J. Hill, at precisely 8:17 a.m. in his study. We waited eagerly in the foyer. "Train time, Watson. He is a man of precision with a fondness for time charts. Eight-seventeen is the departure time for his recently completed Great Northern Railroad bound for Seattle, Washington."

The mahogany doors opened like Aladdin's cave, and we were greeted by one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. He was inches shy of Sherlock's gaunt height, but he commanded the room like a general, with a full beard and piercing eyes like an eagle. He ushered us in with urgency.

"Gentlemen, thank you for coming. I appreciate the time and difficulties of your travel and I shall compensate you generously. I have heard many accounts of your prowess, thanks to you Dr. Watson, but I fear even you will be put to the test Mr. Holmes. What has befallen me is likely to be the downfall of my many years of hard work and dedication. Cigar, Gentlemen?"

We both were captivated by our host and said yes, despite the early hour of the day. We smoked and he continued.

"I have long been in competition with my archrival, Leland Stanford of the Central Pacific Railroad. He and I have been building and buying railroads across the country, trying to outdo the other. With my American and Canadian acquisitions, I have been ahead most of the time. However, with great pomp and circumstance Leland Stanford and David Hewes

celebrated what they called the Great Continental Railroad by hammering in a railroad spike made of solid gold. He was featured in every American newspaper, touted as the greatest of all the railroad builders. He had two golden spikes made — one was hammered into the track, the other he gave me as a trophy of his accomplishment. This golden spike is the reason I have asked you here."

"We would like very much to see this golden spike," I said with great anticipation.

"Easier said than done, I am afraid Watson," Sherlock jumped in. "Unless I am quite mistaken, Mr. Hill, the golden spike of which you speak is missing, is it not? That is the reason you have brought us here."

"Precisely, Mr. Holmes. In honor of our Great Northern Railroad completion, we will hold a triumphant celebration, and Leland Stanford and David Hewes will attend. Unfortunately, I will be unable to produce the golden spike they gave me.

"I see, might you show us where you have kept the golden spike?"

"Of course, it was always in this curio cabinet, here in my study. Under glass, lock and key."

"When did you last see it?"

"Two days ago. We had a large family gathering celebrating my daughter's birthday."

"On such occasions, would you typically lock the doors to your study?"

"Yes indeed. The only person who has a key is my business partner, lawyer and son-in-law, Sam Hill. Last name a coincidence, but now related by marriage. He is beyond reproach."

Sherlock had that look in his eye. I had seen it before, a gleam of excitement like a snake before striking a mouse. He hunched over the glass cabinet with his magnifying glass, running his hand over the edges. The case was lined with black velvet and there was a crushed mark where the golden spike once lay.

"Watson, pass me that ashtray, if you please."

Holmes flicked his cigar so the ash dropped into the tray and fell apart in a soft powder. He then blew gently on the ash causing a billowing cloud of pale dust to descend on the glass case. As if by magic, circles of fingerprints appeared like footprints in snow. Some were large like a bear would make, and others smaller like a dog. Sherlock glanced at me and then at the curio case with the fingerprints revealed on the glass.

"Would your son-in-law, be available to join us by chance?" Holmes asked, still inspecting the glass case.


"Absolutely, he is in the other room." James Hill left them and returned with Sam Hill.

Sherlock straightened up, replaced his magnifying glass inside his hunting coat and greeted the man with a warm, almost too-friendly handshake, holding both of his hands as he spoke. "Thank you for joining us Mr. Hill," Sherlock began, "I wonder if you would be willing to explain to your father-in-law and to my colleague Dr. Watson, why you felt obliged to remove the golden spike from the case and how you intend to get it back from the person to whom you lost it in the card game?"

Sam Hill's face turned pale as Scottish linen and one of his knees buckled as he stood. James Hill's mouth opened but not a sound came out. I rocked back on my heels enjoying yet another of Holmes's performances.

Sam Hill, finally spoke in almost a whisper, "But how did you know?"

"Quite simple really. Your hands are much smaller than your father-in-law's hands, so the smaller fingerprints on the glass case clearly belong to you. There are rumors of your strained relations with your wife, Mamie, and I might guess a gambling addiction. The cuffs on the undersides of both of your shirtsleeves are glossy where the starched cotton rubbed repeatedly on the felted card players' table, confirming a frequency at your gentlemen's club that would strain any marriage. As to the golden spike, it was carelessly lost in a bet. You have exactly one week to get it before Stanford and Hewes arrive for the ceremony. It may sting a bit, but I suggest you buy it back with a portion of your considerable salary."


"And now Watson, I believe we have just enough time to pop over to Neuman's Bar and Grill and get a quick bite in downtown St. Paul, before our afternoon train leaves for New York. Good day, gentlemen." 

(Word from the President – continued from page 1)

- We've begun planning in earnest for our next conference, "Sherlock Holmes @ 50: Celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Collections," which will take place in July 2024

- The Minnesota Antiquarian Book Fair took place July 7 and 8 at the University of St. Thomas St. Paul Campus. A number of Explorers see each other there while looking for additions to their collections.

- Several Norwegian Explorers continue to write, publish, edit and in other ways contribute to the ongoing accumulation of scholarly and other published Holmes and Doyle related material.

As always, you can keep up with these and other items of interest in the monthly Notices to Norwegian Explorers members. It's a great time to be a Sherlockian and a Norwegian Explorer. Thank you for your membership and please spread the word to others. We're always looking for new members. 



Parting Words and Trifles



Several Norwegian Explorers have been mentioned online or been involved with a relatively recently released book.

- The Shoso-in at Nara, Japan, was mentioned in ILLU. There is an online article about an exhibition of the Shoso-in treasures on the website of the English language *The Japan News* with quotes from fellow-Explorer Mitch Higurashi.

<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/social-series/20231025-145453/>

- Another Explorer from outside of Minnesota is Rob Nunn from southern Illinois (near St. Louis, MO — he was one of the key organizers of the "Holmes in the Heartland" conference). He has a blog where he frequently has "Interesting Interviews" of Sherlockians. Several of these have been Norwegian Explorers. These are Rich Krisciunas (8/27/23); Soren Eversoll (6/30/23); Phil Bergem (11/13/22); Jim Hawkins (4/11/22); Pj Doyle (9/26/21); Steve Mason (6/27/21); Barbara Rusch (4/25/21); Joe Eckrich (4/11/21); Tamar Zeffren (3/28/21); Tim Johnson (3/14/21); Ross Davies (1/24/21); Julie McKuras (10/25/20); Burt Wolder (5/10/20); and Monica Schmidt (3/8/20).

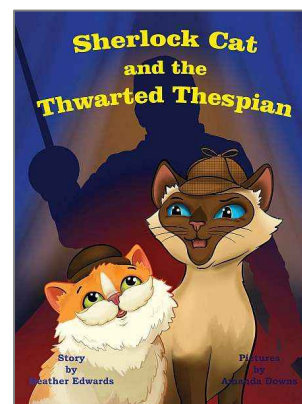
The blog can be found at **<http://interestingthoughelementary.blogspot.com/>**. You

can use the Blog Archive list along the right side to find various dates.

- Steve Doyle conducts interviews and post them on YouTube. One from March 24, 2023, was about The Public Sherlock Holmes Collections and involved Tim Johnson, Erika Dowell (Lilly Library at Indiana University) and Jessie Amaolo (the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library). It can best be found by going to **www.youtube.com** and searching for < fortnightly dispatch doyle public collections >.
- Tim Johnson was also the subject of a podcast — “Historians at the Movies” — by Jason Herbert. (Episode 46: Sherlock Holmes with Tim Johnson (Oct. 11, 2023)) It can be accessed at **www.historiansatthemovies.com** or on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.
- Julie McKuras and Sonia Fetherston wrote the *Baker Street Journal 2022 Christmas Annual* titled “‘A Lady Ventures into the Sacred Precincts’: Women on the Periphery of the BSI, 1940–1960.” A fascinating and well-researched history of women and their involvement in the Sherlockian world of the time.
- Phil Bergem edited the most recent book in the BSI Manuscript Series, *The Haven Horror*, that was released in January 2023. John Bergquist did the final editing and layout production. It consists of a reproduction of the original manuscript, a transcription, annotations, and essays of RETI. In association with this, Phil was the subject of a podcast, Episode 257 of “I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere,” hosted by Scott Monty and Norwegian Explorer Burt Wolder (released 1/30/23). It can be accessed at **https://ihose.co/ihose257**.
- There is a new collection of sixteen pastiches, compiled and edited by Ray Riethmeier. It is *The Consultations of Sherlock Holmes* (Manchester, NH: Belanger Books, 2023) and is

available from various booksellers in hard-cover, paperback, and eBook formats.

- Heather Edwards and Amanda Downs are releasing their second book about felines acting like Holmes and Watson. *Sherlock Cat and the Thwarted Thespians* (London: MX Publishing, 2023) is scheduled to be released on December 12, 2023.



- The Annual Dinner and Business Meeting will be held at the Minneapolis Golf Club (2001 Flag Ave S, St. Louis Park) on Thursday, December 7th at 6:30 pm. Details and the opportunity to register can be found on the Explorers' website, **www.norwegianexplorers.org**.
- Our Annual Baker Street West gathering is scheduled for Sunday, February 4, 2024 at 5:00 pm. The location is still to be decided.
- 2024 sees the return of our famous and popular Conference, jointly hosted with the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the University of Minnesota Libraires. The title is “Sherlock Holmes @ 50: Celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Collections” and it will run from Friday July 26 to Sunday July 28, 2024. Registration details will be available at the Annual Dinner and on the Norwegian Explorers website after December 11th.
- Please note the enclosed dues notice for 2024. Dues of \$25 per year (increasing due to higher postage and printing costs) can be paid by check (made out to The Norwegian Explorers and sent to Phil Bergem, 3829 172nd Ave NW, Andover, MN 55304-1820) or by PayPal on the website. 🐾

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